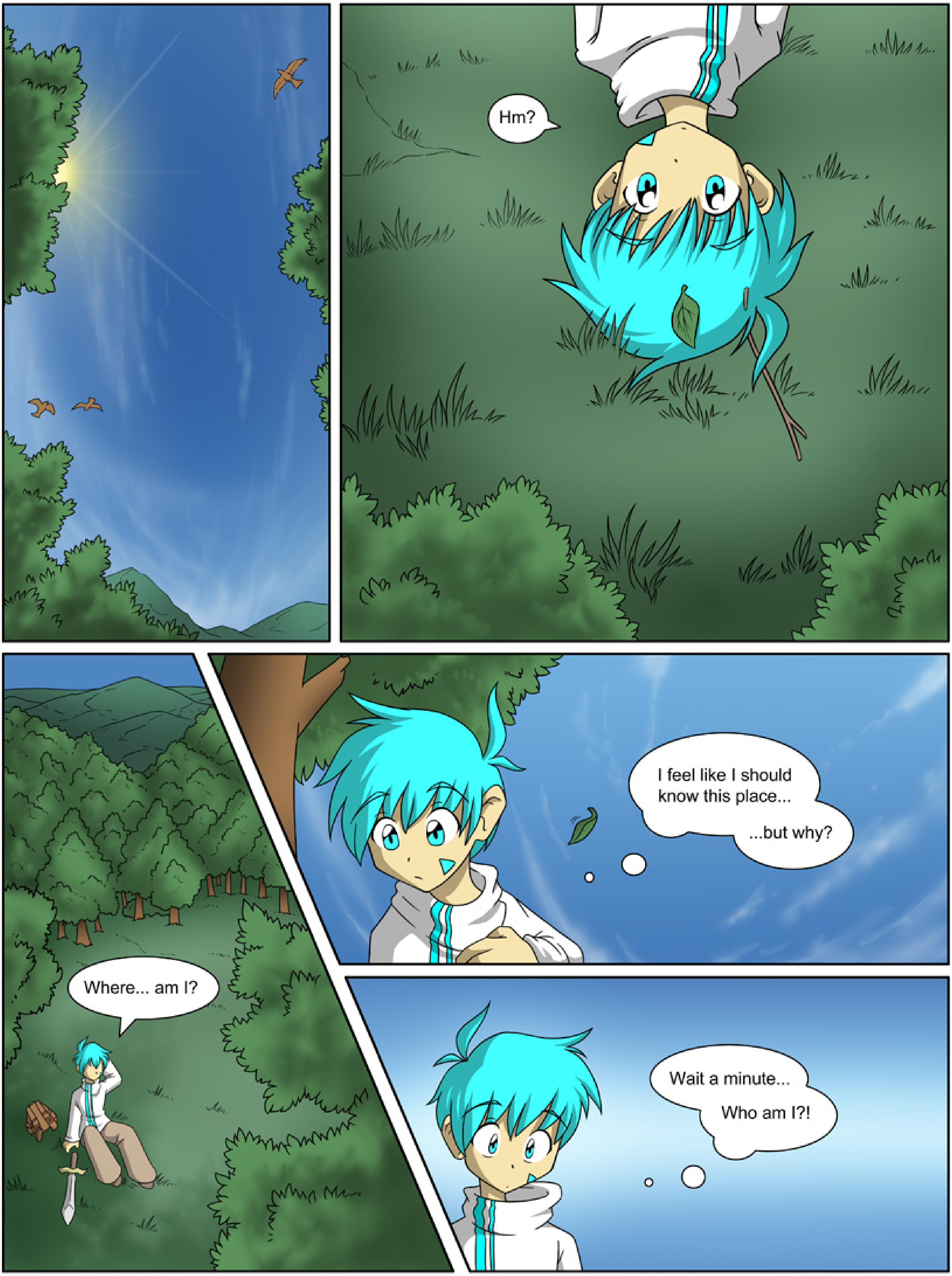
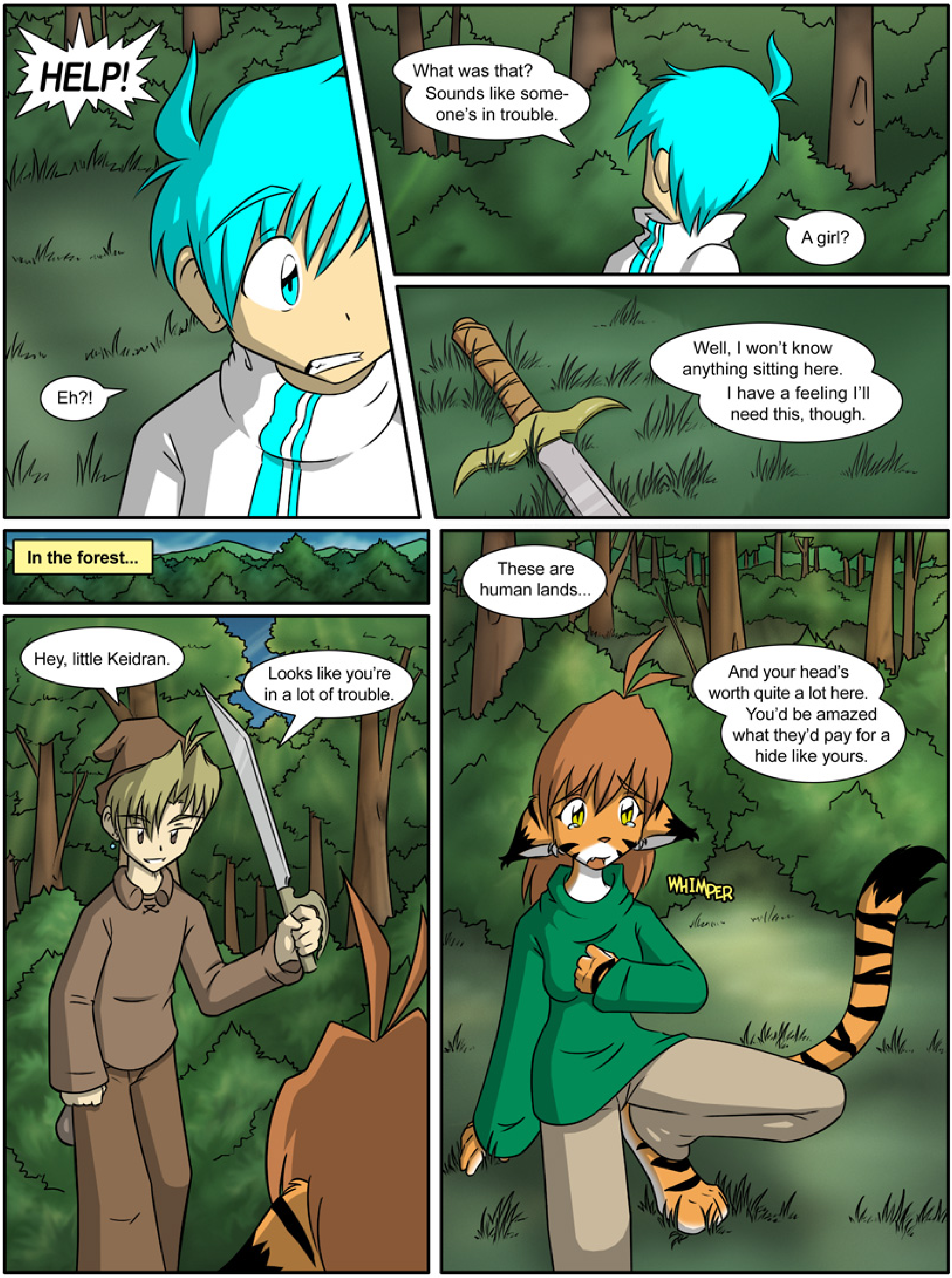
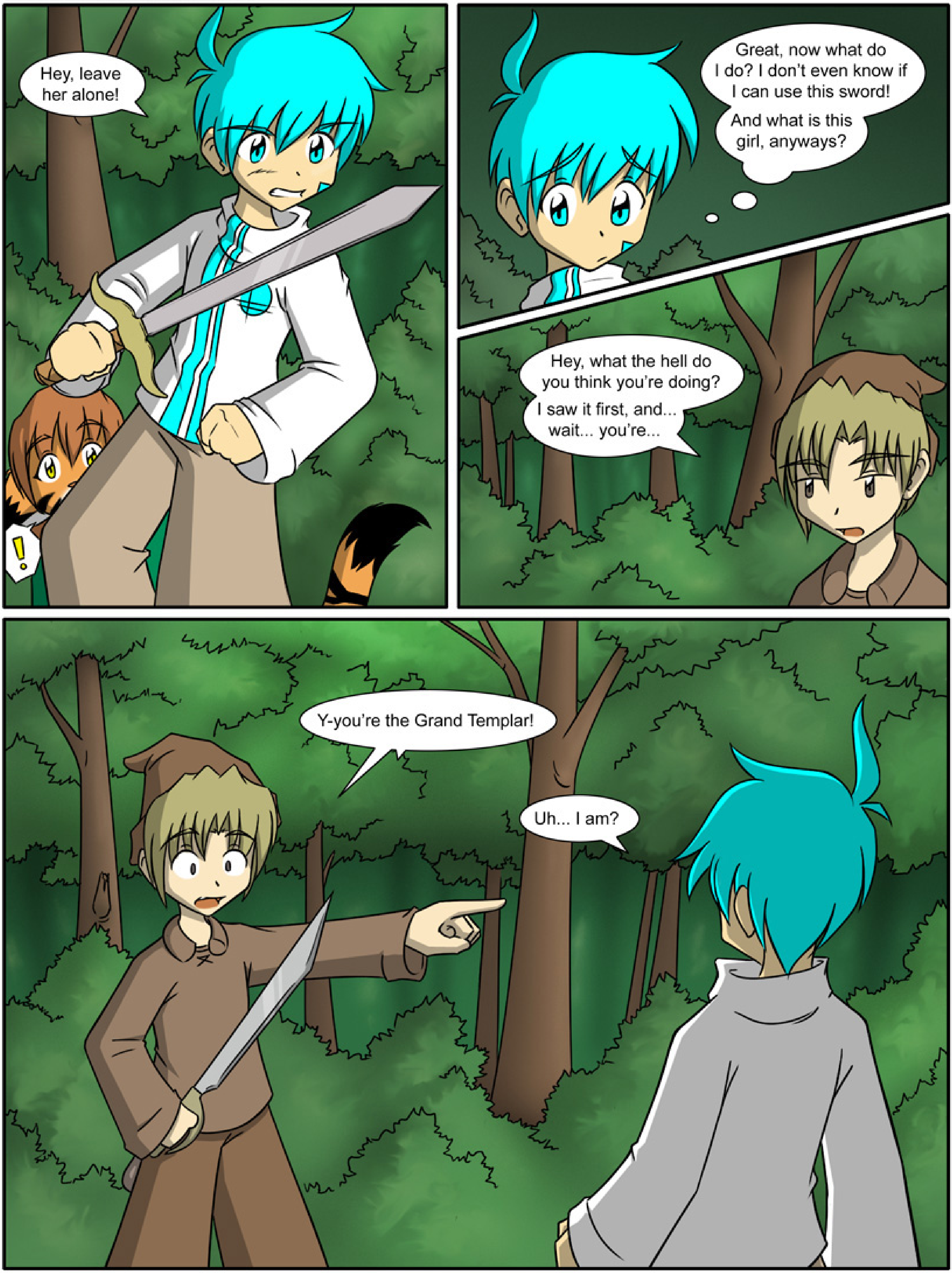
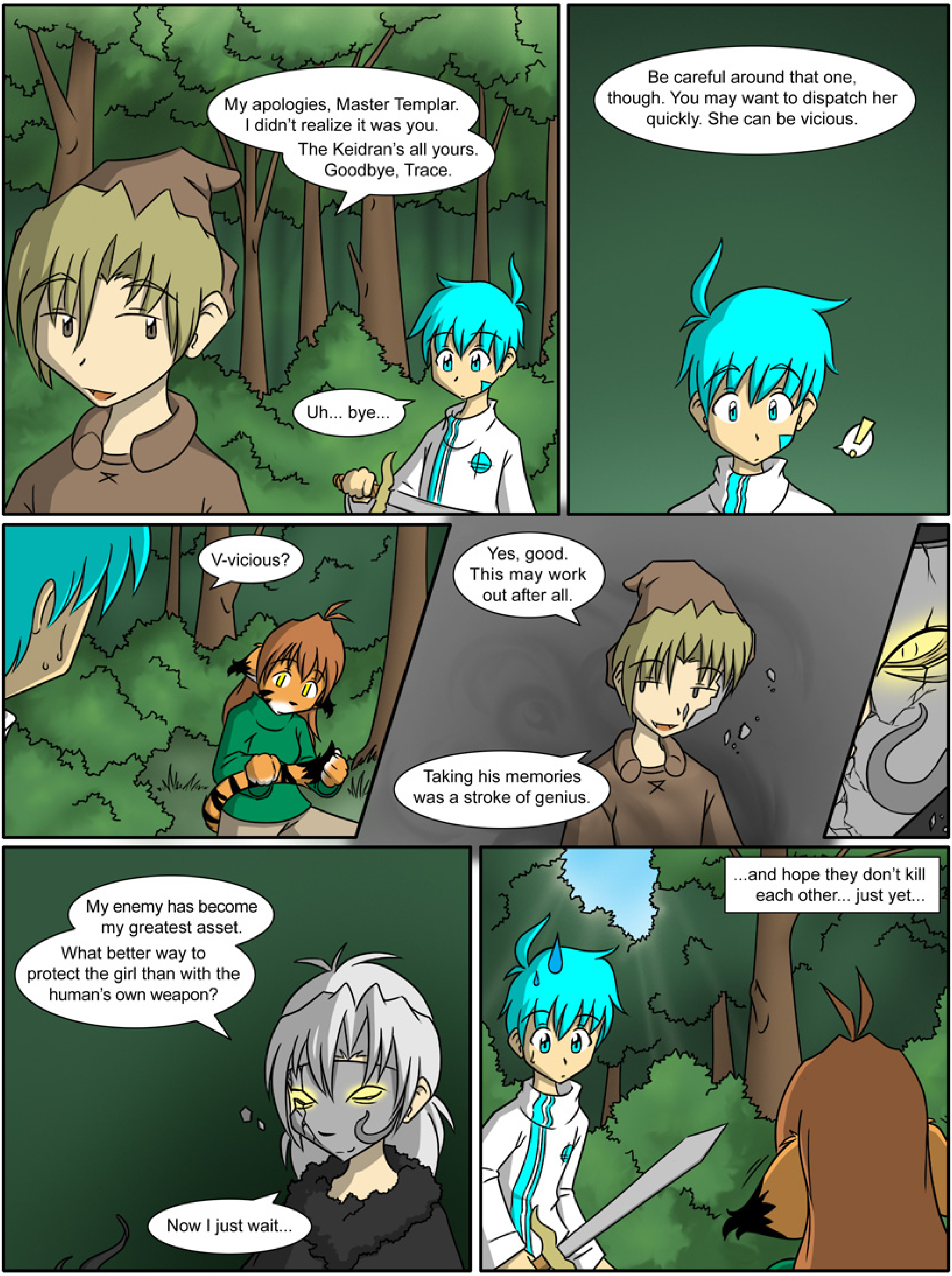

Hm?
Where... am I?
I feel like I should know this place...
...but why?
Wait a minute...
Who am I?!

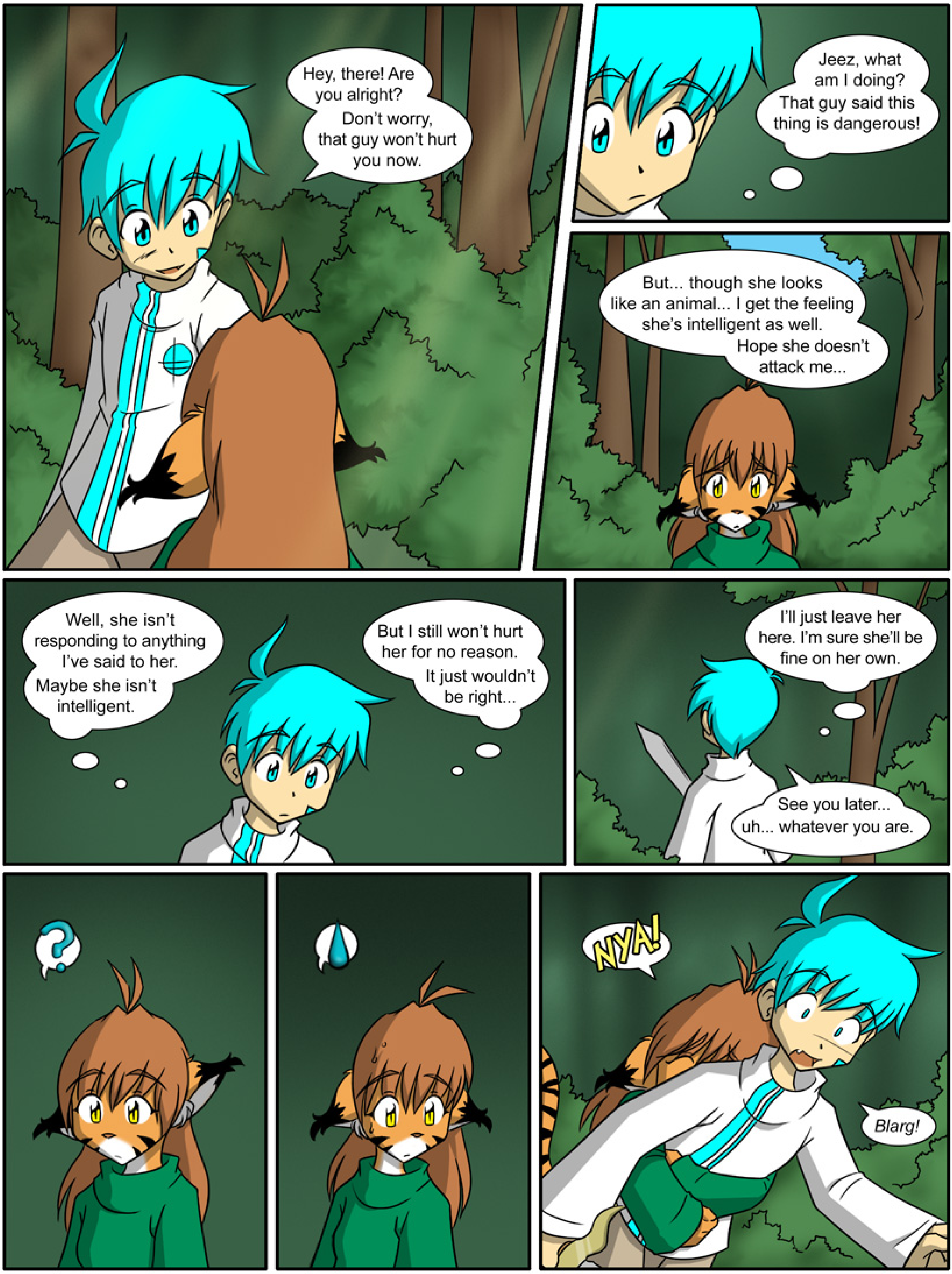

HELP!
Eh?!
What was that? Sounds like someone's in trouble.
A girl?
Well, I won't know anything sitting here.
I have a feeling I'll need this, though.
In the forest...
Hey, little Keidran.
Looks like you're in a lot of trouble.
These are human lands...
And your head's worth quite a lot here. You'd be amazed what they'd pay for a hide like yours.
WHIMPER


Hey, leave her alone!
!
Great, now what do I do? I don't even know if I can use this sword!
And what is this girl, anyways?
Hey, what the hell do you think you're doing?
I saw it first, and... wait... you're...
Y-you're the Grand Templar!
Uh... I am?


My apologies, Master Templar. I didn't realize it was you.
The Keidran's all yours. Goodbye, Trace.
Uh... bye...
Be careful around that one, though. You may want to dispatch her quickly. She can be vicious.
!
V-vicious?
Yes, good. This may work out after all.
Taking his memories was a stroke of genius.
My enemy has become my greatest asset.
What better way to protect the girl than with the human's own weapon?
Now I just wait...
...and hope they don't kill each other... just yet...

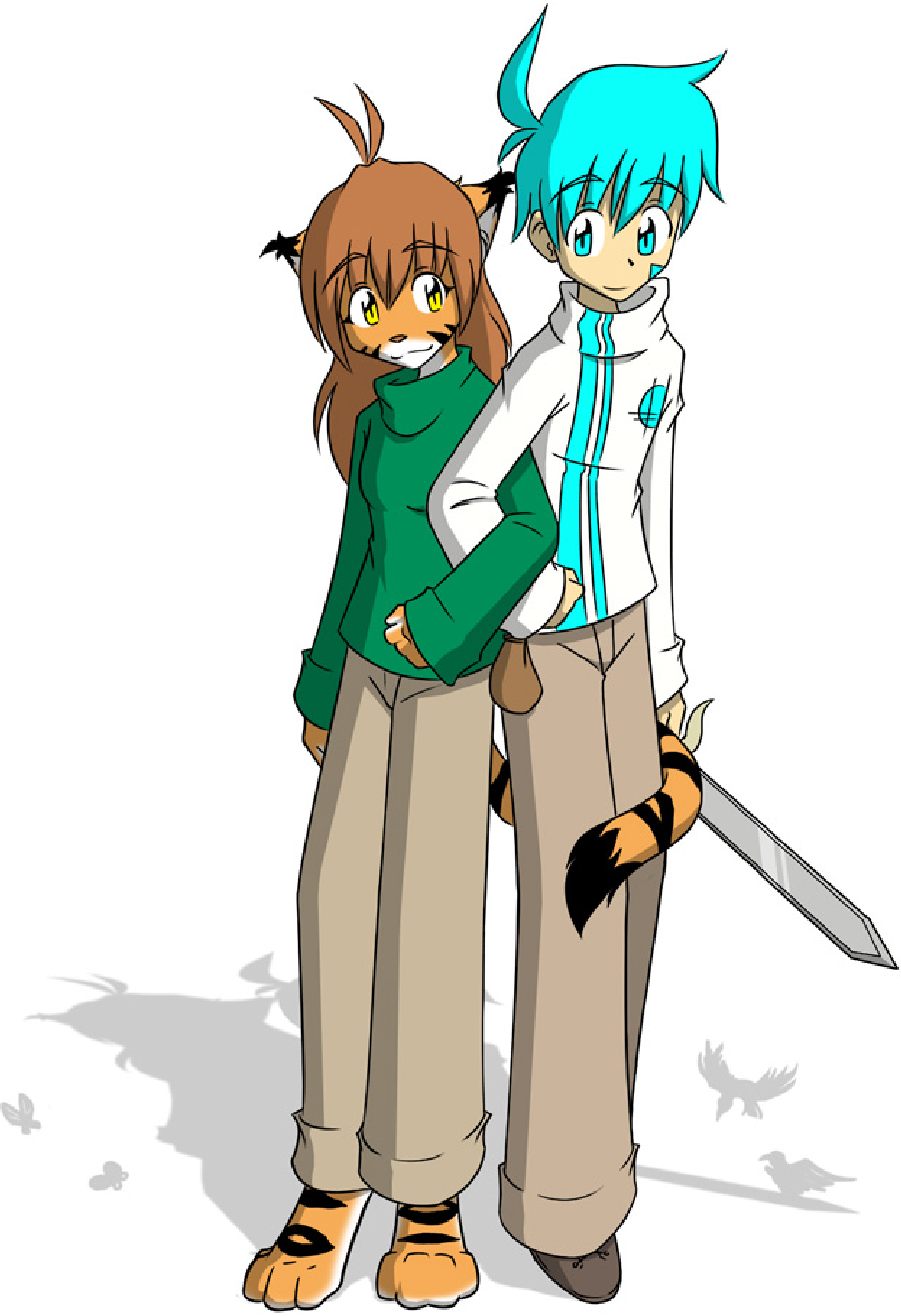
Twokinds

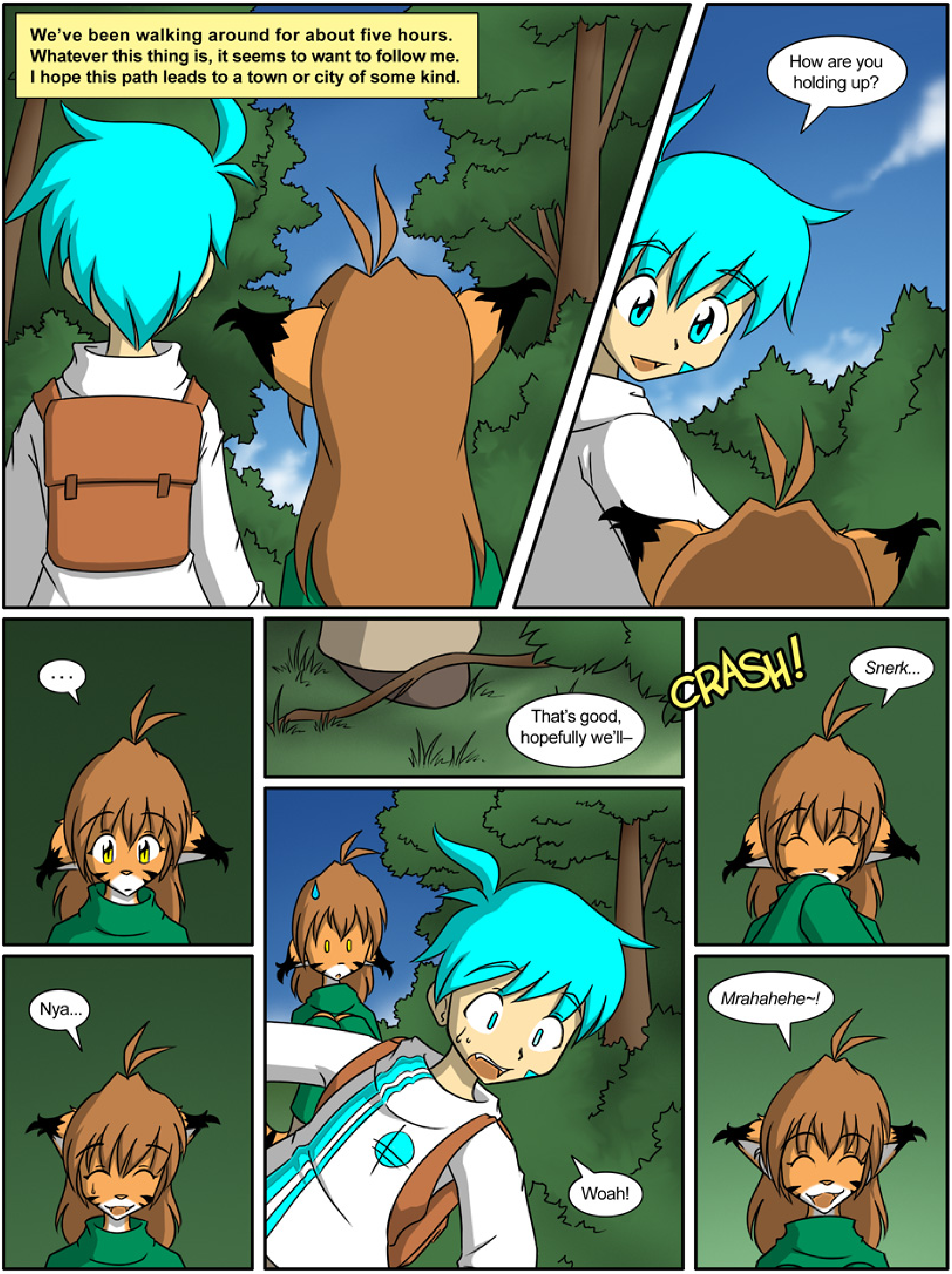
Happy Halloween

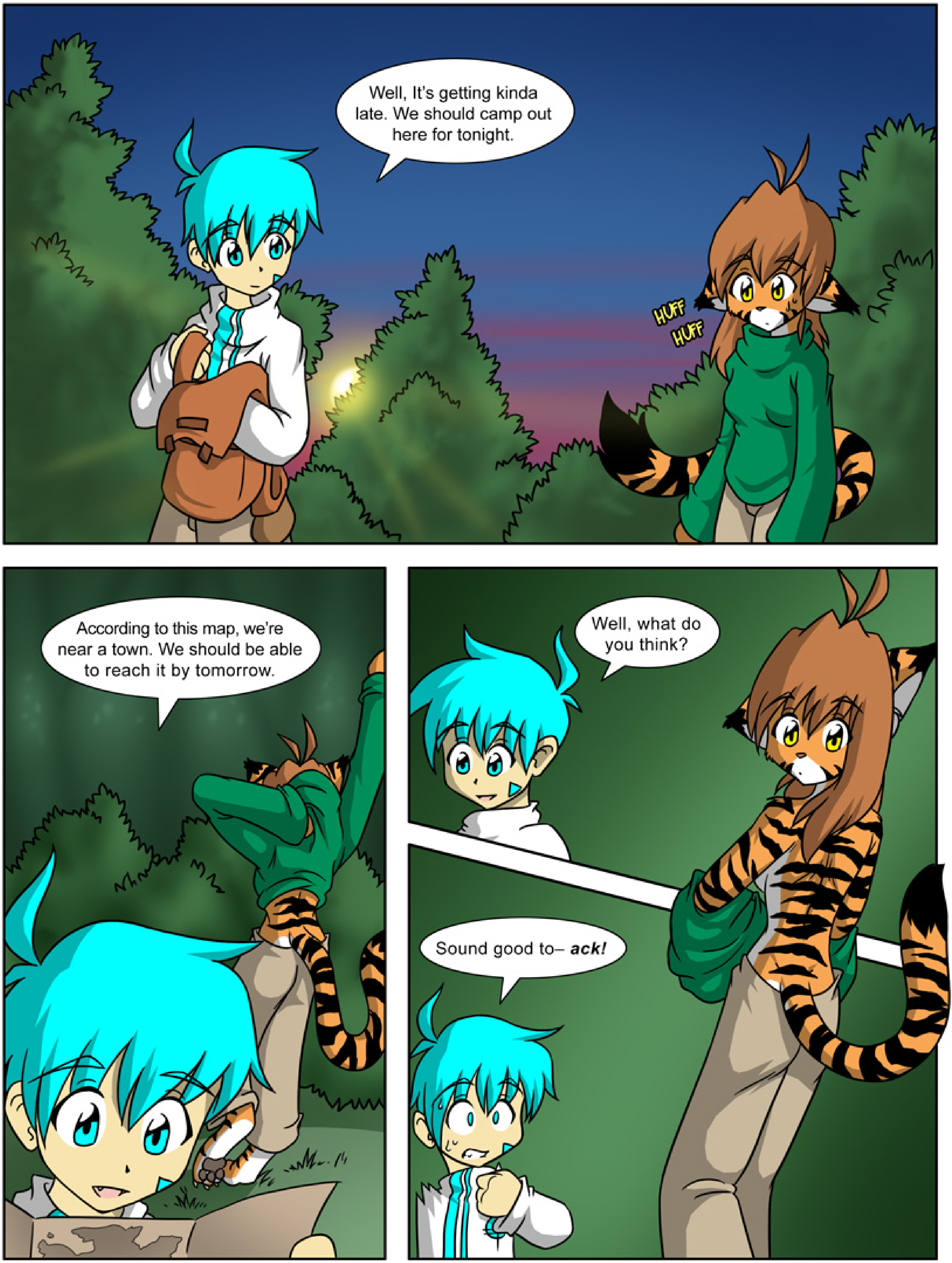

Hey, there! Are you alright?
Don't worry, that guy won't hurt you now.
Jeez, what am I doing? That guy said this thing is dangerous!
But... though she looks like an animal... I get the feeling she's intelligent as well.
Hope she doesn't attack me...
Well, she isn't responding to anything I've said to her.
Maybe she isn't intelligent.
But I still won't hurt her for no reason.
It just wouldn't be right...
I'll just leave her here. I'm sure she'll be fine on her own.
See you later... uh... whatever you are.
?
NYA!
Blarg!

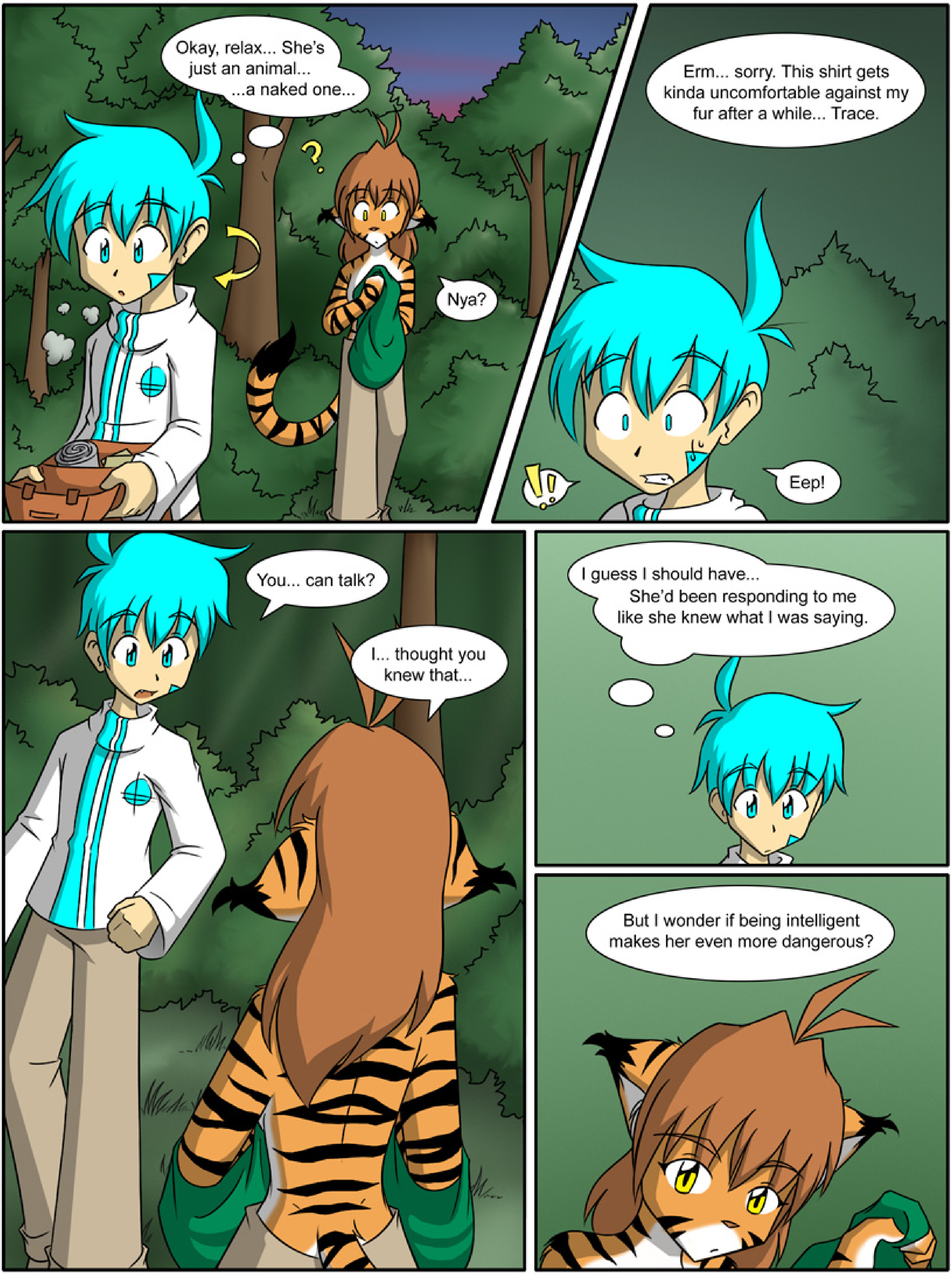
TwoKindS

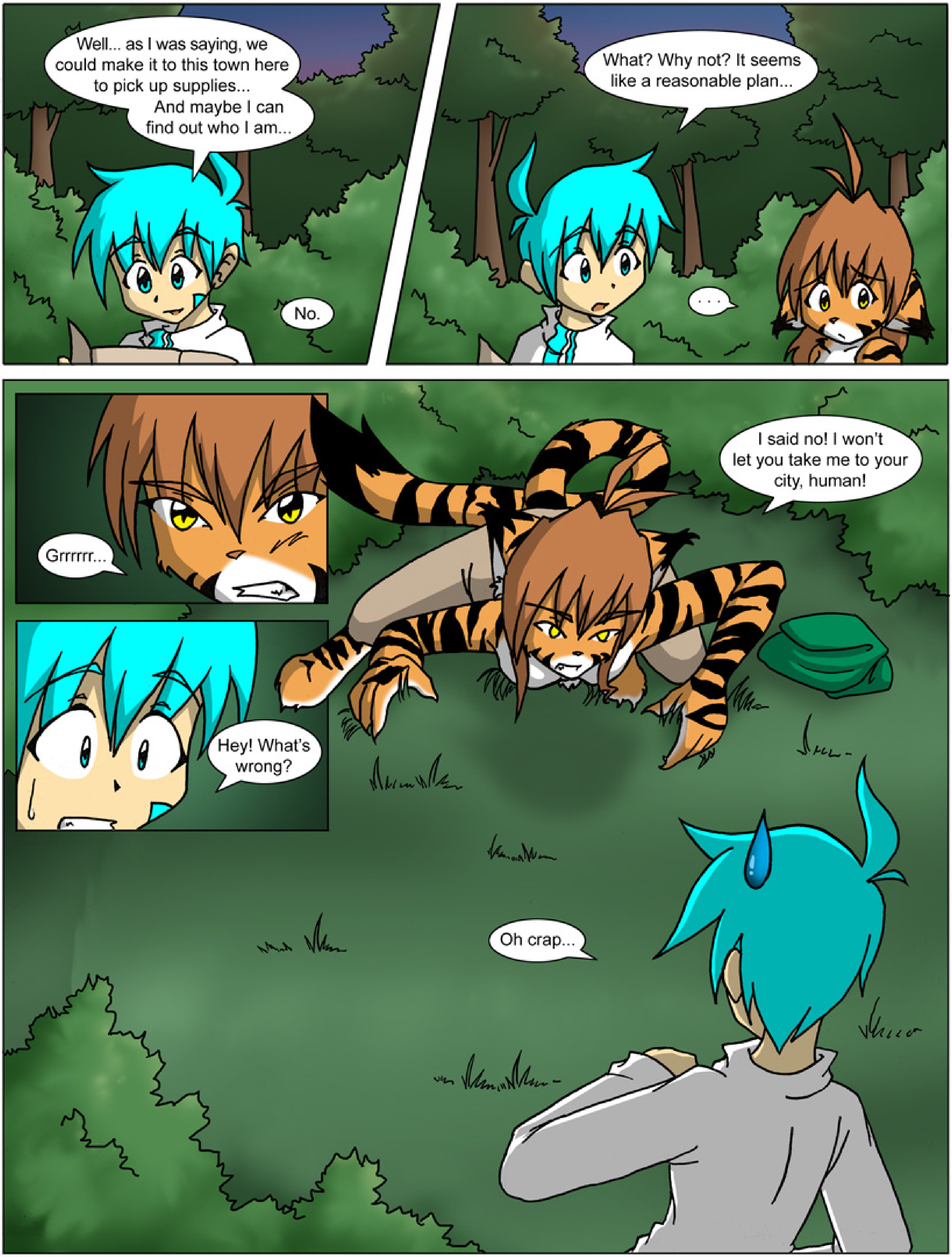
Chapter One

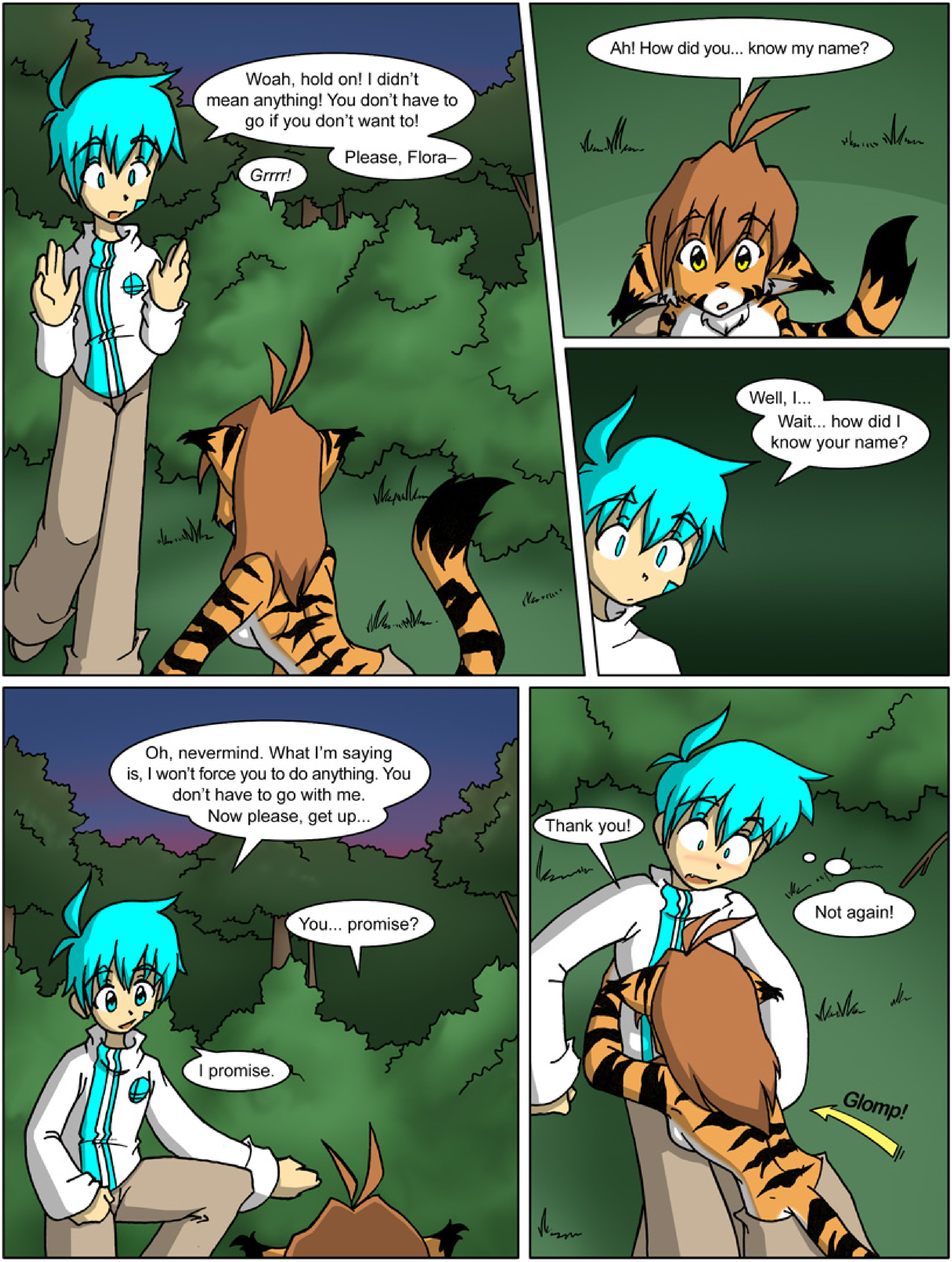


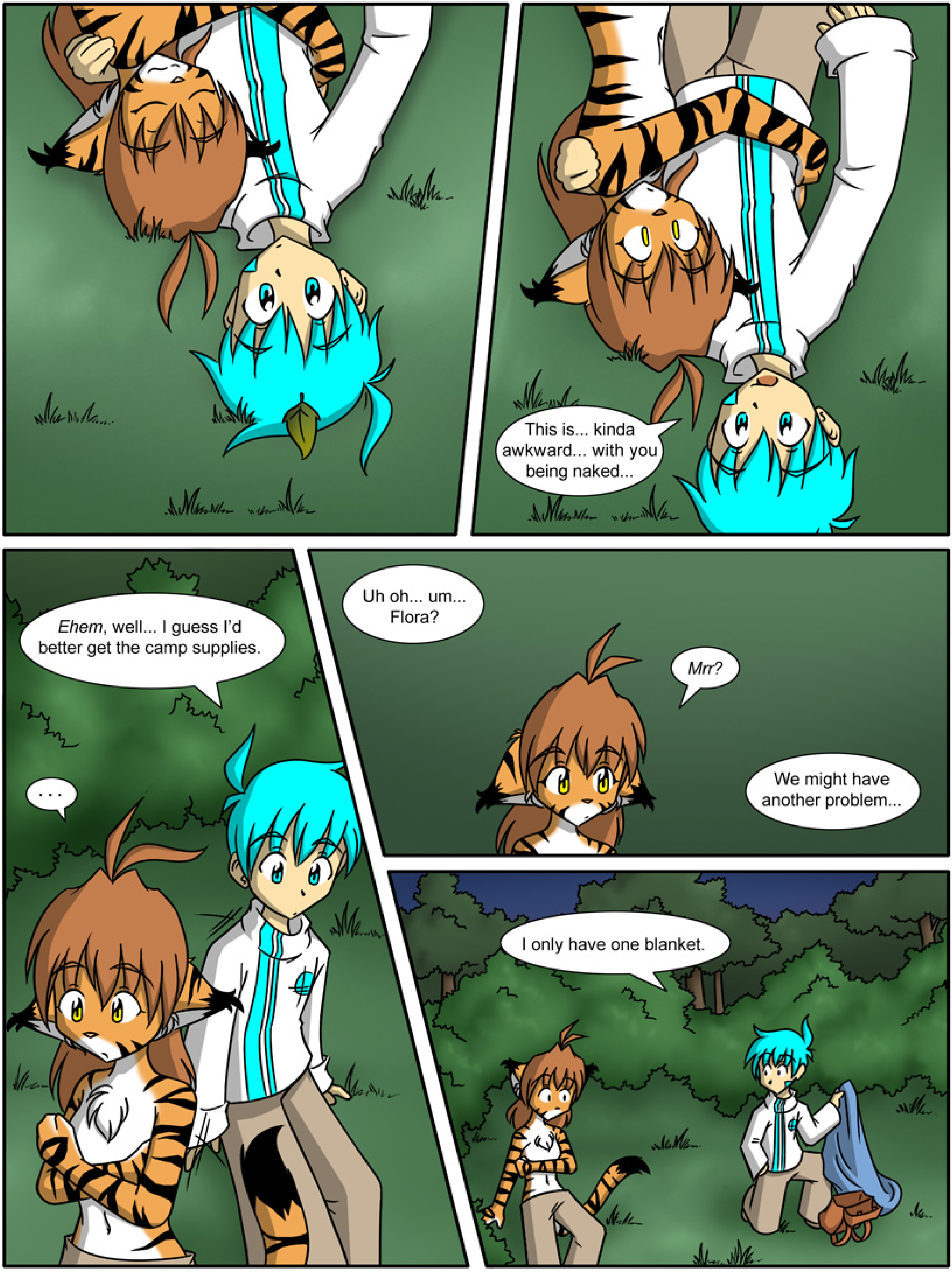

We've been walking around for about five hours. Whatever this thing is, it seems to want to follow me. I hope this path leads to a town or city of some kind.
How are you holding up?
...
That's good, hopefully we'll–
CRASH!
Woah!
Snerk...
Nya...
Mrahahehe~!

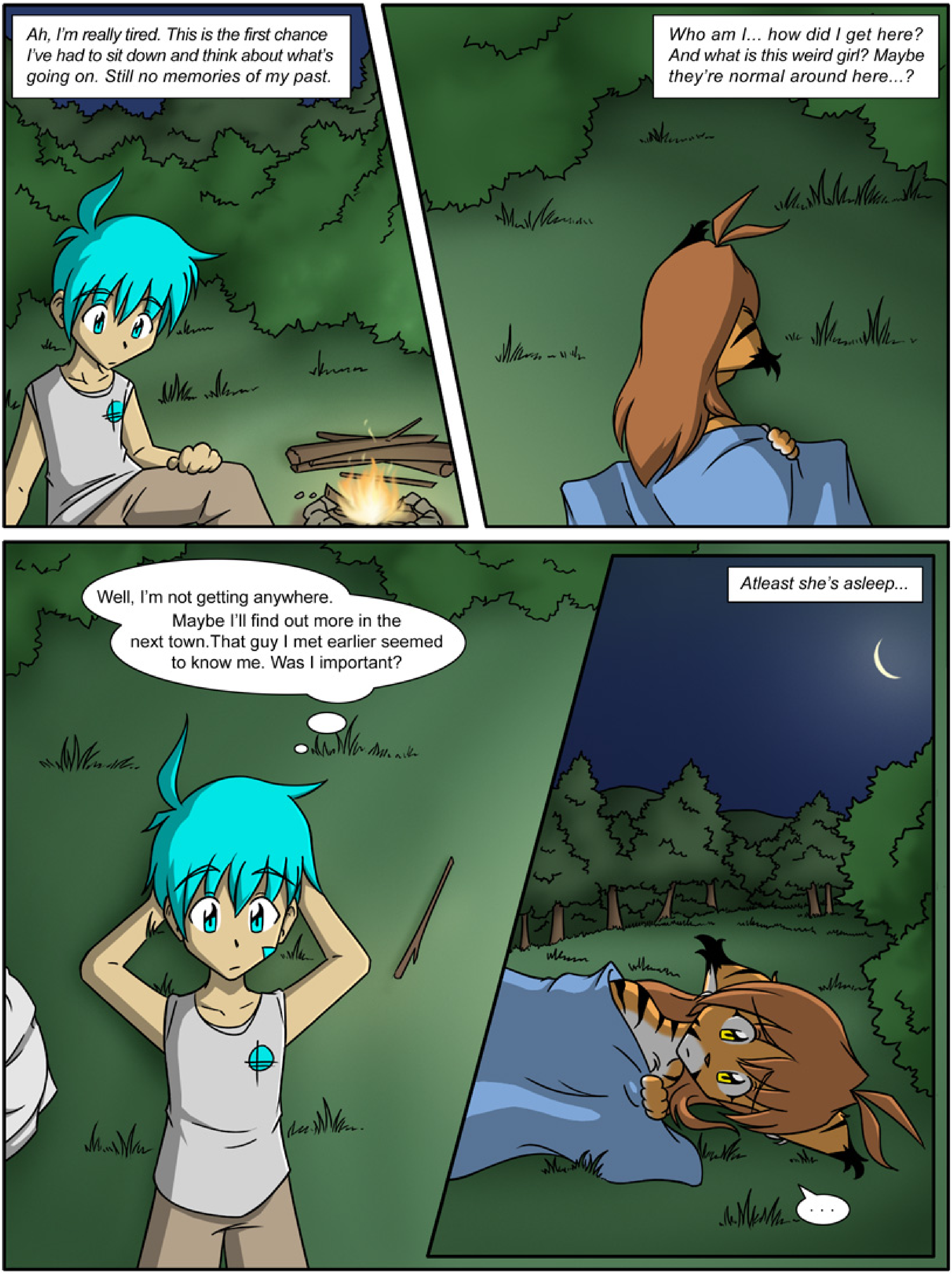

Well, It's getting kinda late. We should camp out here for tonight.
HUFF
HUFF
According to this map, we're near a town. We should be able to reach it by tomorrow.
Well, what do you think?
Sound good to– ***ack!***

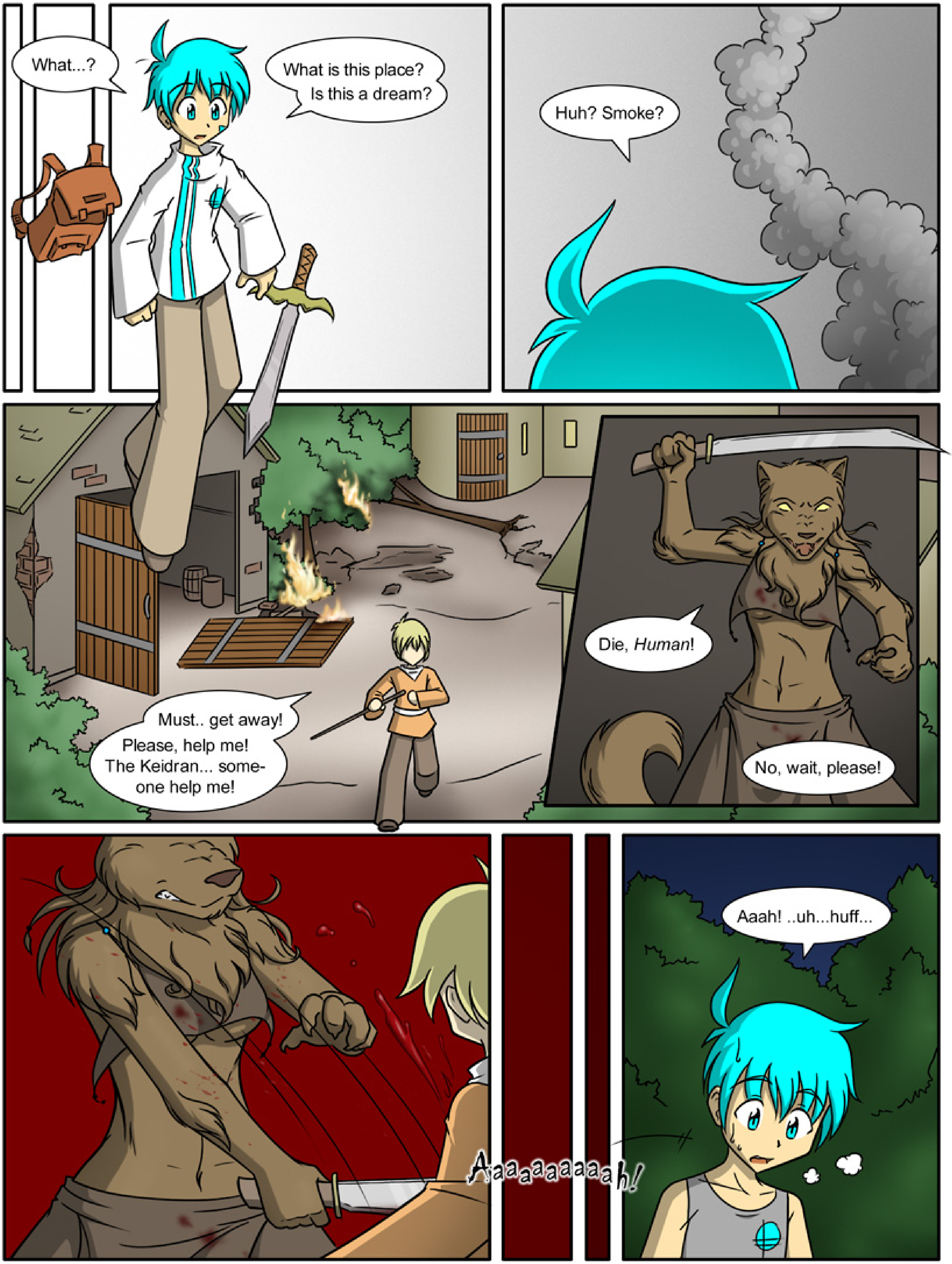

Okay, relax... She's just an animal... ...a naked one...
?
Nya?
Erm... sorry. This shirt gets kinda uncomfortable against my fur after a while... Trace.
!!
Eep!
You... can talk?
I... thought you knew that...
I guess I should have... She'd been responding to me like she knew what I was saying.
But I wonder if being intelligent makes her even more dangerous?

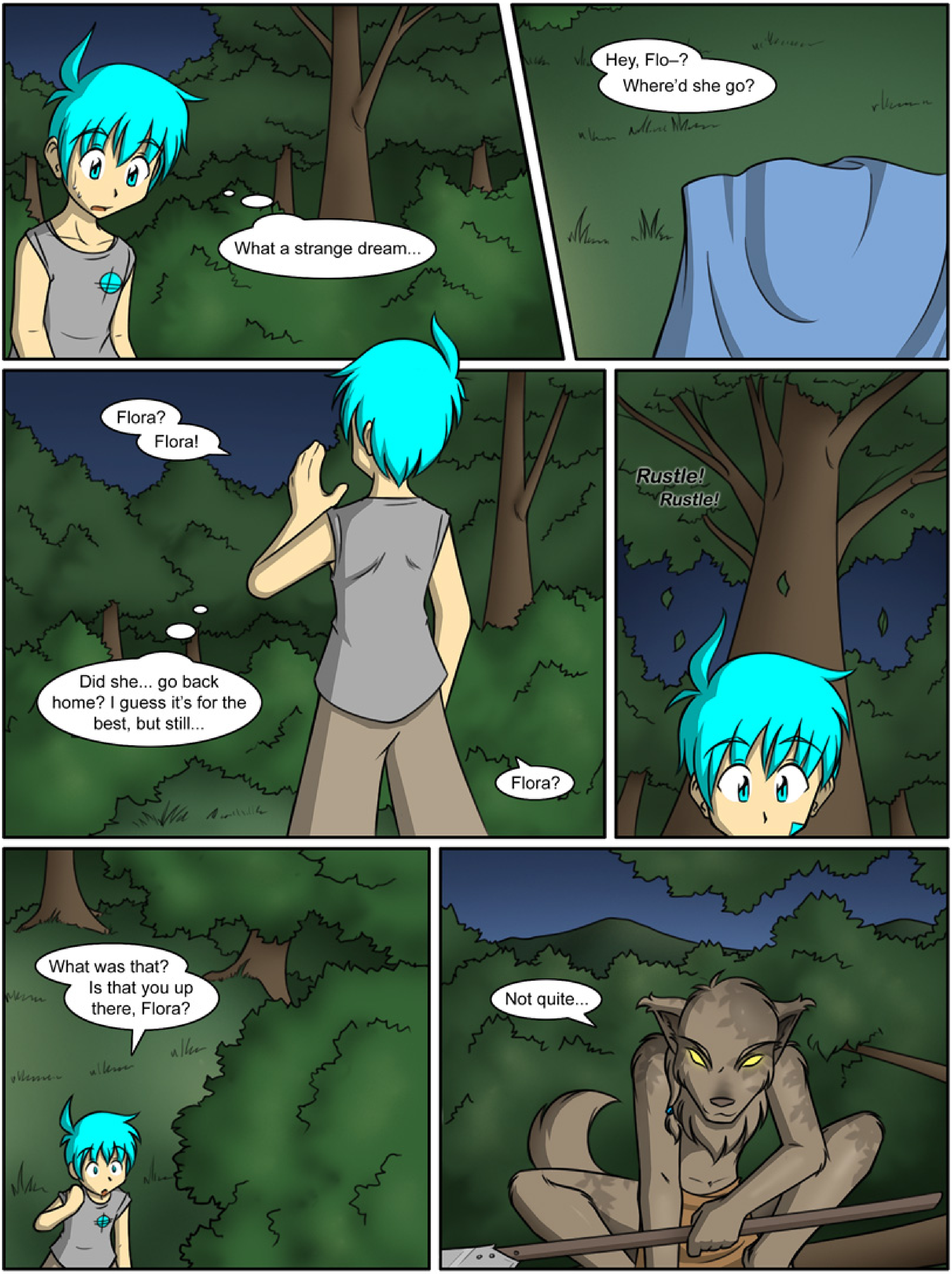

Well... as I was saying, we could make it to this town here to pick up supplies...
And maybe I can find out who I am...
No.
What? Why not? It seems like a reasonable plan...
. . .
Grrrrrr...
Hey! What's wrong?
I said no! I won't let you take me to your city, human!
Oh crap...

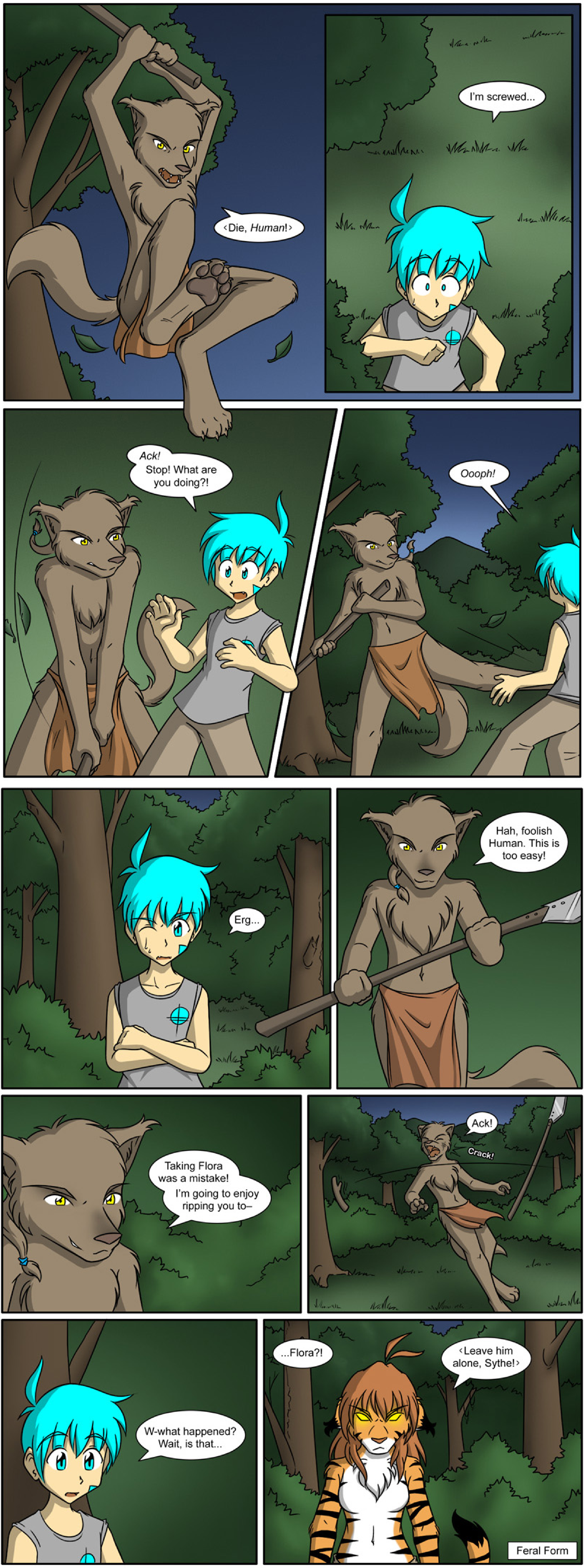

Woah, hold on! I didn't mean anything! You don't have to go if you don't want to!
Please, Flora–
Grrrr!
Ah! How did you... know my name?
Well, I...
Wait... how did I know your name?
Oh, nevermind. What I'm saying is, I won't force you to do anything. You don't have to go with me.
Now please, get up...
You... promise?
I promise.
Thank you!
Not again!
Glomp!

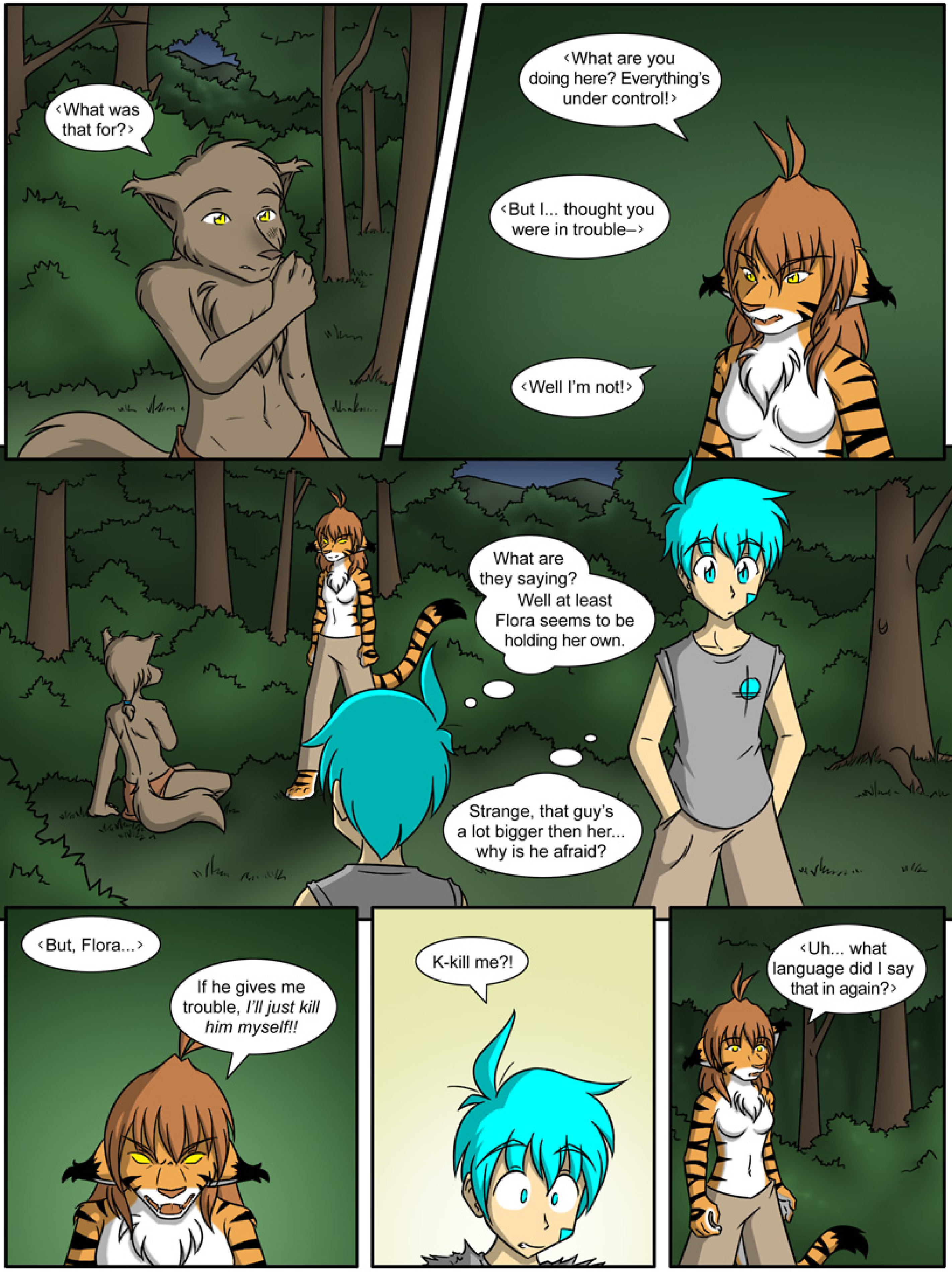

This is... kinda awkward... with you being naked...
Ehem, well... I guess I'd better get the camp supplies.
. . .
Uh oh... um... Flora?
Mrr?
We might have another problem...
I only have one blanket.

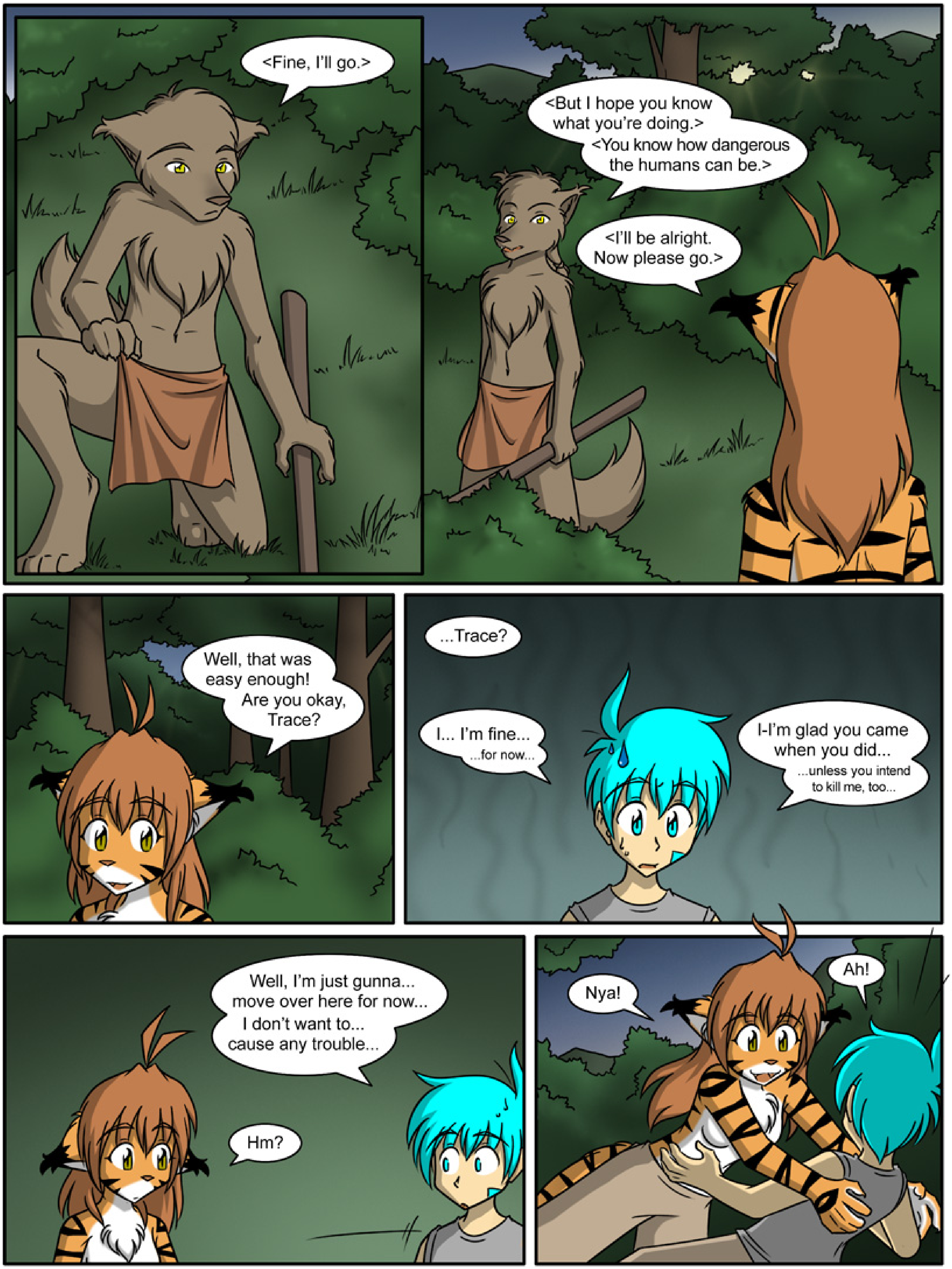

Ah, I'm really tired. This is the first chance I've had to sit down and think about what's going on. Still no memories of my past.
Who am I... how did I get here? And what is this weird girl? Maybe they're normal around here...?
Well, I'm not getting anywhere. Maybe I'll find out more in the next town.That guy I met earlier seemed to know me. Was I important?
Atleast she's asleep...
. . .

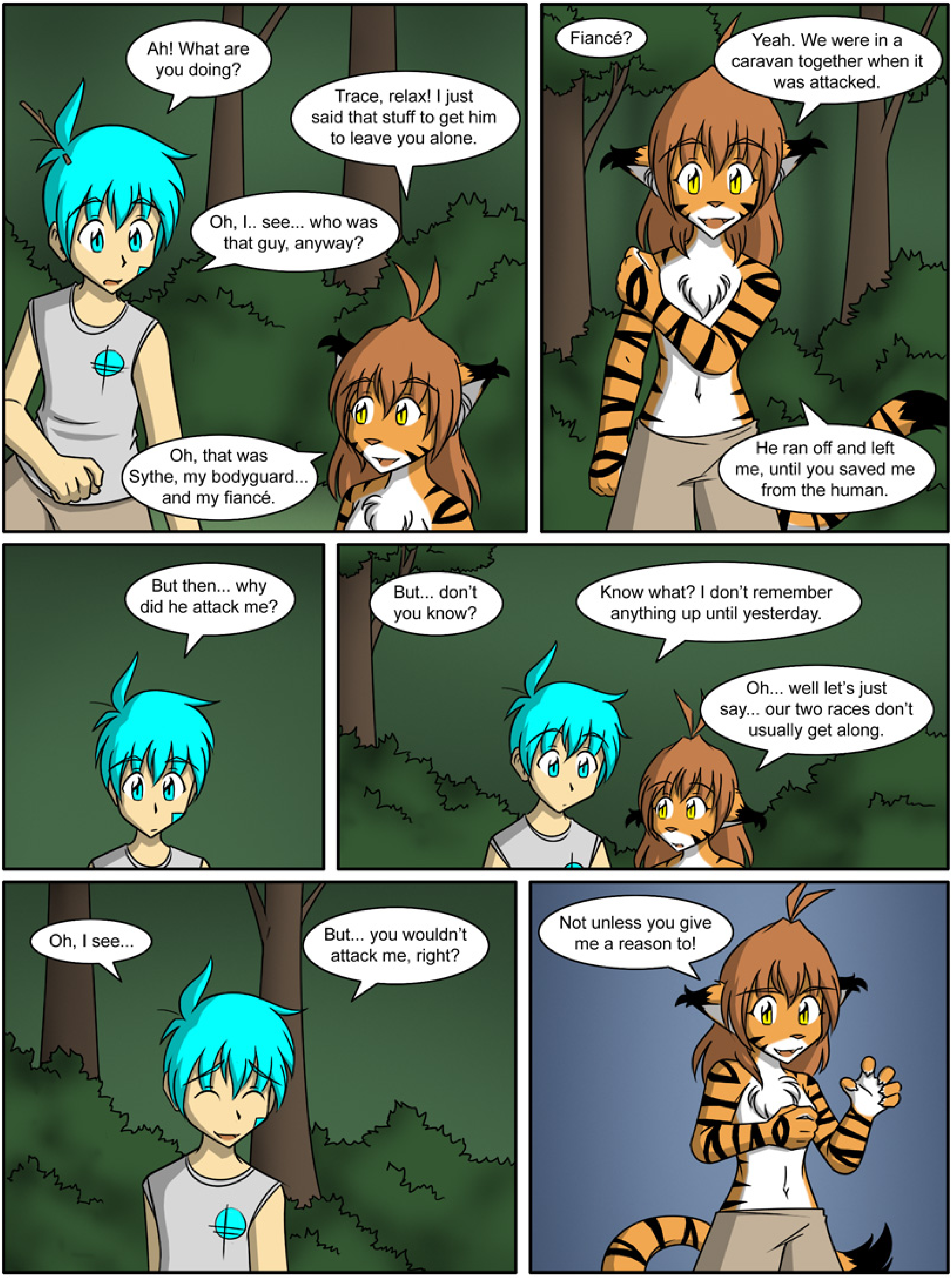

What...?
What is this place? Is this a dream?
Huh? Smoke?
Must.. get away! Please, help me! The Keidran... someone help me!
Die, *Human*!
No, wait, please!
Aaaaaaaaaaah!
Aaah! ..uh...huff...

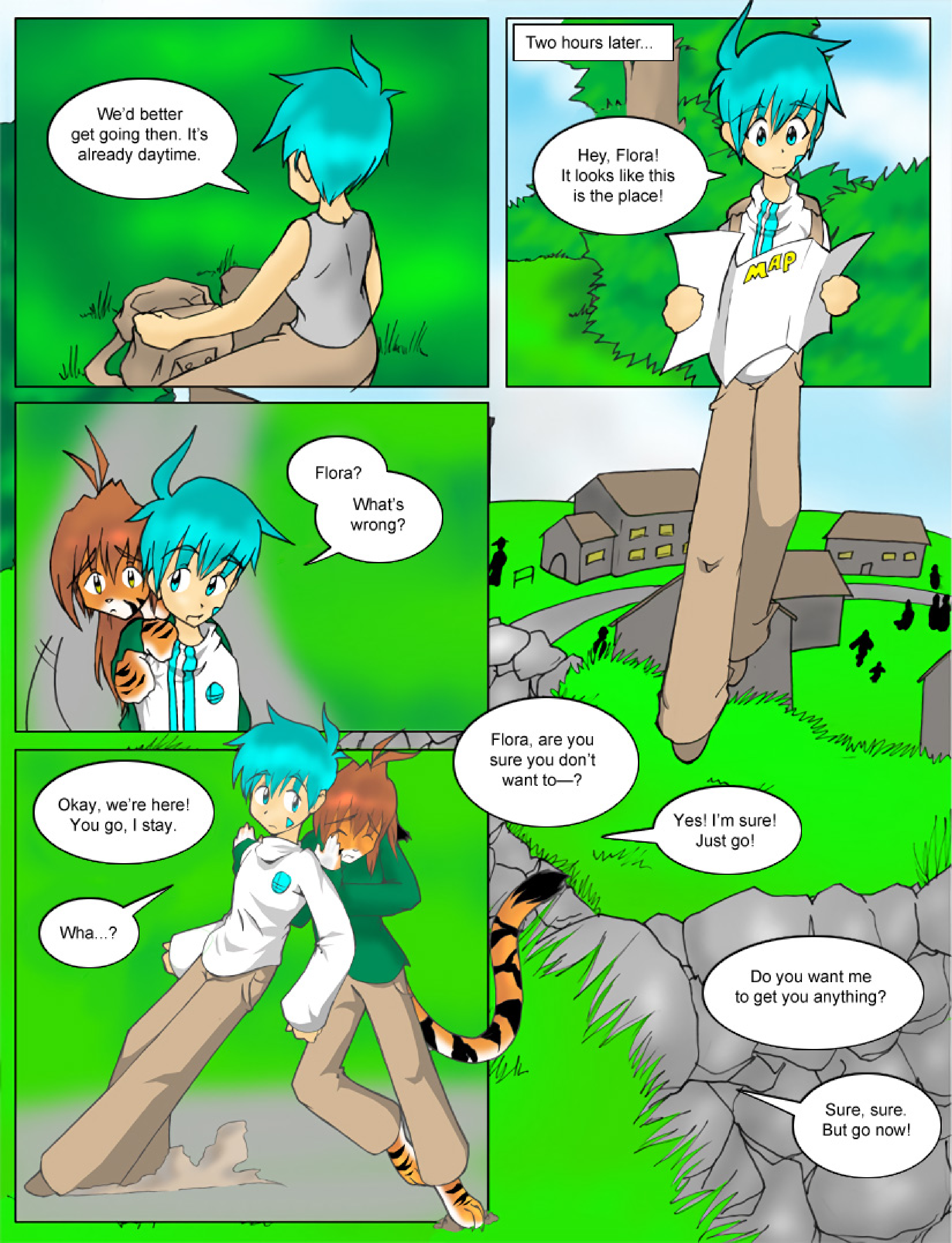

What a strange dream...
Hey, Flo–?
Where'd she go?
Flora?
Flora!
Did she... go back home? I guess it's for the best, but still...
Flora?
Rustle!
Rustle!
What was that?
Is that you up there, Flora?
Not quite...


‹Die, Human!›
I'm screwed...
Ack! Stop! What are you doing?!
Oooph!
Erg...
Hah, foolish Human. This is too easy!
Taking Flora was a mistake!
I'm going to enjoy ripping you to–
Ack!
Crack!
W-what happened? Wait, is that...
...Flora?!
‹Leave him alone, Sythe!›
Feral Form


‹What was that for?›
‹What are you doing here? Everything's under control!›
‹But I... thought you were in trouble–›
‹Well I'm not!›
What are they saying?
Well at least Flora seems to be holding her own.
Strange, that guy's a lot bigger then her... why is he afraid?
‹But, Flora...›
If he gives me trouble, *I'll just kill him myself!!*
K-kill me?!
‹Uh... what language did I say that in again?›

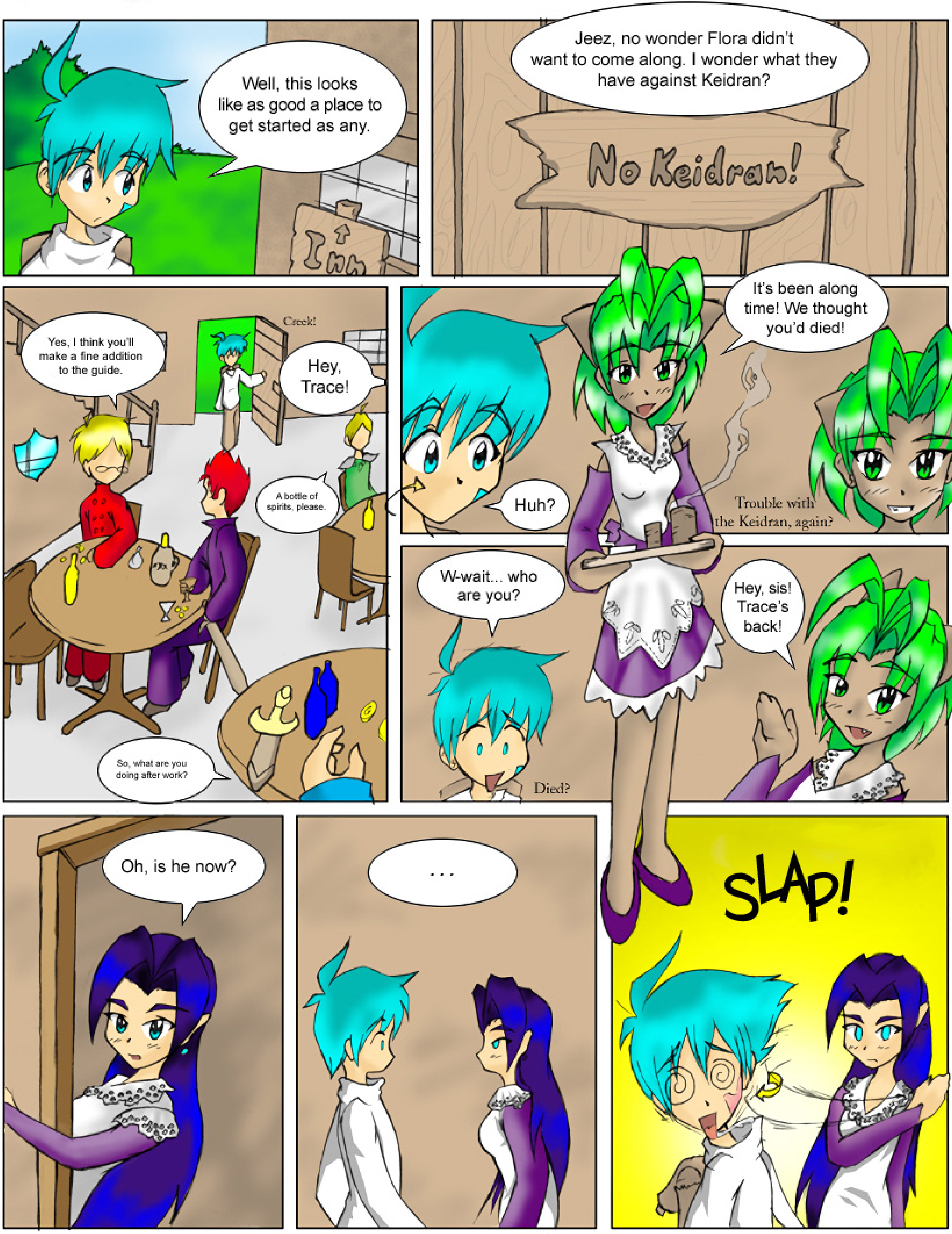

<Fine, I'll go.>
<But I hope you know what you're doing.>
<You know how dangerous the humans can be.>
<I'll be alright. Now please go.>
Well, that was easy enough!
Are you okay, Trace?
...Trace?
I... I'm fine... ...for now...
I-I'm glad you came when you did... ...unless you intend to kill me, too...
Well, I'm just gunna... move over here for now...
I don't want to... cause any trouble...
Hm?
Nya!
Ah!

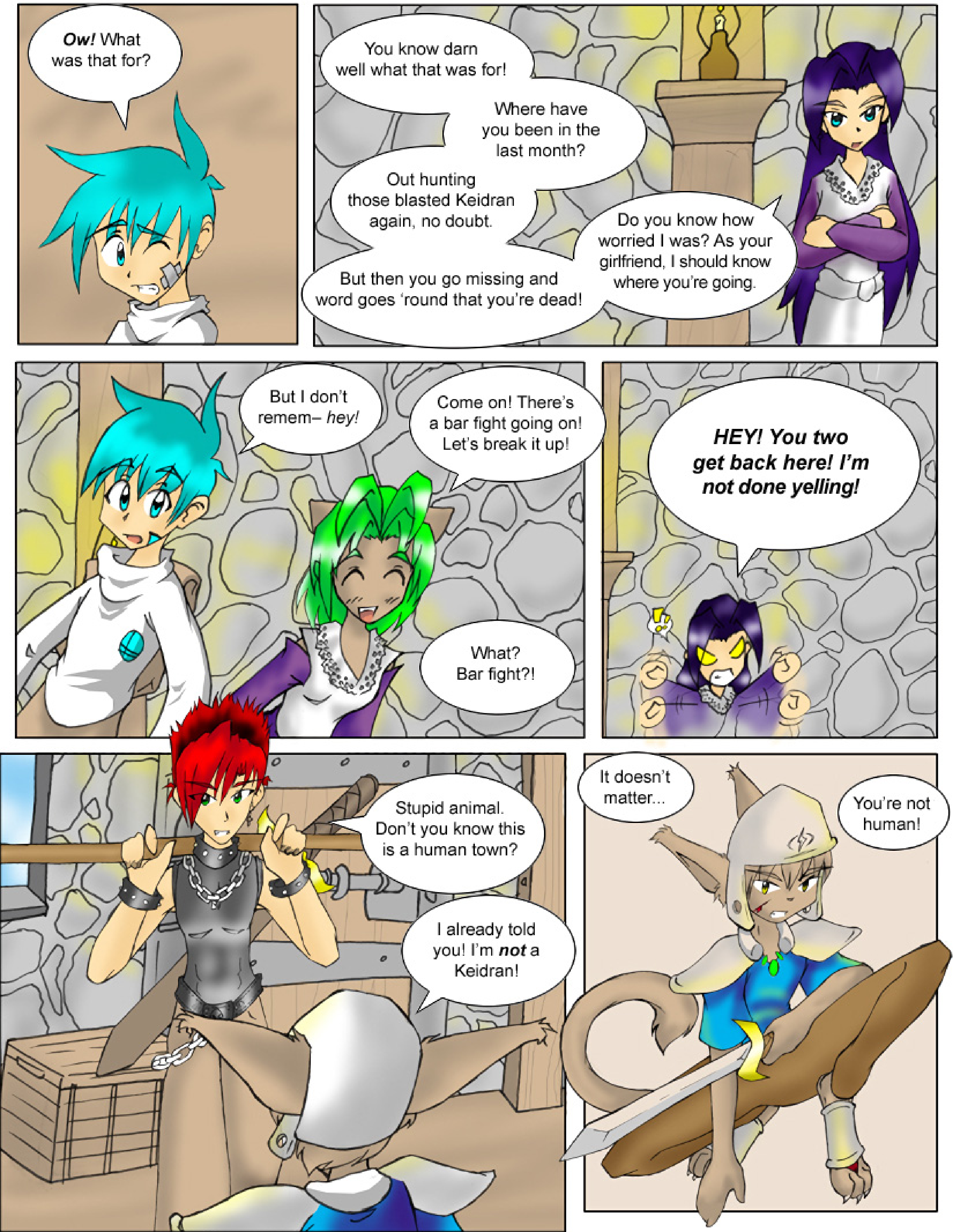

Ah! What are you doing?
Trace, relax! I just said that stuff to get him to leave you alone.
Oh, I.. see... who was that guy, anyway?
Oh, that was Sythe, my bodyguard... and my fiancé.
Fiancé?
Yeah. We were in a caravan together when it was attacked.
He ran off and left me, until you saved me from the human.
But then... why did he attack me?
But... don't you know?
Know what? I don't remember anything up until yesterday.
Oh... well let's just say... our two races don't usually get along.
Oh, I see...
But... you wouldn't attack me, right?
Not unless you give me a reason to!

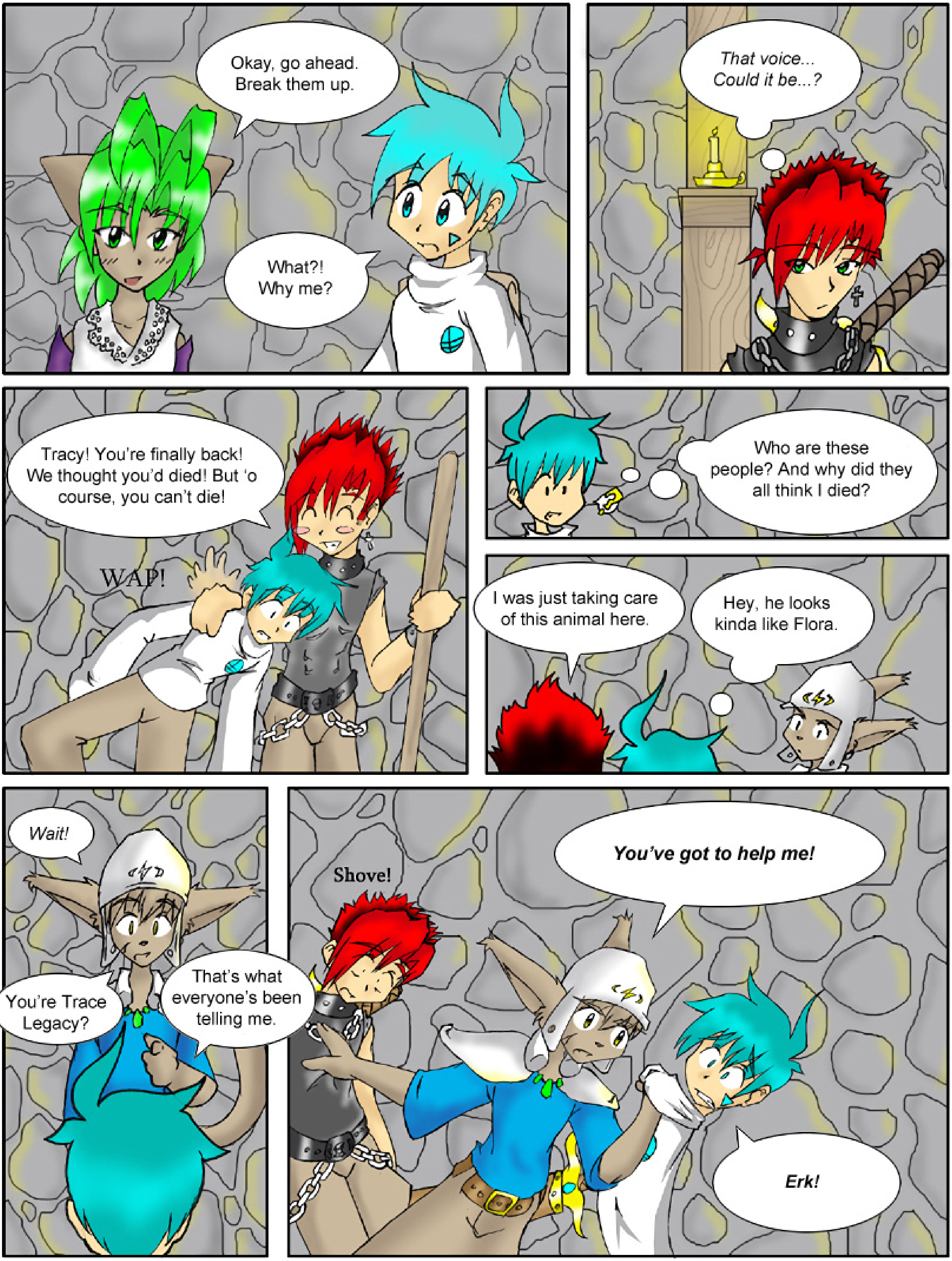

We'd better get going then. It's already daytime.
Two hours later...
Hey, Flora! It looks like this is the place!
MAP
Flora?
What's wrong?
Flora, are you sure you don't want to—?
Yes! I'm sure! Just go!
Okay, we're here! You go, I stay.
Wha...?
Do you want me to get you anything?
Sure, sure. But go now!

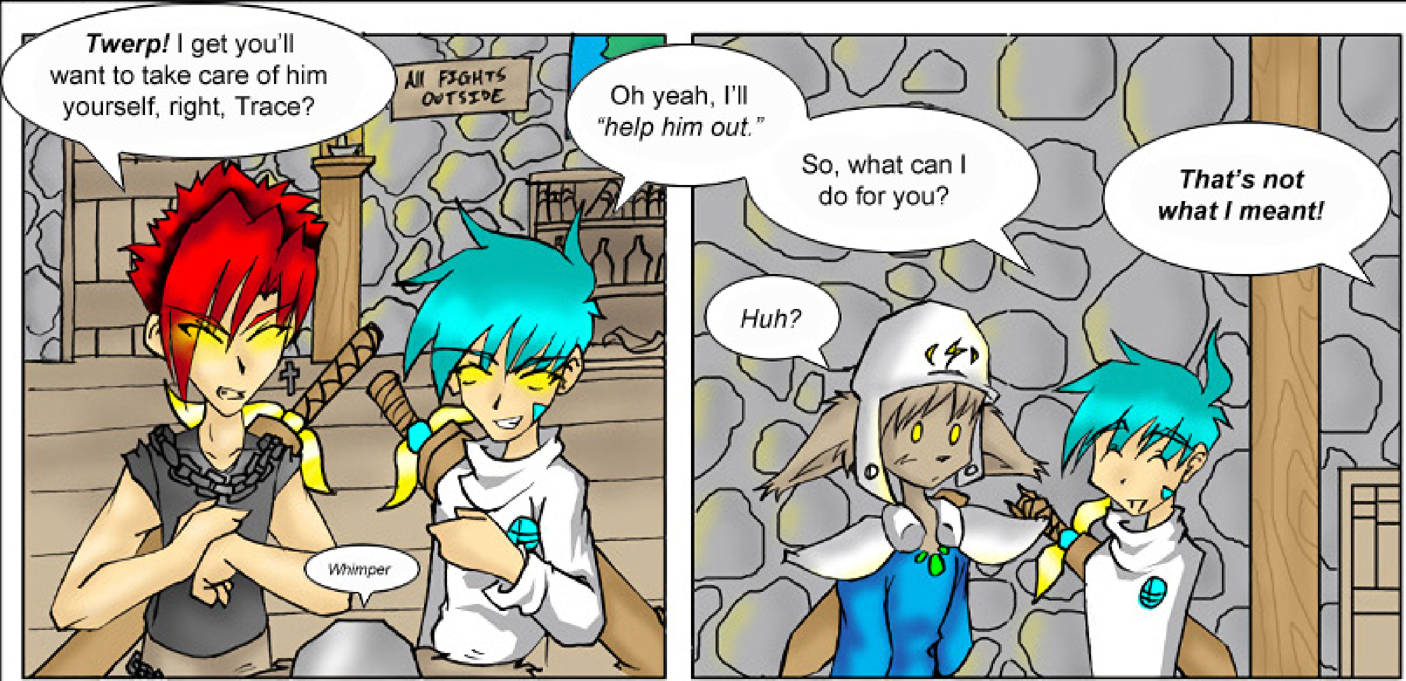
TwoKinds

Chapter Two


Well, this looks like as good a place to get started as any.
Inn
Jeez, no wonder Flora didn't want to come along. I wonder what they have against Keidran?
No Keidran!
Creek!
Yes, I think you'll make a fine addition to the guide.
Hey, Trace!
A bottle of spirits, please.
So, what are you doing after work?
It's been along time! We thought you'd died!
Huh?
Trouble with the Keidran, again?
W-wait... who are you?
Died?
Hey, sis! Trace's back!
Oh, is he now?
. . .
SLAP!


Ow! What was that for?
You know darn well what that was for!
Where have you been in the last month?
Out hunting those blasted Keidran again, no doubt.
But then you go missing and word goes 'round that you're dead!
Do you know how worried I was? As your girlfriend, I should know where you're going.
But I don't remem– *hey!*
Come on! There's a bar fight going on! Let's break it up!
What? Bar fight?!
HEY! You two get back here! I'm not done yelling!
Stupid animal. Don't you know this is a human town?
I already told you! I'm ***not*** a Keidran!
It doesn't matter...
You're not human!

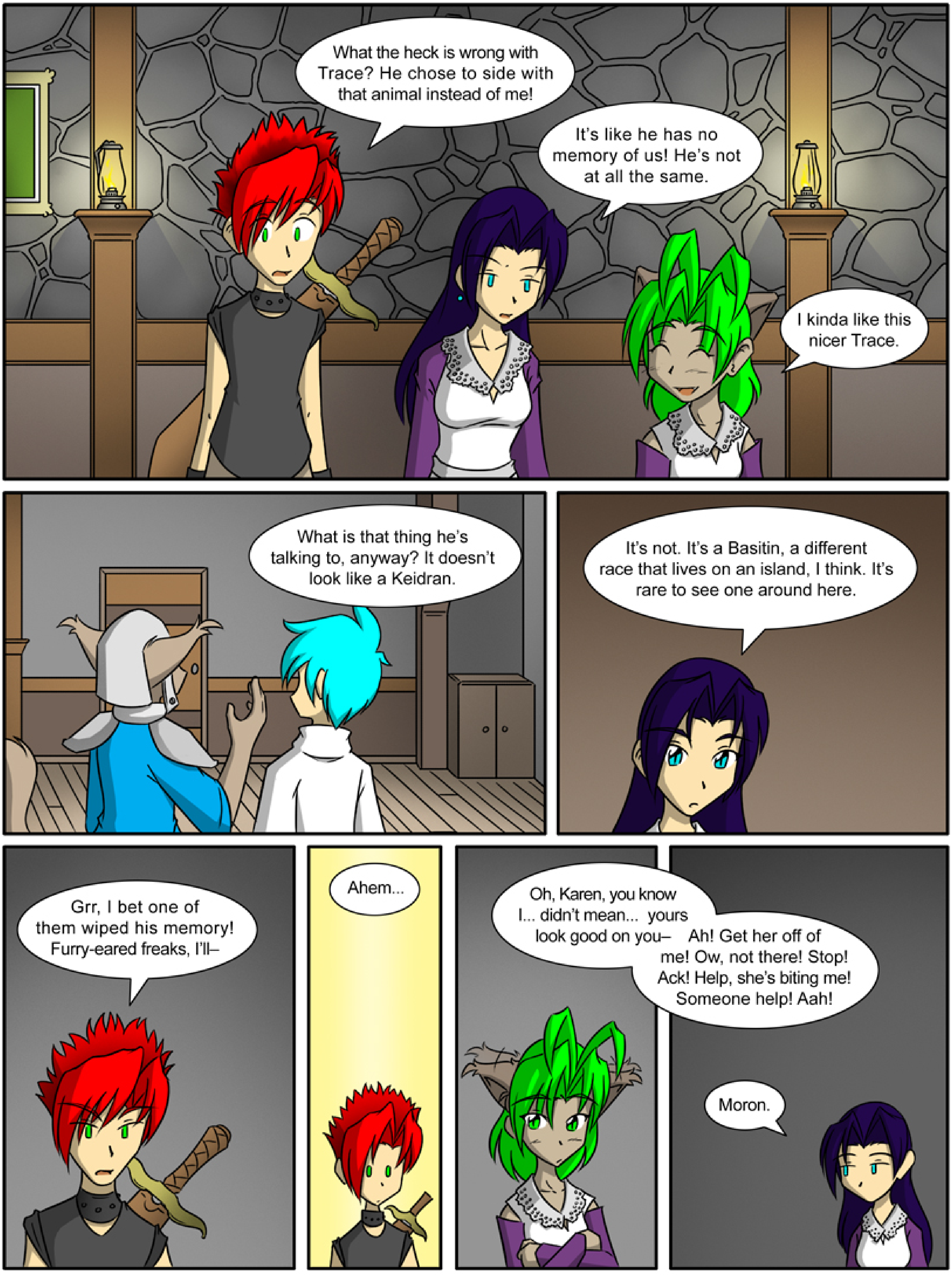

Okay, go ahead. Break them up.
What?! Why me?
That voice... Could it be...?
Tracy! You're finally back! We thought you'd died! But 'o course, you can't die!
WAP!
Who are these people? And why did they all think I died?
I was just taking care of this animal here.
Hey, he looks kinda like Flora.
Wait!
You're Trace Legacy?
That's what everyone's been telling me.
Shove!
You've got to help me!
Erk!

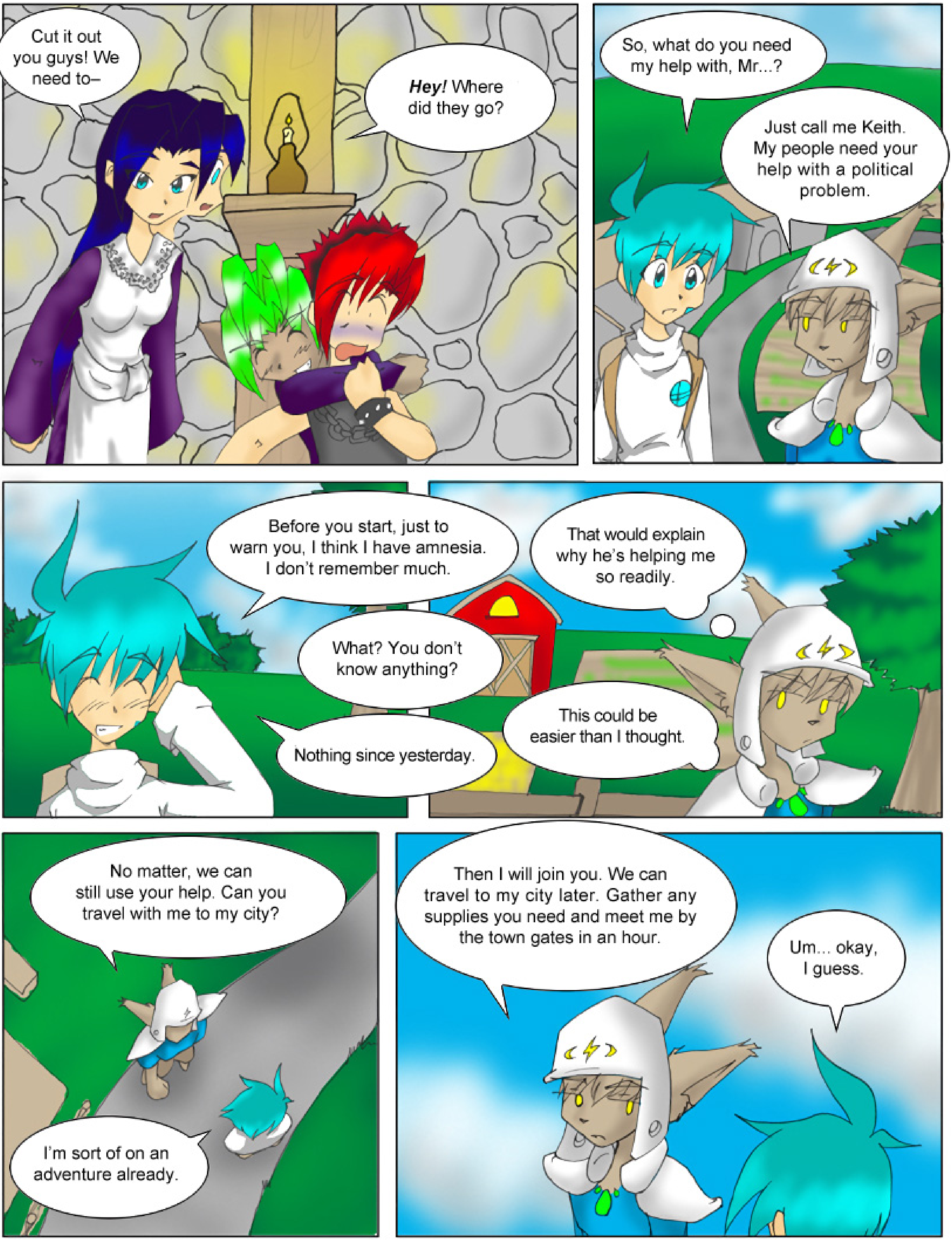

Twerp! I get you'll want to take care of him yourself, right, Trace?
All FIGHTS OUTSIDE
Oh yeah, I'll *"help him out."*
Whimper
So, what can I do for you?
Huh?
That's not what I meant!

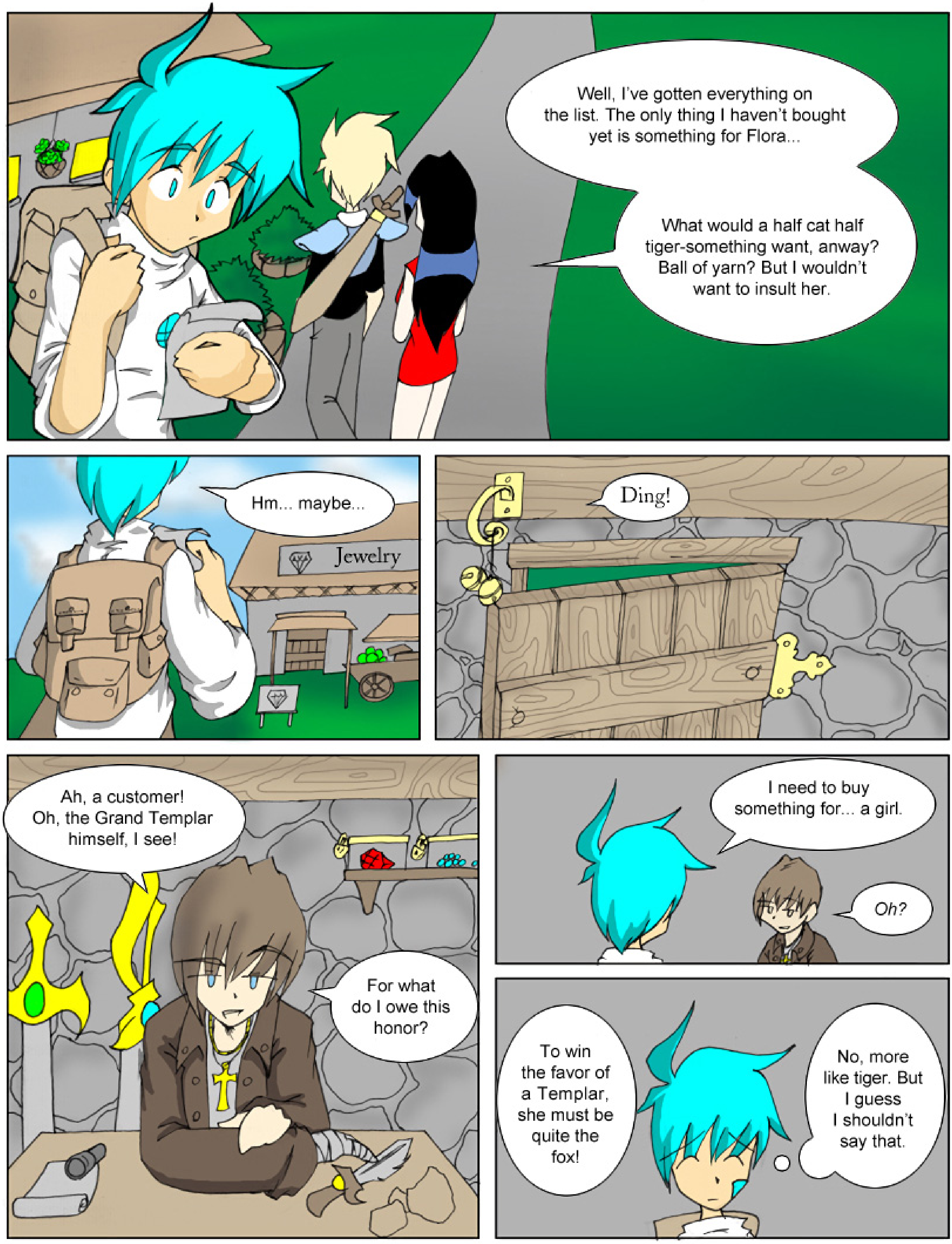
TomFischbach

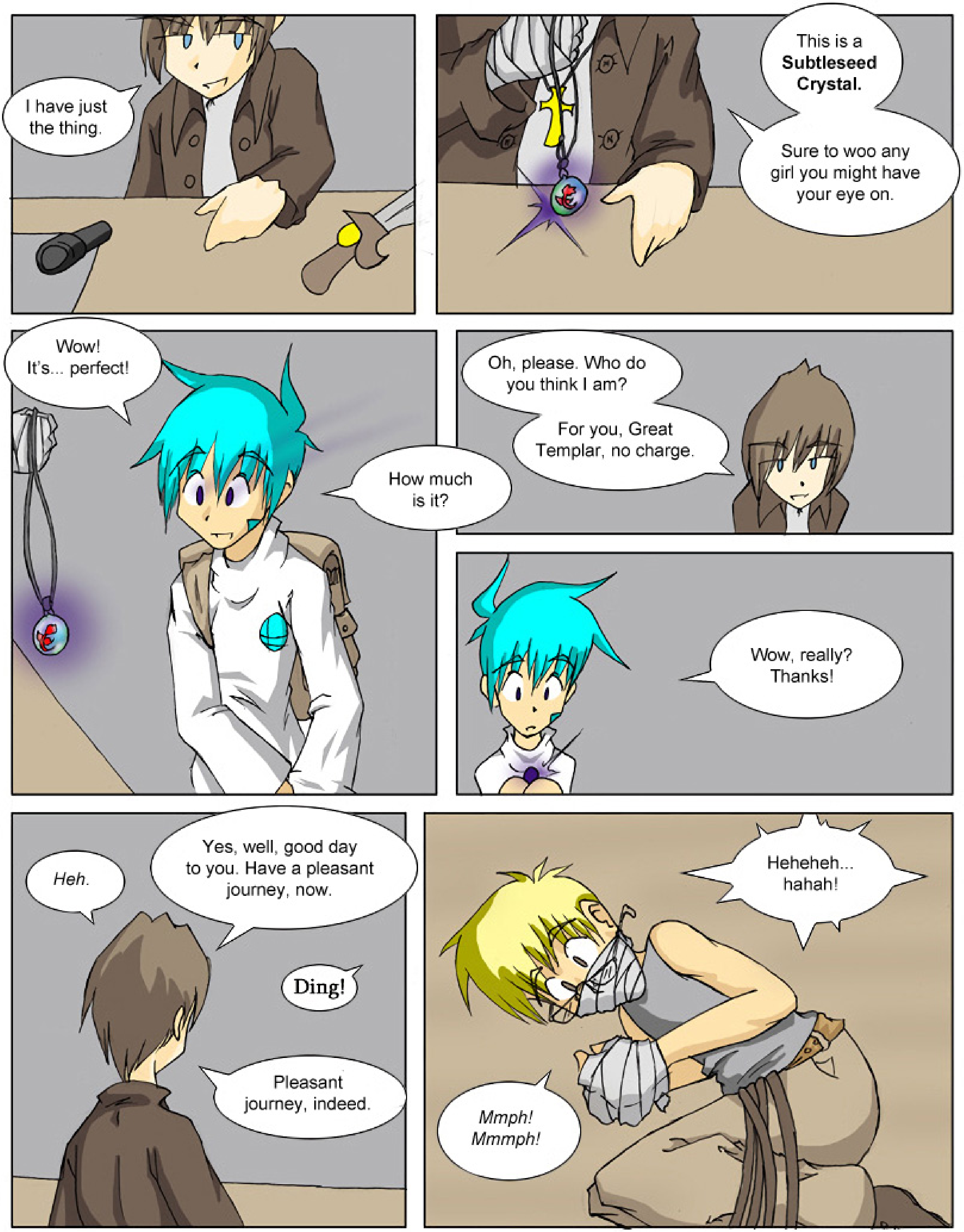
Happy
Holidays!

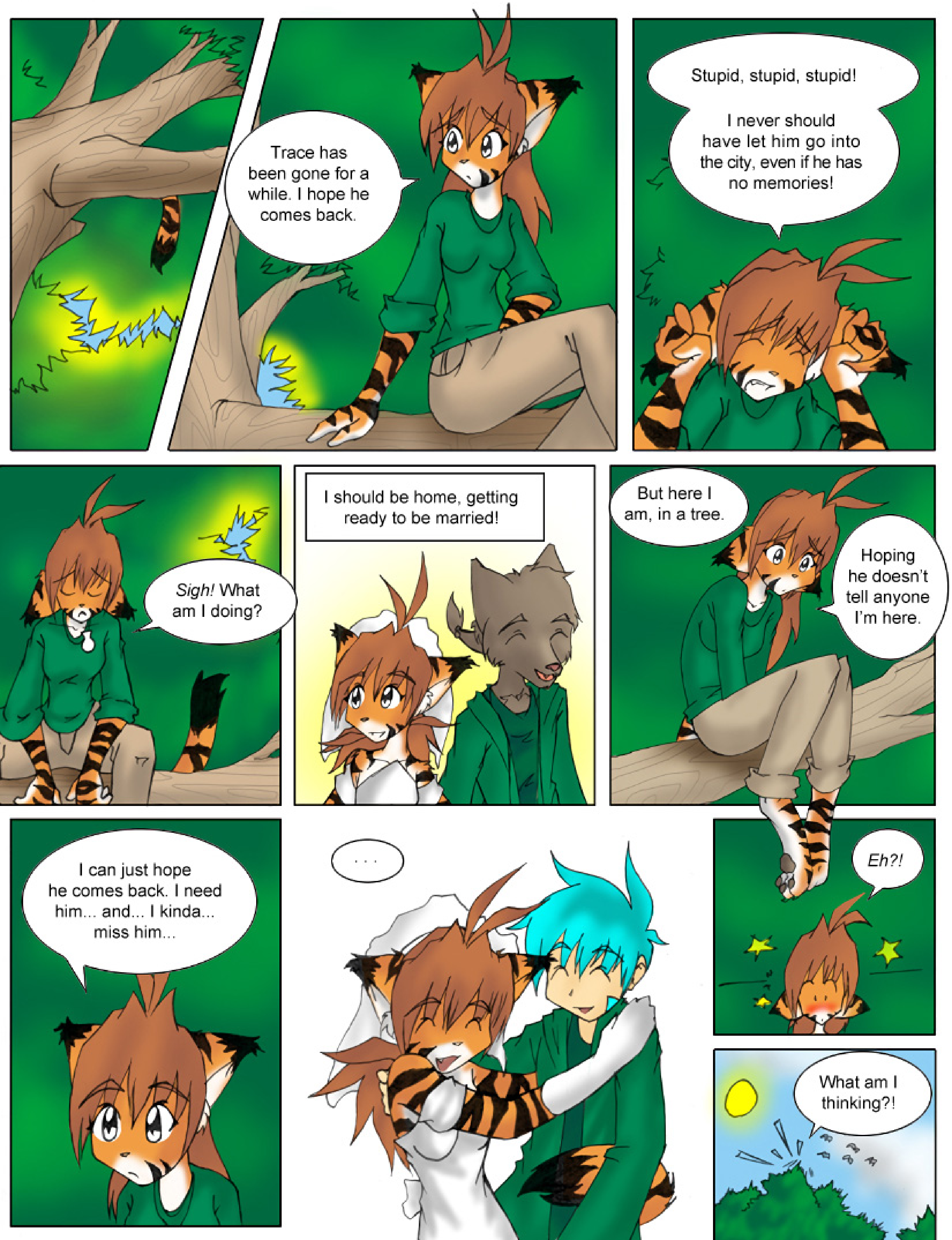
Merry
Christmas

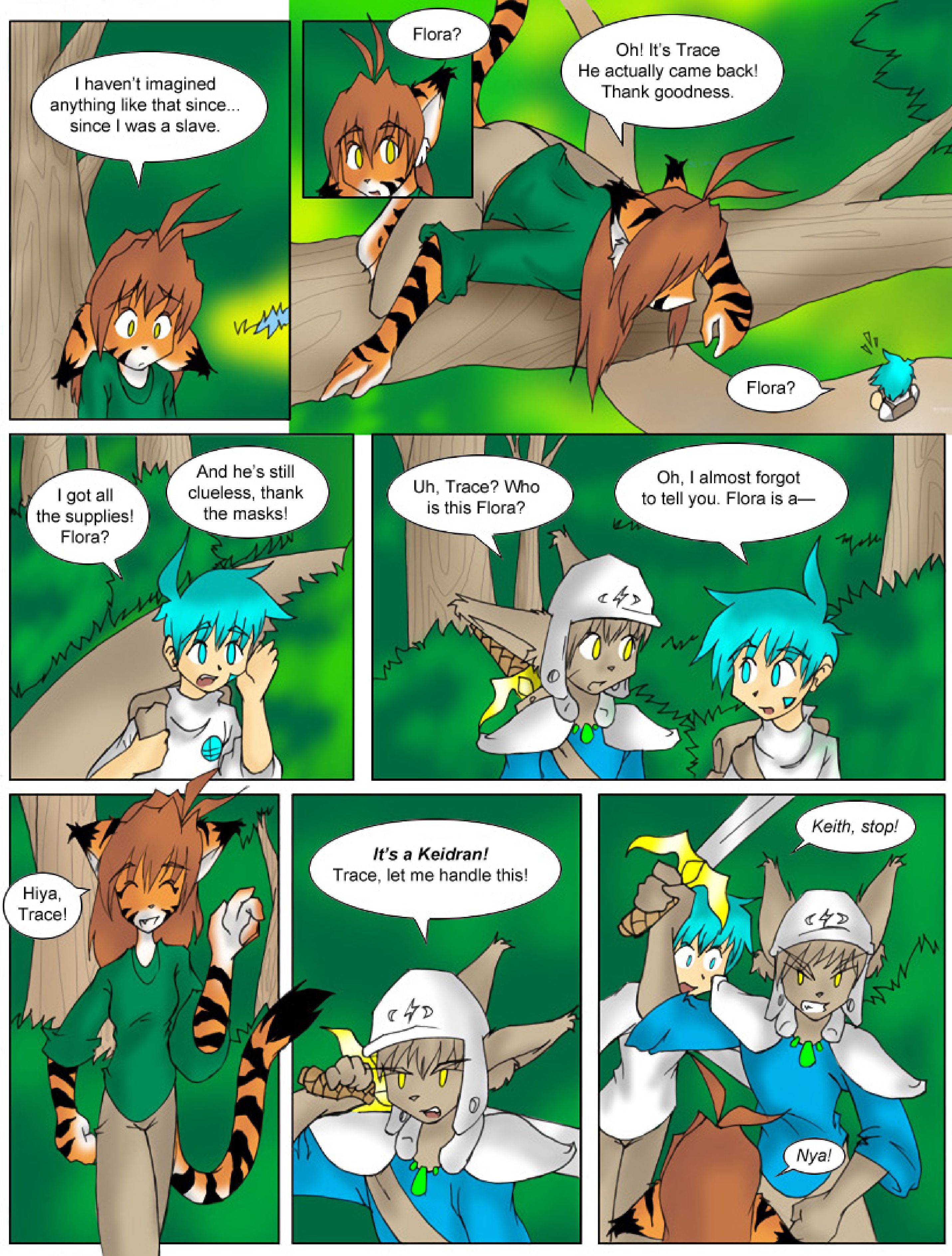

What the heck is wrong with Trace? He chose to side with that animal instead of me!
It's like he has no memory of us! He's not at all the same.
I kinda like this nicer Trace.
What is that thing he's talking to, anyway? It doesn't look like a Keidran.
It's not. It's a Basitin, a different race that lives on an island, I think. It's rare to see one around here.
Grr, I bet one of them wiped his memory! Furry-eared freaks, I'll–
Ahem...
Oh, Karen, you know I... didn't mean... yours look good on you–
Ah! Get her off of me! Ow, not there! Stop! Ack! Help, she's biting me! Someone help! Aah!
Moron.


Cut it out you guys! We need to–
Hey! Where did they go?
So, what do you need my help with, Mr...?
Just call me Keith. My people need your help with a political problem.
Before you start, just to warn you, I think I have amnesia. I don't remember much.
That would explain why he's helping me so readily.
What? You don't know anything?
Nothing since yesterday.
This could be easier than I thought.
No matter, we can still use your help. Can you travel with me to my city?
I'm sort of on an adventure already.
Then I will join you. We can travel to my city later. Gather any supplies you need and meet me by the town gates in an hour.
Um... okay, I guess.

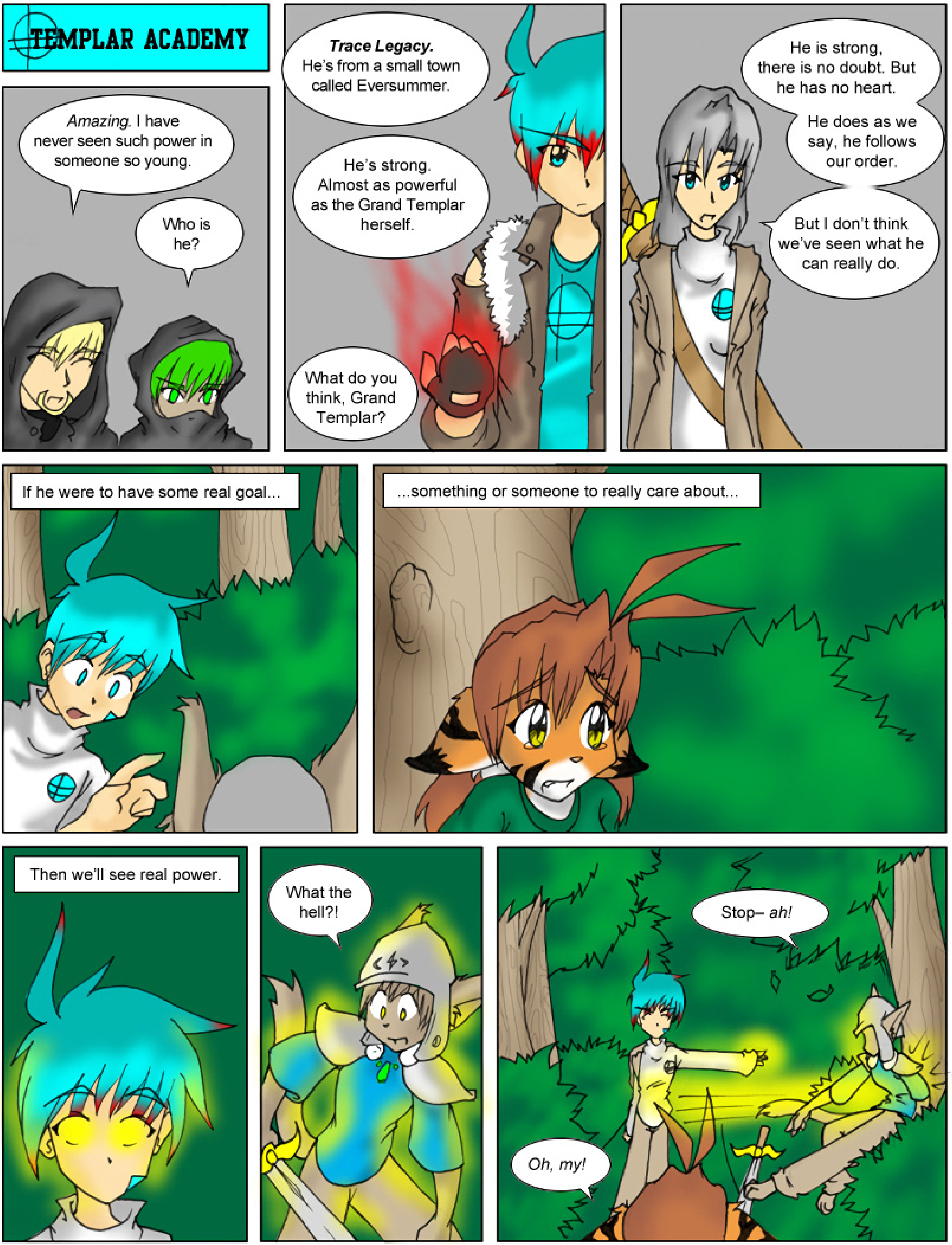

Well, I've gotten everything on the list. The only thing I haven't bought yet is something for Flora...
What would a half cat half tiger-something want, anway? Ball of yarn? But I wouldn't want to insult her.
Hm... maybe...
Jewelry
Ding!
Ah, a customer! Oh, the Grand Templar himself, I see!
For what do I owe this honor?
I need to buy something for... a girl.
Oh?
To win the favor of a Templar, she must be quite the fox!
No, more like tiger. But I guess I shouldn't say that.

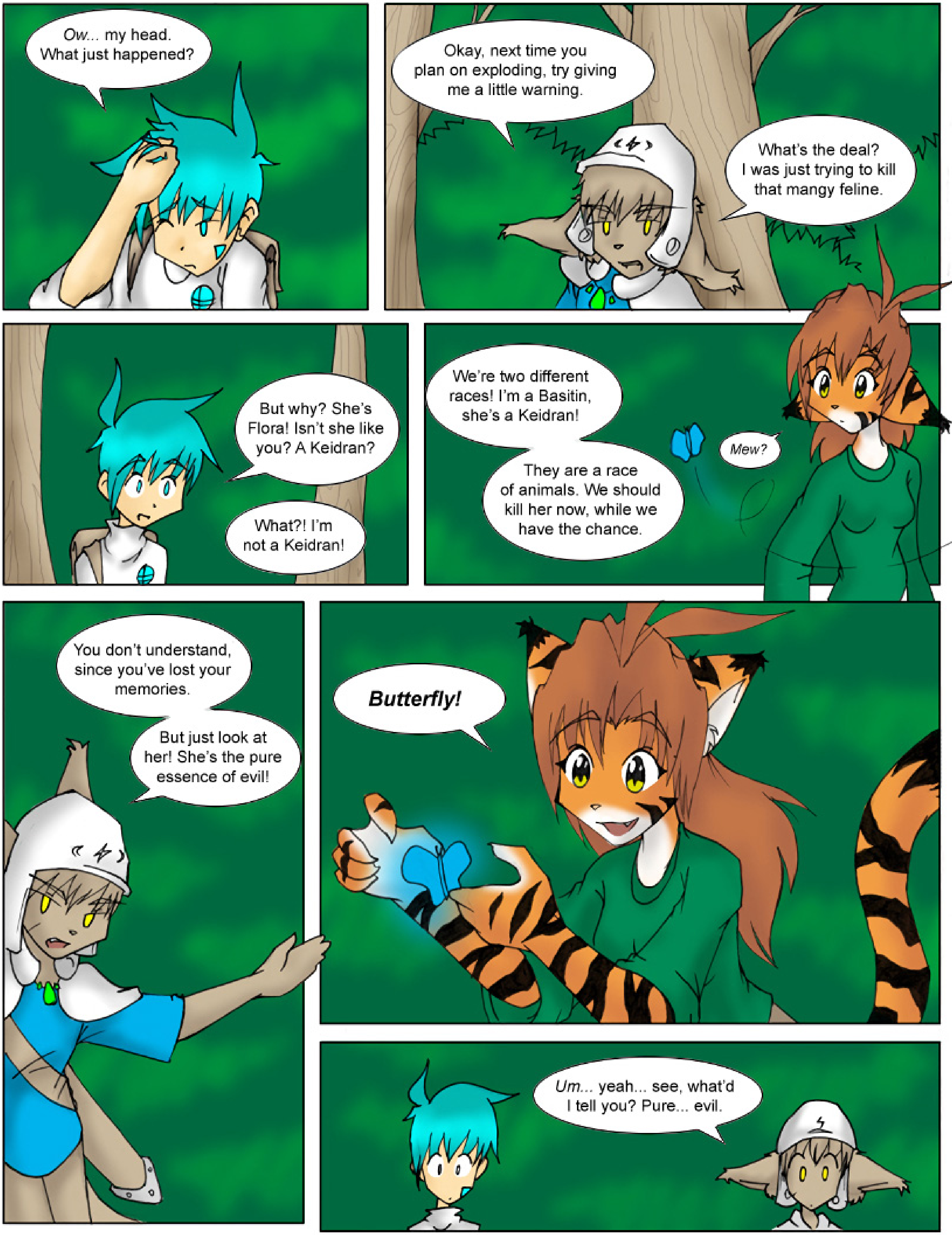

I have just the thing.
This is a **Subtleseed Crystal.**
Sure to woo any girl you might have your eye on.
Wow! It's... perfect!
How much is it?
Oh, please. Who do you think I am?
For you, Great Templar, no charge.
Wow, really? Thanks!
Heh.
Yes, well, good day to you. Have a pleasant journey, now.
Ding!
Pleasant journey, indeed.
Heheheh... hahah!
Mmph! Mmmph!

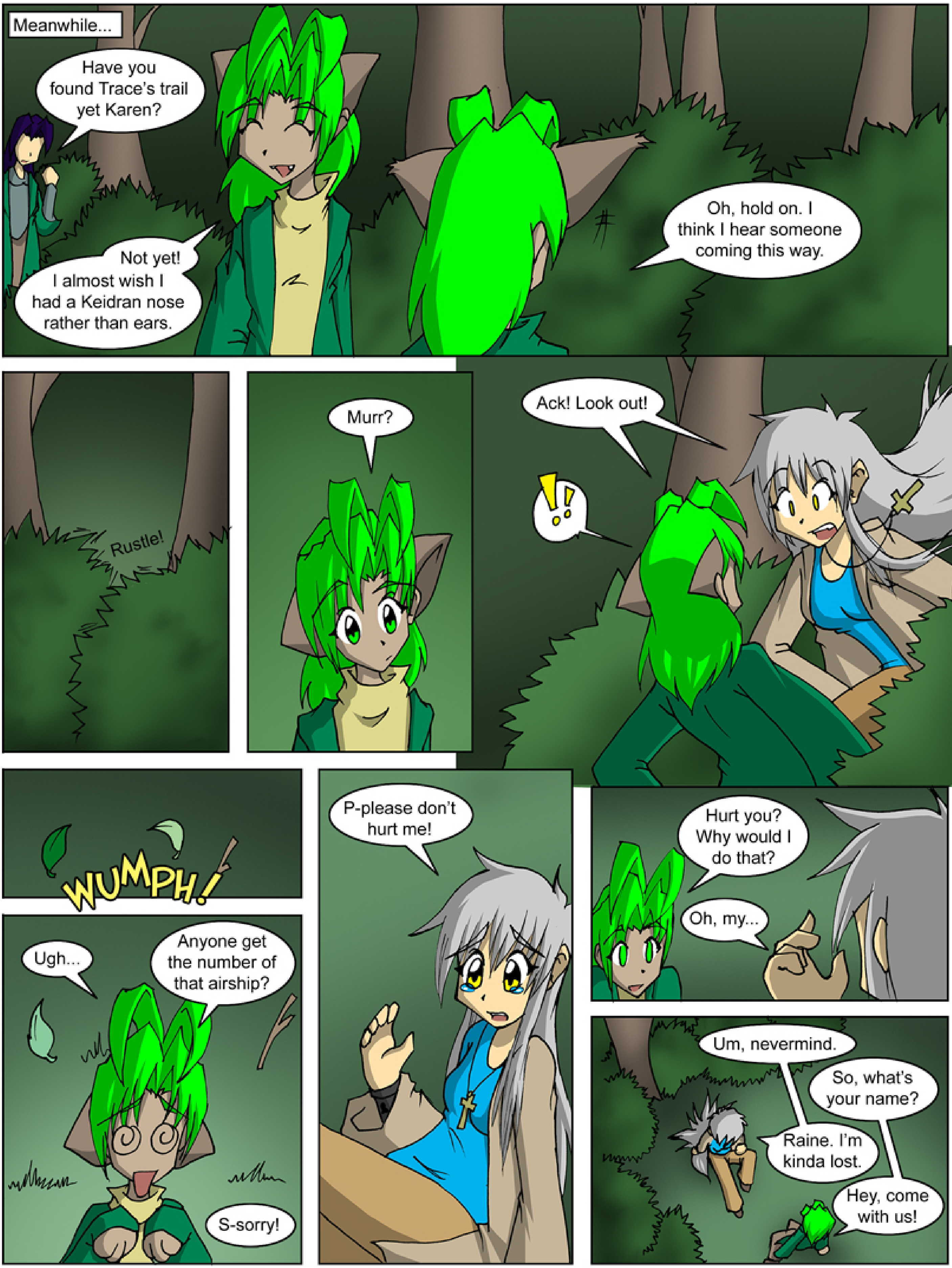

Trace has been gone for a while. I hope he comes back.
Stupid, stupid, stupid!
I never should have let him go into the city, even if he has no memories!
Sigh! What am I doing?
I should be home, getting ready to be married!
But here I am, in a tree.
Hoping he doesn't tell anyone I'm here.
I can just hope he comes back. I need him... and... I kinda... miss him...
. . .
Eh?!
What am I thinking?!

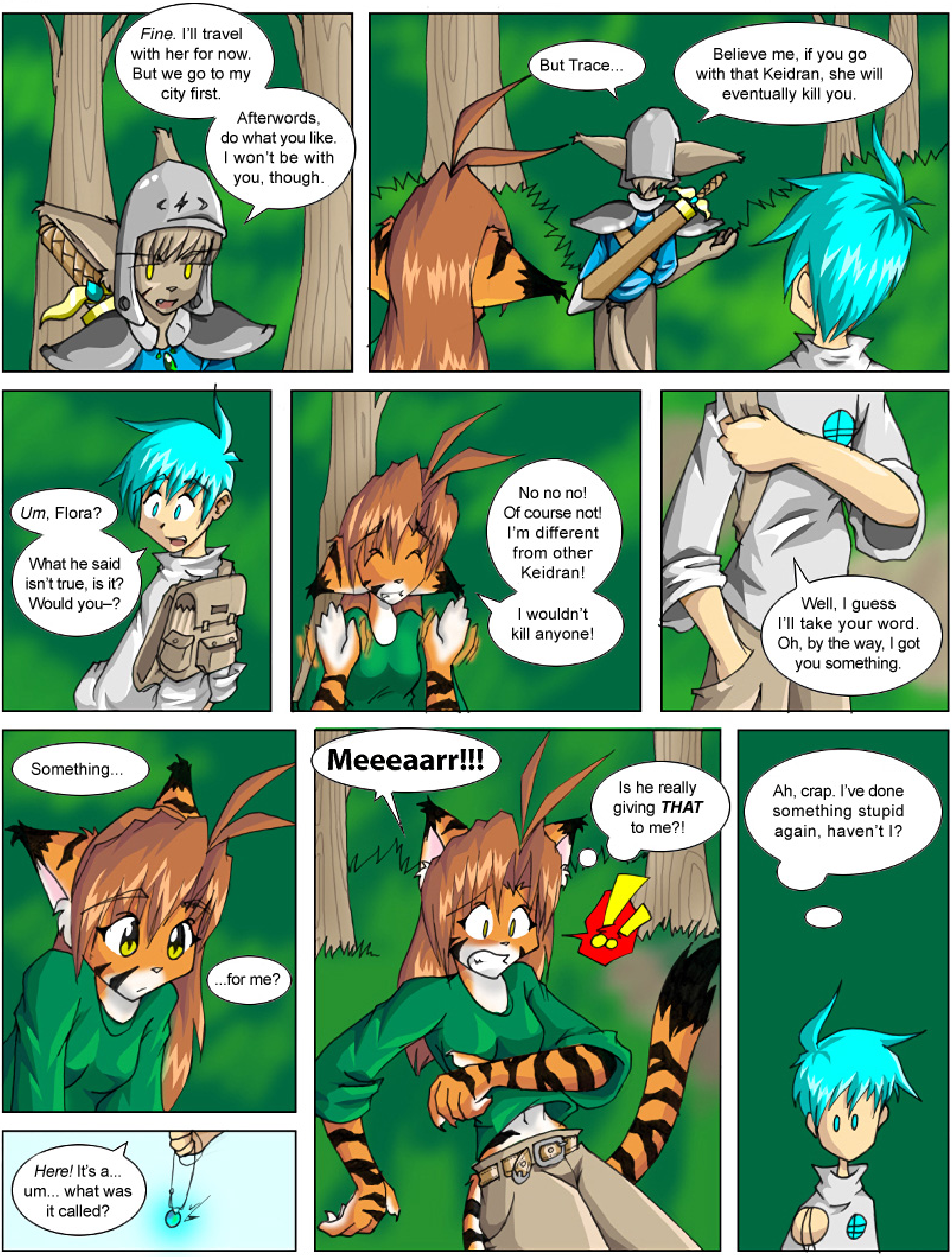

I haven't imagined anything like that since... since I was a slave.
Flora?
Oh! It's Trace
He actually came back!
Thank goodness.
Flora?
I got all the supplies! Flora?
And he's still clueless, thank the masks!
Uh, Trace? Who is this Flora?
Oh, I almost forgot to tell you. Flora is a—
Hiya, Trace!
It's a Keidran!
Trace, let me handle this!
Keith, stop!
Nya!

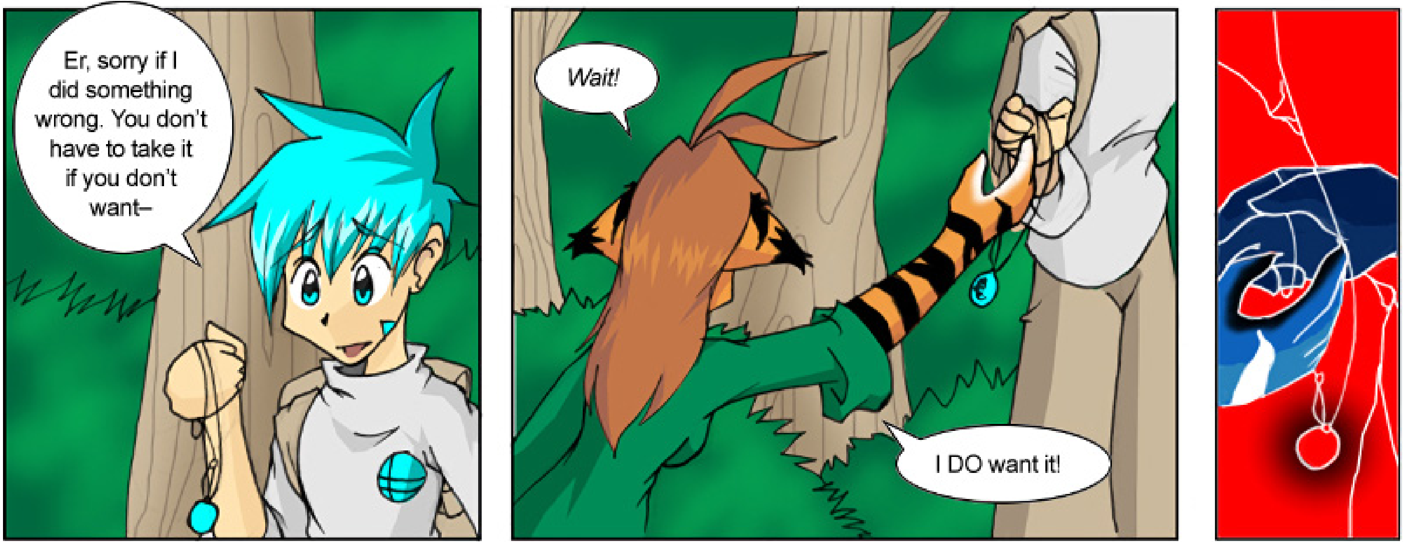
TEMPLAR ACADEMY


Amazing. I have never seen such power in someone so young.
Who is he?
Trace Legacy. He's from a small town called Eversummer.
He's strong. Almost as powerful as the Grand Templar herself.
What do you think, Grand Templar?
He is strong, there is no doubt. But he has no heart.
He does as we say, he follows our order.
But I don't think we've seen what he can really do.
If he were to have some real goal...
...something or someone to really care about...
Then we'll see real power.
What the hell?!
Stop– *ah!*
Oh, my!

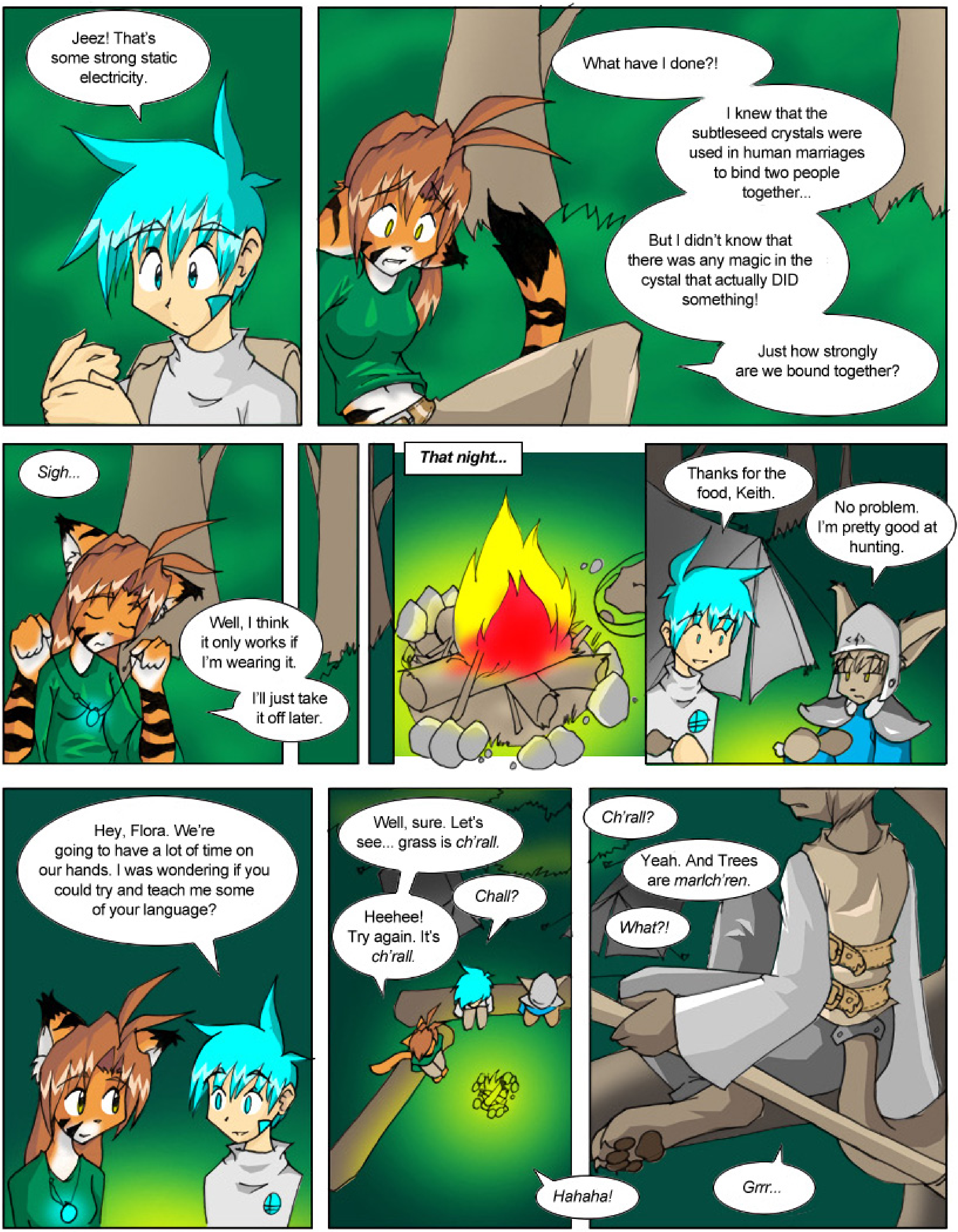

Ow... my head.
What just happened?
Okay, next time you plan on exploding, try giving me a little warning.
What's the deal? I was just trying to kill that mangy feline.
But why? She's Flora! Isn't she like you? A Keidran?
What?! I'm not a Keidran!
We're two different races! I'm a Basitin, she's a Keidran!
They are a race of animals. We should kill her now, while we have the chance.
Mew?
You don't understand, since you've lost your memories.
But just look at her! She's the pure essence of evil!
Butterfly!
Um... yeah... see, what'd I tell you? Pure... evil.

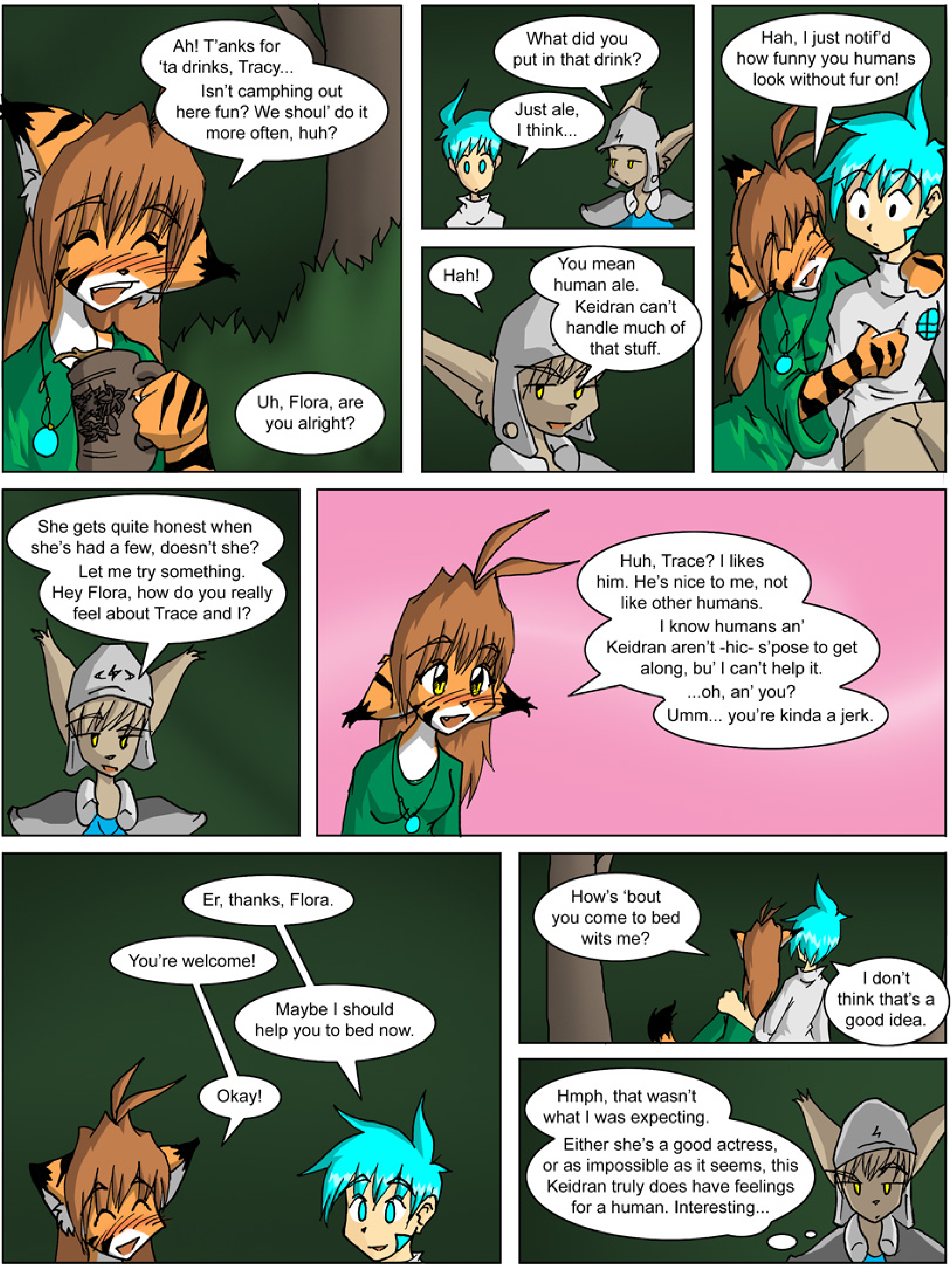

Meanwhile...
Have you found Trace's trail yet Karen?
Not yet! I almost wish I had a Keidran nose rather than ears.
Oh, hold on. I think I hear someone coming this way.
Rustle!
Murr?
Ack! Look out!
!!
WUMPH!
Ugh...
Anyone get the number of that airship?
S-sorry!
P-please don't hurt me!
Hurt you? Why would I do that?
Oh, my...
Um, nevermind.
So, what's your name?
Raine. I'm kinda lost.
Hey, come with us!

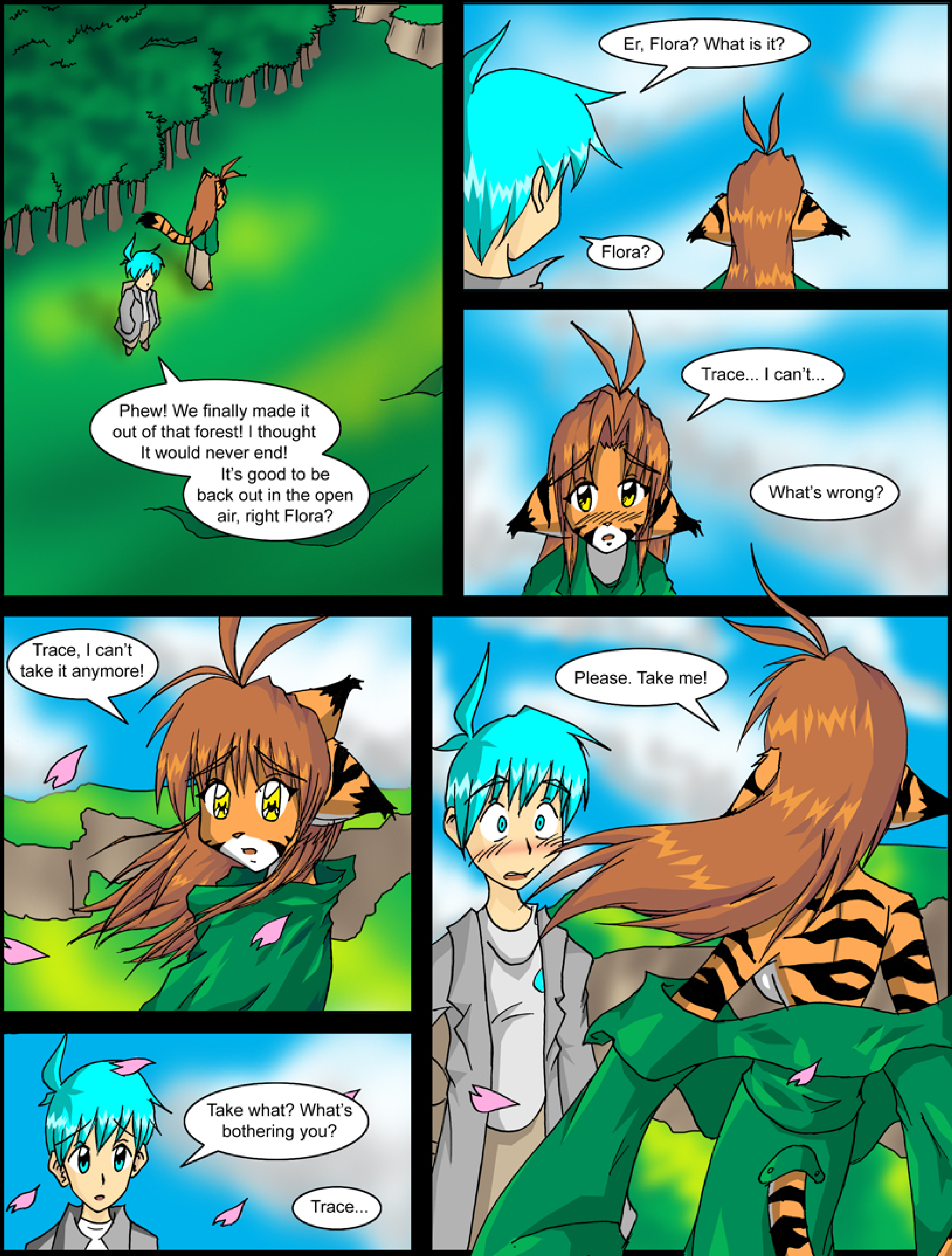

Fine. I'll travel with her for now. But we go to my city first.
Afterwords, do what you like. I won't be with you, though.
But Trace...
Believe me, if you go with that Keidran, she will eventually kill you.
Um, Flora?
What he said isn't true, is it? Would you–?
No no no! Of course not! I'm different from other Keidran!
I wouldn't kill anyone!
Well, I guess I'll take your word. Oh, by the way, I got you something.
Something...
...for me?
Here! It's a... um... what was it called?
Meeeaarr!!!
Is he really giving ***THAT*** to me?!
Ah, crap. I've done something stupid again, haven't I?

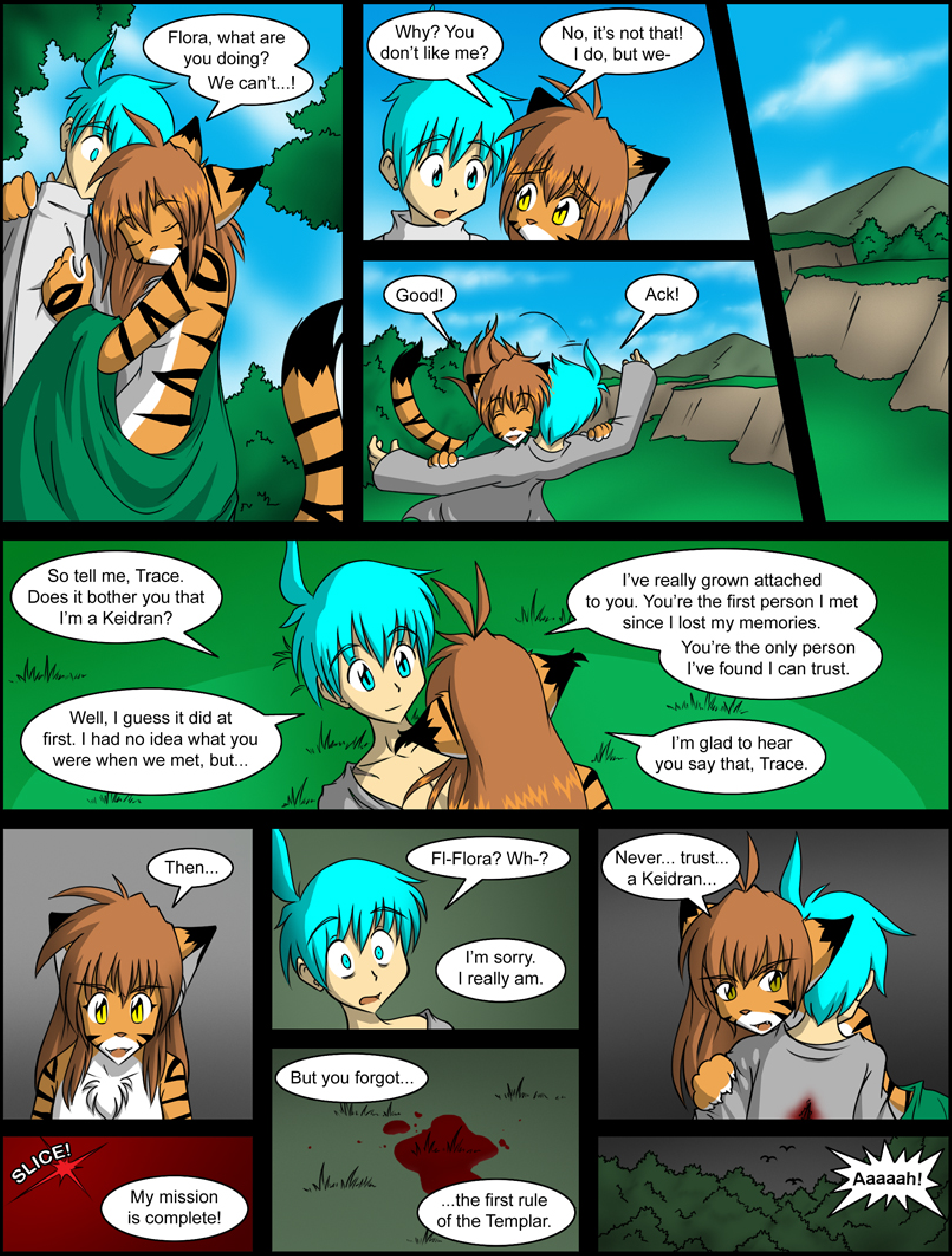

Er, sorry if I did something wrong. You don't have to take it if you don't want–
Wait!
I DO want it!

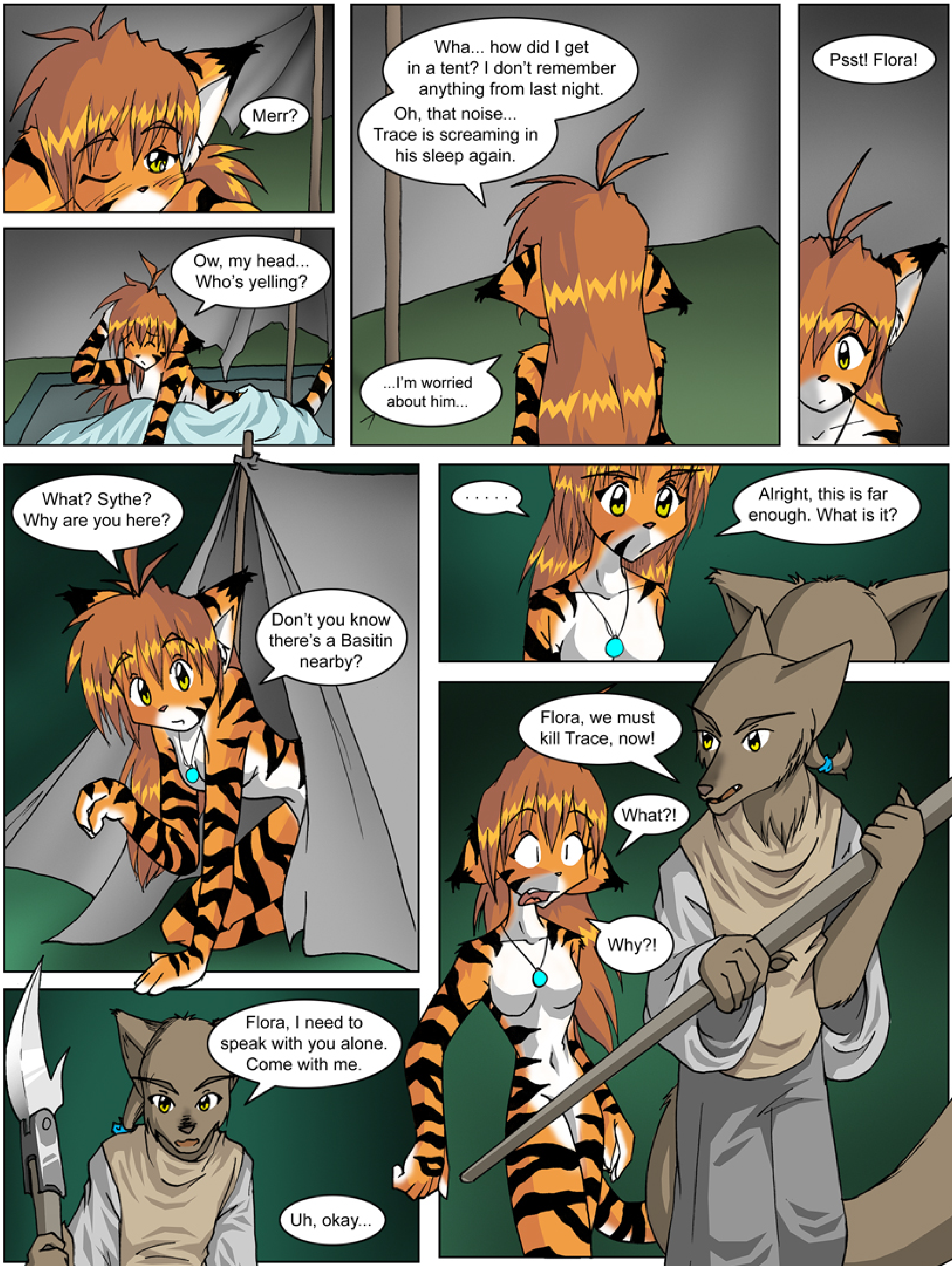
25,000 Hits!
Thank you!
Tom Fischbach

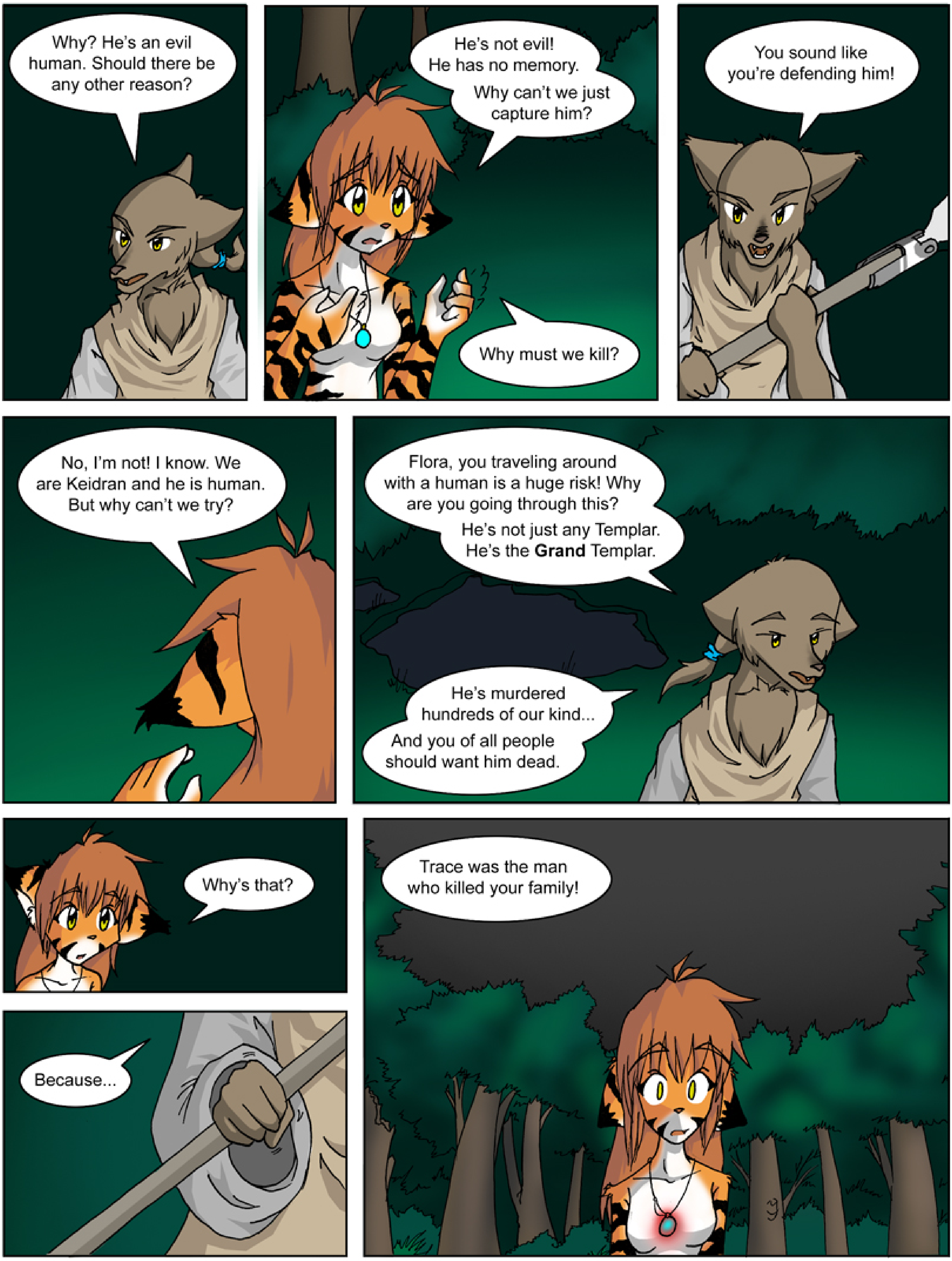

Jeez! That's some strong static electricity.
What have I done?!
I knew that the subtleseed crystals were used in human marriages to bind two people together...
But I didn't know that there was any magic in the cystal that actually DID something!
Just how strongly are we bound together?
Sigh...
Well, I think it only works if I'm wearing it.
I'll just take it off later.
That night...
Thanks for the food, Keith.
No problem. I'm pretty good at hunting.
Hey, Flora. We're going to have a lot of time on our hands. I was wondering if you could try and teach me some of your language?
Well, sure. Let's see... grass is *ch'rall.*
Chall?
Heehee! Try again. It's *ch'rall.*
Hahaha!
Ch'rall?
Yeah. And Trees are *marlch'ren.*
What?!
Grrr...

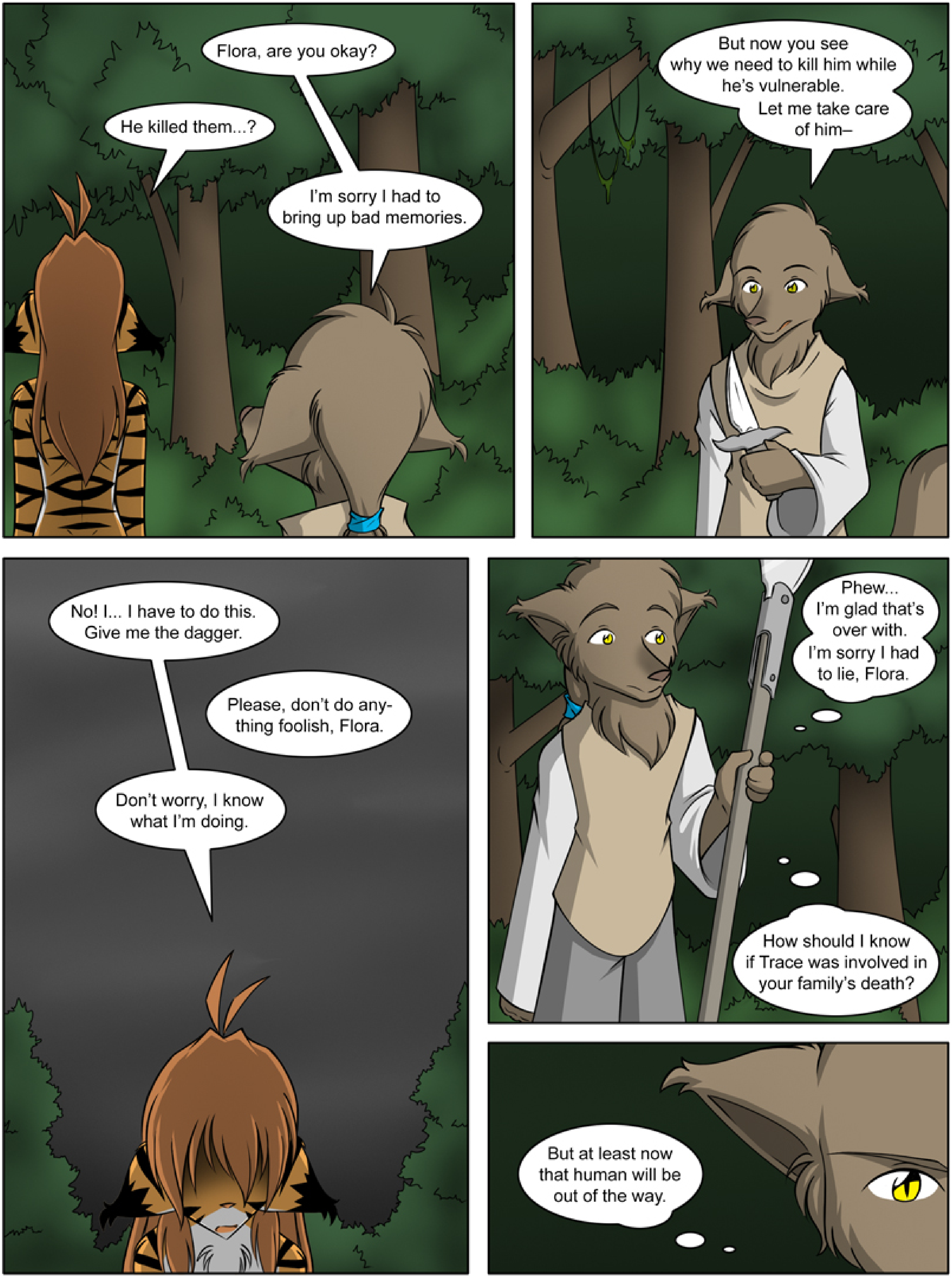

Ah! T'anks for 'ta drinks, Tracy...
Isn't camphing out here fun? We shoul' do it more often, huh?
Uh, Flora, are you alright?
What did you put in that drink?
Just ale, I think...
Hah!
You mean human ale.
Keidran can't handle much of that stuff.
Hah, I just notif'd how funny you humans look without fur on!
She gets quite honest when she's had a few, doesn't she?
Let me try something.
Hey Flora, how do you really feel about Trace and I?
Huh, Trace? I likes him. He's nice to me, not like other humans.
I know humans an' Keidran aren't -hic- s'pose to get along, bu' I can't help it.
...oh, an' you?
Umm... you're kinda a jerk.
Er, thanks, Flora.
You're welcome!
Maybe I should help you to bed now.
Okay!
How's 'bout you come to bed wits me?
I don't think that's a good idea.
Hmph, that wasn't what I was expecting.
Either she's a good actress, or as impossible as it seems, this Keidran truly does have feelings for a human. Interesting...

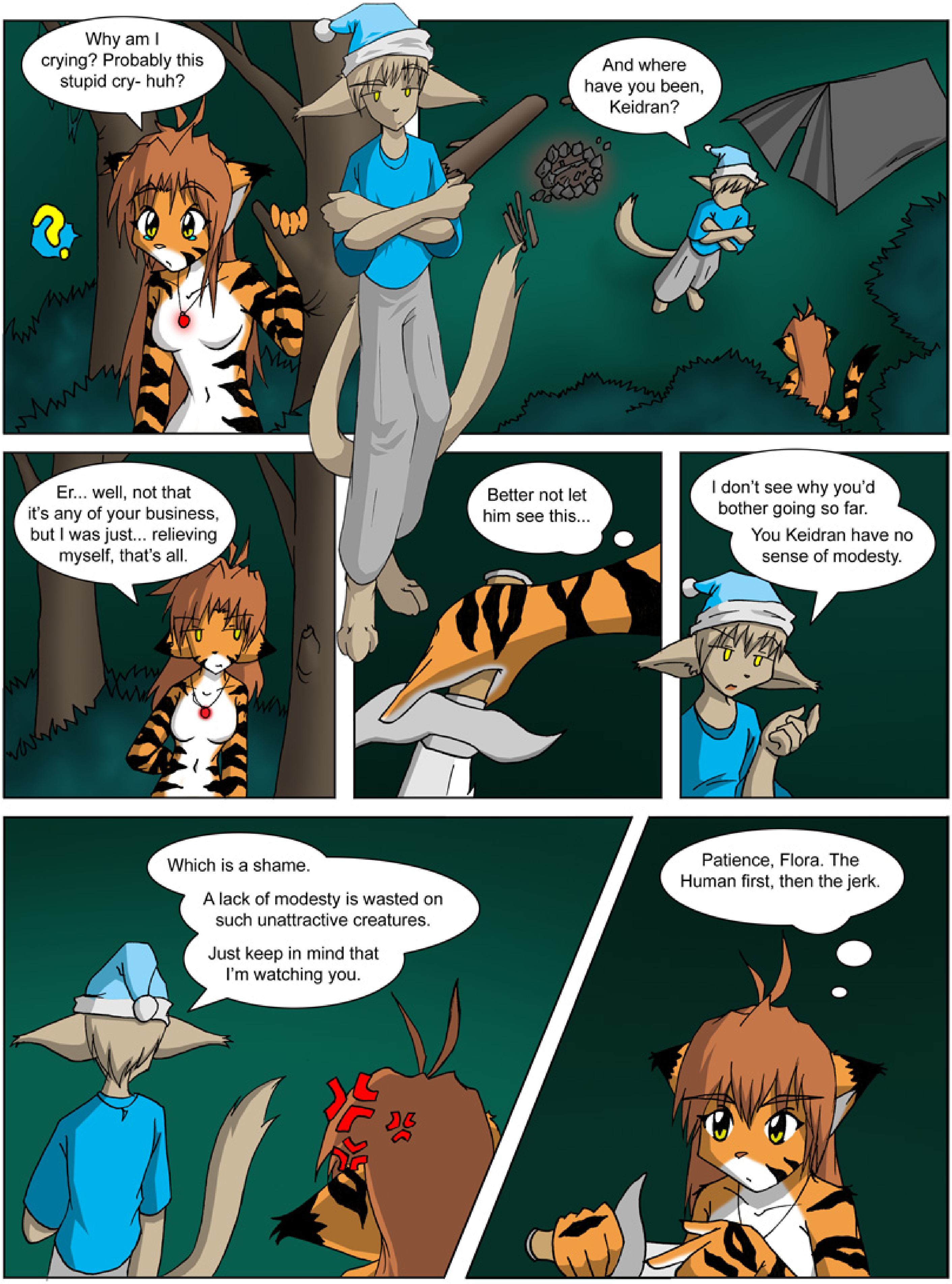

Phew! We finally made it out of that forest! I thought It would never end!
It's good to be back out in the open air, right Flora?
Er, Flora? What is it?
Flora?
Trace... I can't...
What's wrong?
Trace, I can't take it anymore!
Take what? What's bothering you?
Trace...
Please. Take me!

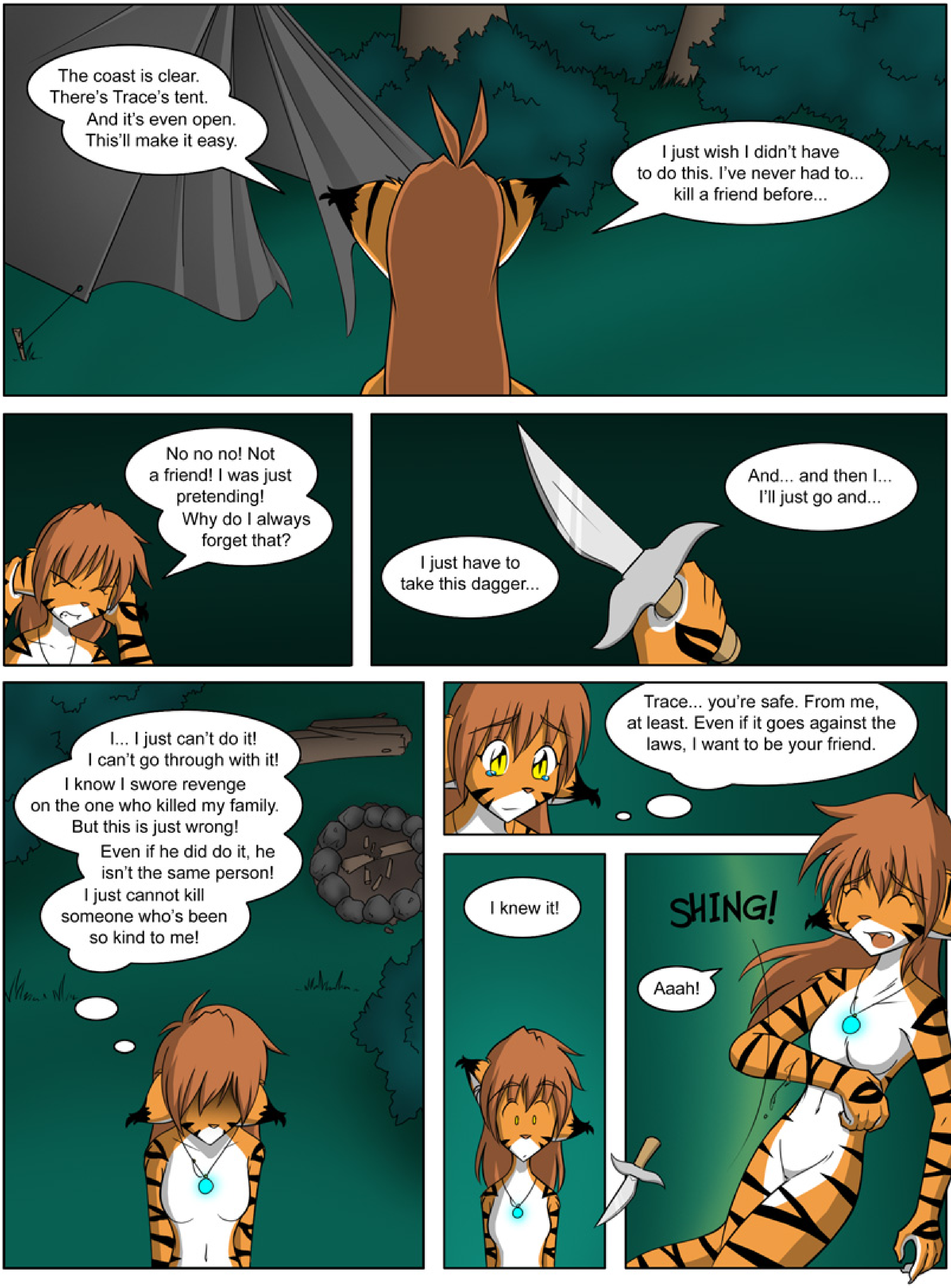

Flora, what are you doing? We can't...!
Why? You don't like me?
No, it's not that! I do, but we-
Good!
Ack!
So tell me, Trace. Does it bother you that I'm a Keidran?
Well, I guess it did at first. I had no idea what you were when we met, but...
I've really grown attached to you. You're the first person I met since I lost my memories.
You're the only person I've found I can trust.
I'm glad to hear you say that, Trace.
Then...
Fl-Flora? Wh-?
I'm sorry. I really am.
Never... trust... a Keidran...
But you forgot...
...the first rule of the Templar.
SLICE!
My mission is complete!
Aaaaah!

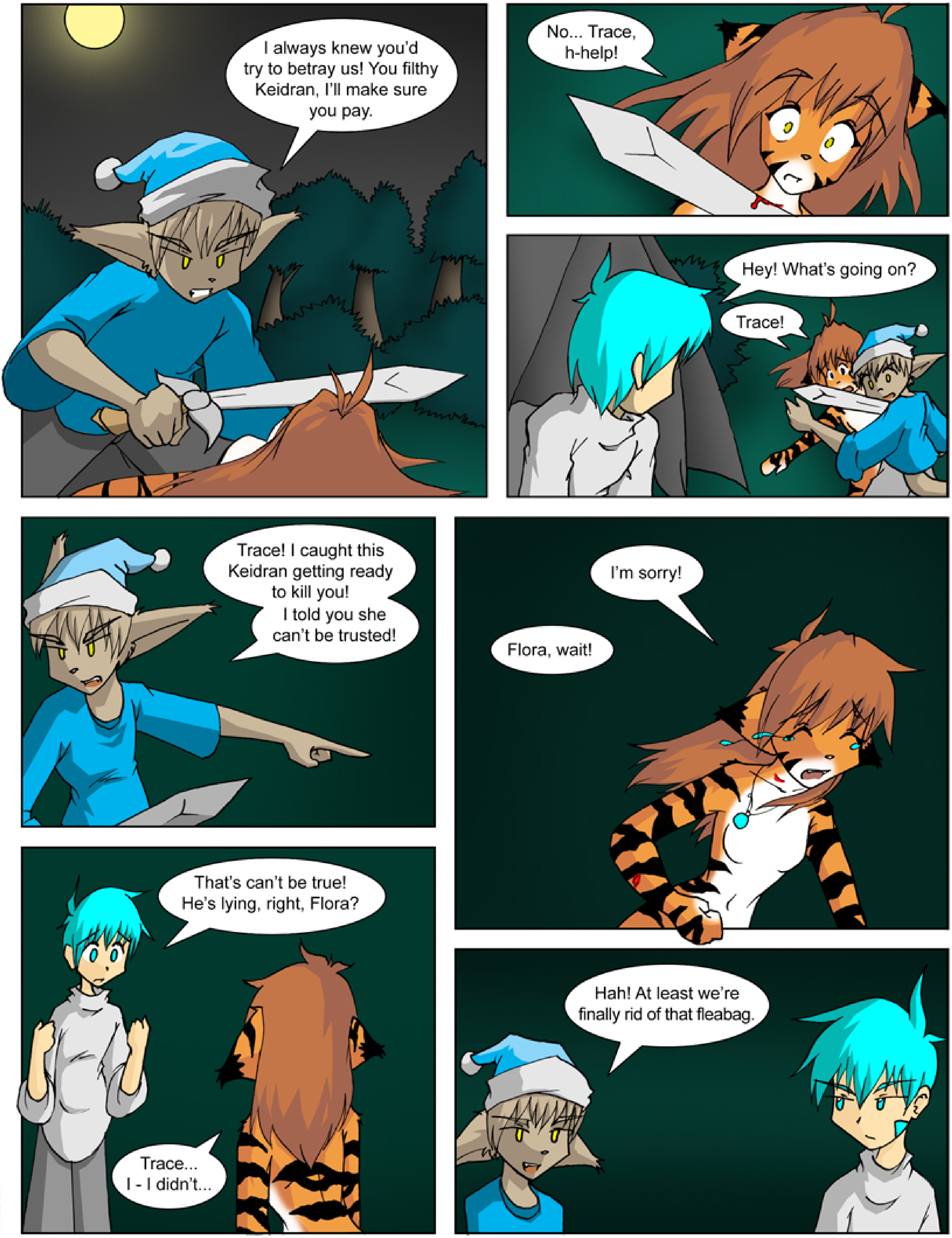

Merr?
Ow, my head... Who's yelling?
Wha... how did I get in a tent? I don't remember anything from last night.
Oh, that noise... Trace is screaming in his sleep again.
...I'm worried about him...
Psst! Flora!
What? Sythe? Why are you here?
Don't you know there's a Basitin nearby?
Flora, I need to speak with you alone. Come with me.
Uh, okay...
. . . . .
Alright, this is far enough. What is it?
Flora, we must kill Trace, now!
What?!
Why?!


Why? He's an evil human. Should there be any other reason?
He's not evil! He has no memory.
Why can't we just capture him?
Why must we kill?
You sound like you're defending him!
No, I'm not! I know. We are Keidran and he is human. But why can't we try?
Flora, you traveling around with a human is a huge risk! Why are you going through this?
He's not just any Templar. He's the **Grand** Templar.
He's murdered hundreds of our kind...
And you of all people should want him dead.
Why's that?
Because...
Trace was the man who killed your family!

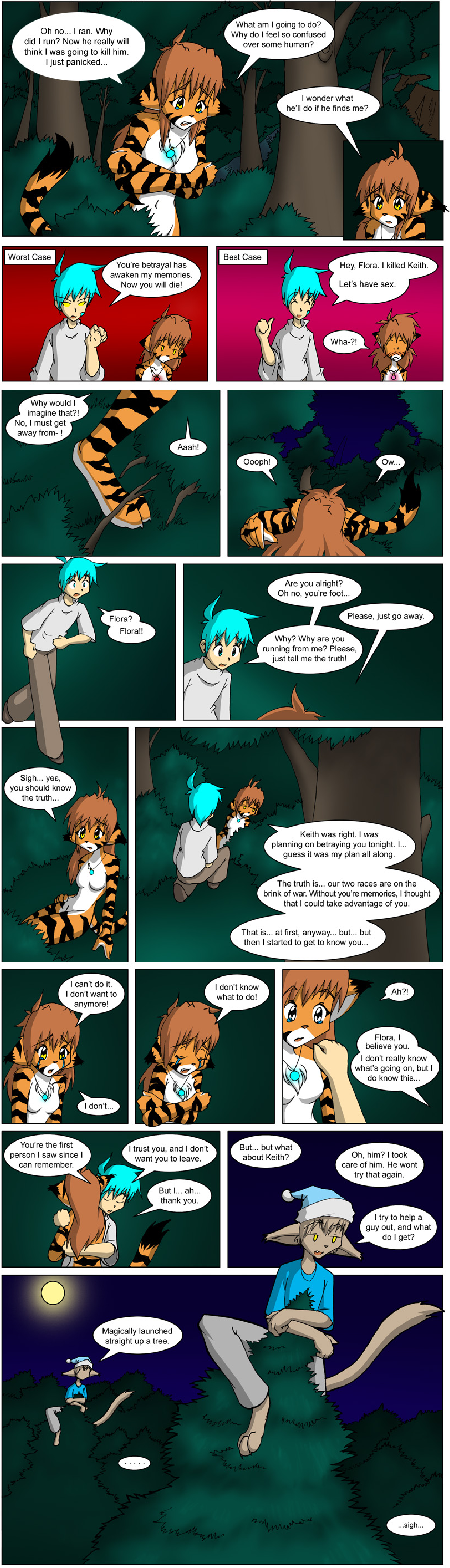

Flora, are you okay?
He killed them...?
I'm sorry I had to bring up bad memories.
But now you see why we need to kill him while he's vulnerable.
Let me take care of him–
No! I... I have to do this. Give me the dagger.
Please, don't do anything foolish, Flora.
Don't worry, I know what I'm doing.
Phew... I'm glad that's over with. I'm sorry I had to lie, Flora.
How should I know if Trace was involved in your family's death?
But at least now that human will be out of the way.


Why am I crying? Probably this stupid cry- huh?
?
And where have you been, Keidran?
Er... well, not that it's any of your business, but I was just... relieving myself, that's all.
Better not let him see this...
I don't see why you'd bother going so far.
You Keidran have no sense of modesty.
Which is a shame.
A lack of modesty is wasted on such unattractive creatures.
Just keep in mind that I'm watching you.
Patience, Flora. The Human first, then the jerk.


The coast is clear. There's Trace's tent. And it's even open. This'll make it easy.
I just wish I didn't have to do this. I've never had to... kill a friend before...
No no no! Not a friend! I was just pretending! Why do I always forget that?
I just have to take this dagger...
And... and then I... I'll just go and...
I... I just can't do it! I can't go through with it! I know I swore revenge on the one who killed my family. But this is just wrong! Even if he did do it, he isn't the same person! I just cannot kill someone who's been so kind to me!
Trace... you're safe. From me, at least. Even if it goes against the laws, I want to be your friend.
I knew it!
SHING!
Aaah!

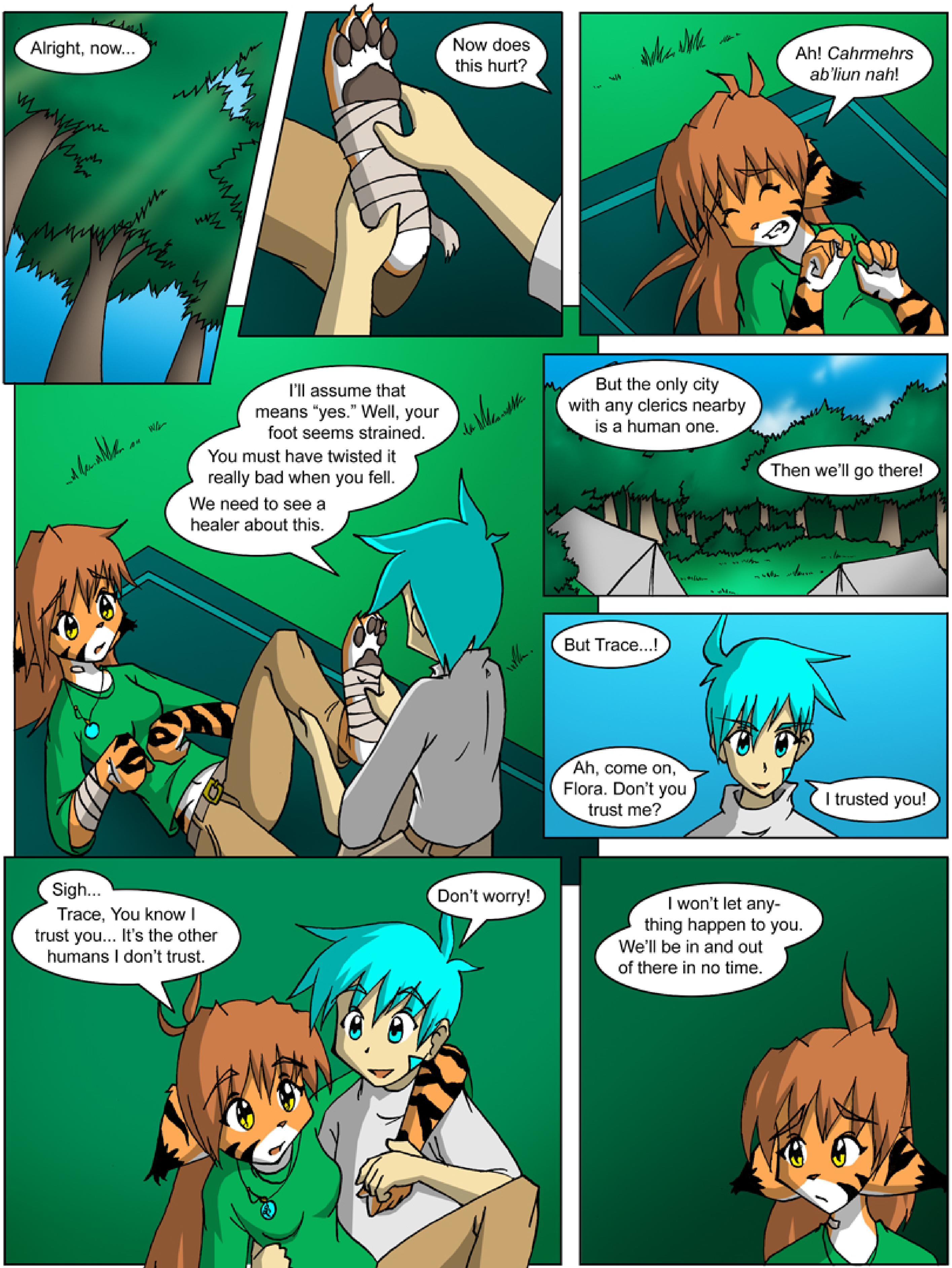

I always knew you'd try to betray us! You filthy Keidran, I'll make sure you pay.
No... Trace, h-help!
Hey! What's going on?
Trace!
Trace! I caught this Keidran getting ready to kill you!
I told you she can't be trusted!
That's can't be true! He's lying, right, Flora?
Trace... I - I didn't...
I'm sorry!
Flora, wait!
Hah! At least we're finally rid of that fleabag.

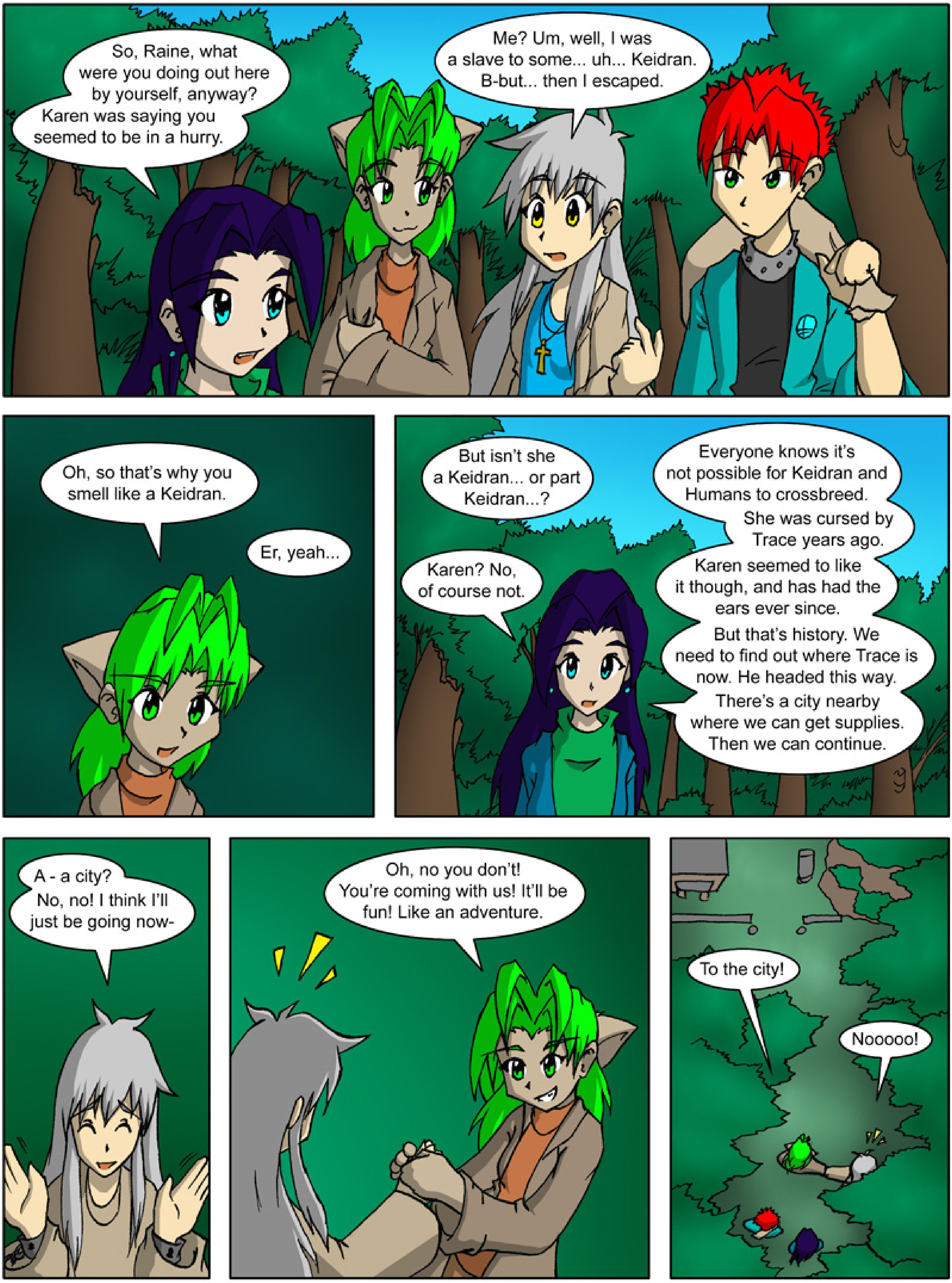
Twokinds' super special, ultra long, overly sappy 50th comic!

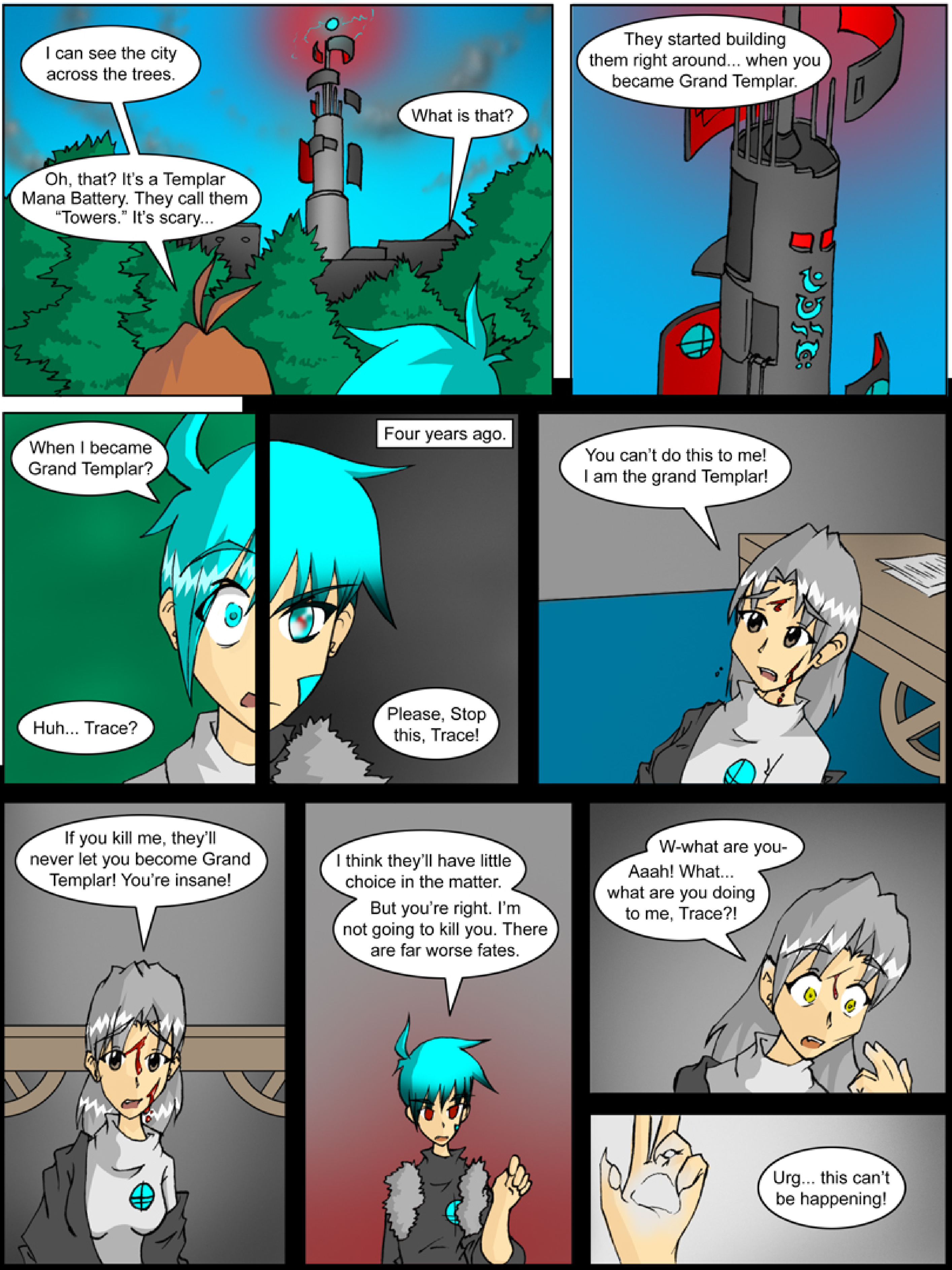

Oh no... I ran. Why did I run? Now he really will think I was going to kill him. I just panicked...
What am I going to do? Why do I feel so confused over some human?
I wonder what he'll do if he finds me?
Worst Case
You're betrayal has awaken my memories. Now you will die!
Best Case
Hey, Flora. I killed Keith.
Let's have sex.
Wha-?!
Why would I imagine that?! No, I must get away from- !
Aaah!
Ooph!
Ow...
Flora?
Flora!!
Are you alright? Oh no, you're foot...
Please, just go away.
Why? Why are you running from me? Please, just tell me the truth!
Sigh... yes, you should know the truth...
Keith was right. I *was* planning on betraying you tonight. I... guess it was my plan all along.
The truth is... our two races are on the brink of war. Without you're memories, I thought that I could take advantage of you.
That is... at first, anyway... but... but then I started to get to know you...
I can't do it. I don't want to anymore!
I don't...
I don't know what to do!
Ah?!
Flora, I believe you.
I don't really know what's going on, but I do know this...
You're the first person I saw since I can remember.
I trust you, and I don't want you to leave.
But I... ah... thank you.
But... but what about Keith?
Oh, him? I took care of him. He wont try that again.
I try to help a guy out, and what do I get?
Magically launched straight up a tree.
. . . . .
...sigh...

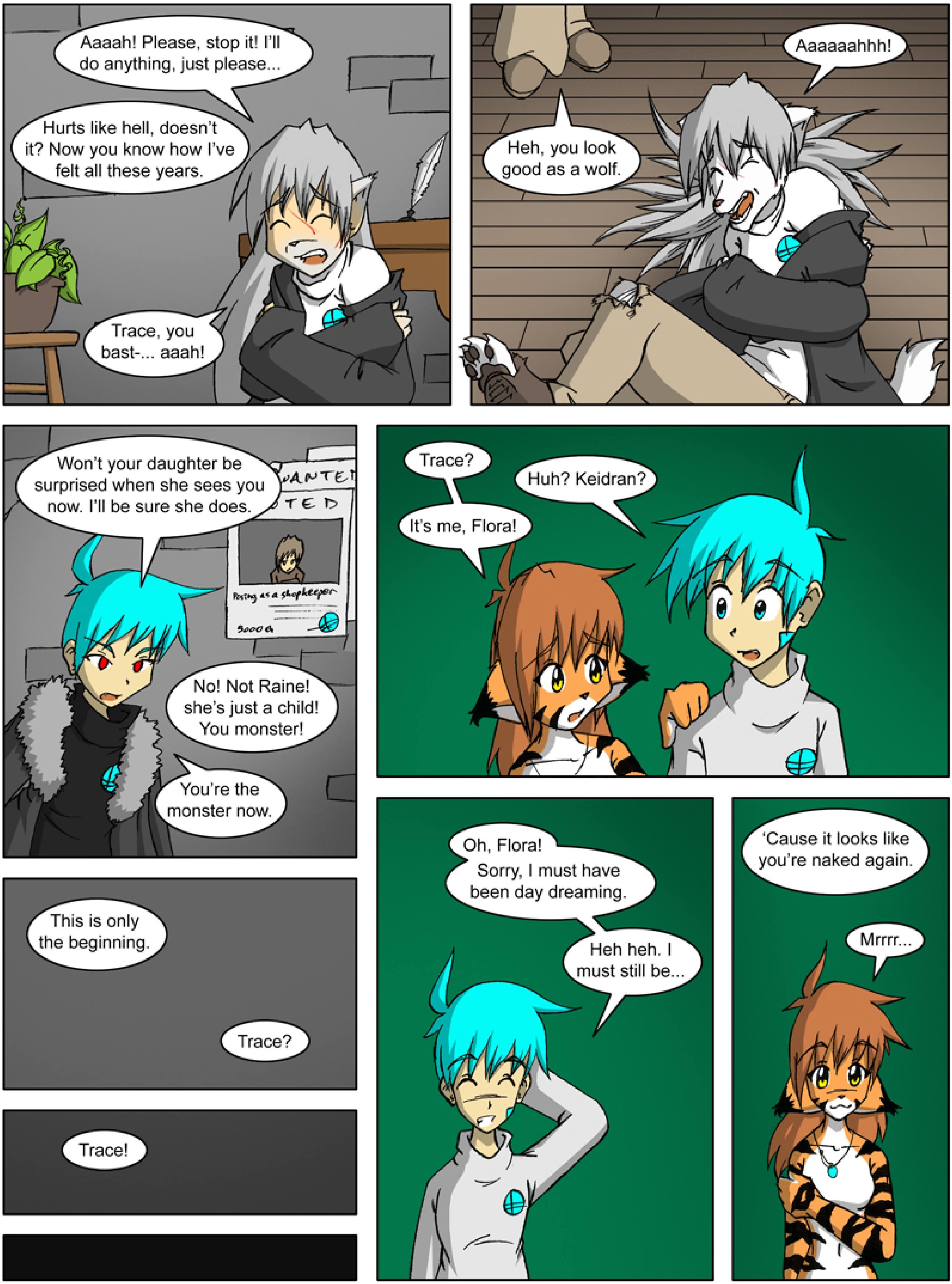
TwoKinds

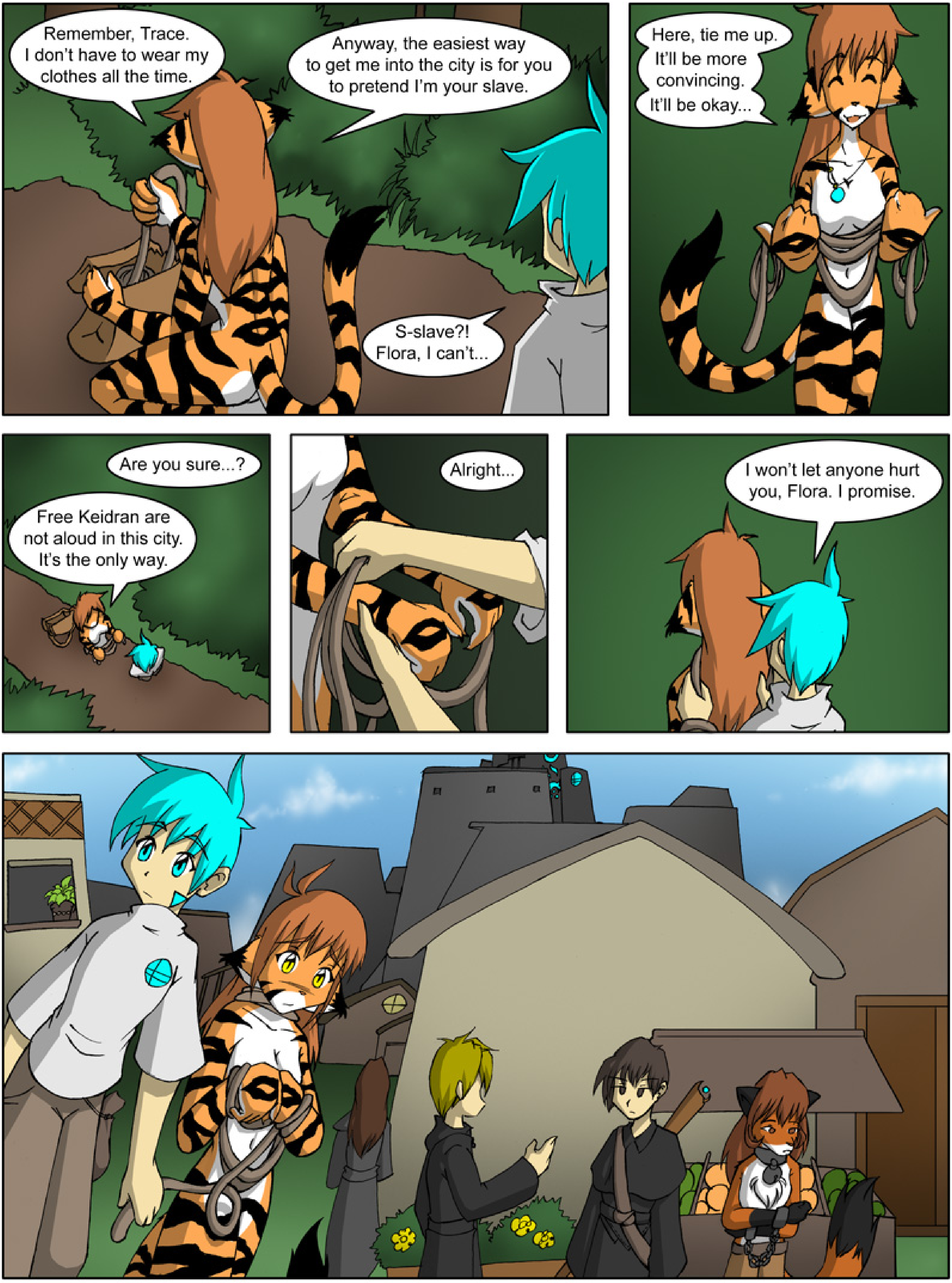
Chapter Three

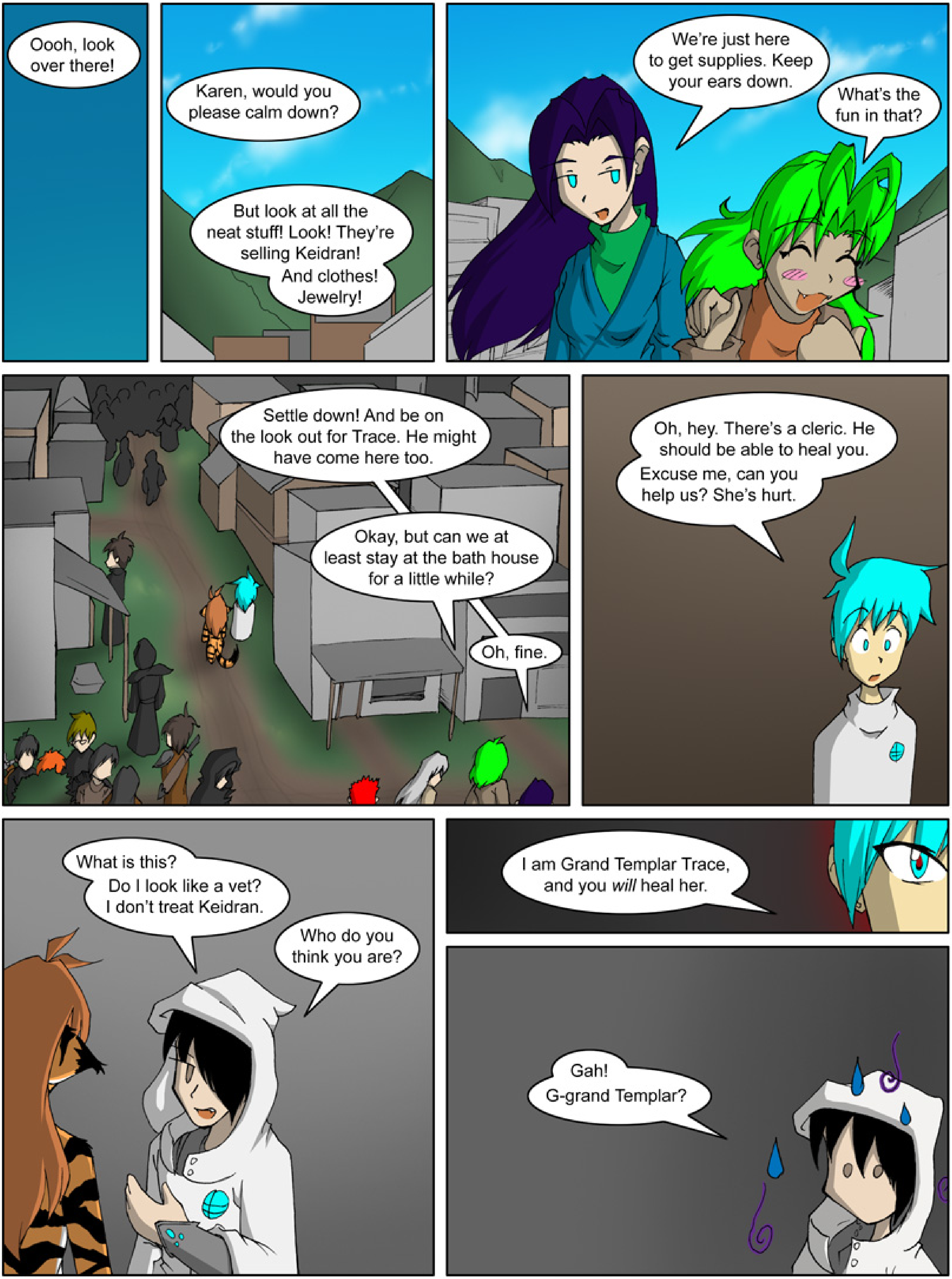

Alright, now...
Now does this hurt?
Ah! *Cahrmehrs ab'liun nah*!
I'll assume that means "yes." Well, your foot seems strained.
You must have twisted it really bad when you fell.
We need to see a healer about this.
But the only city with any clerics nearby is a human one.
Then we'll go there!
But Trace...!
Ah, come on, Flora. Don't you trust me?
I trusted you!
Sigh...
Trace, You know I trust you... It's the other humans I don't trust.
Don't worry!
I won't let any-thing happen to you.
We'll be in and out of there in no time.

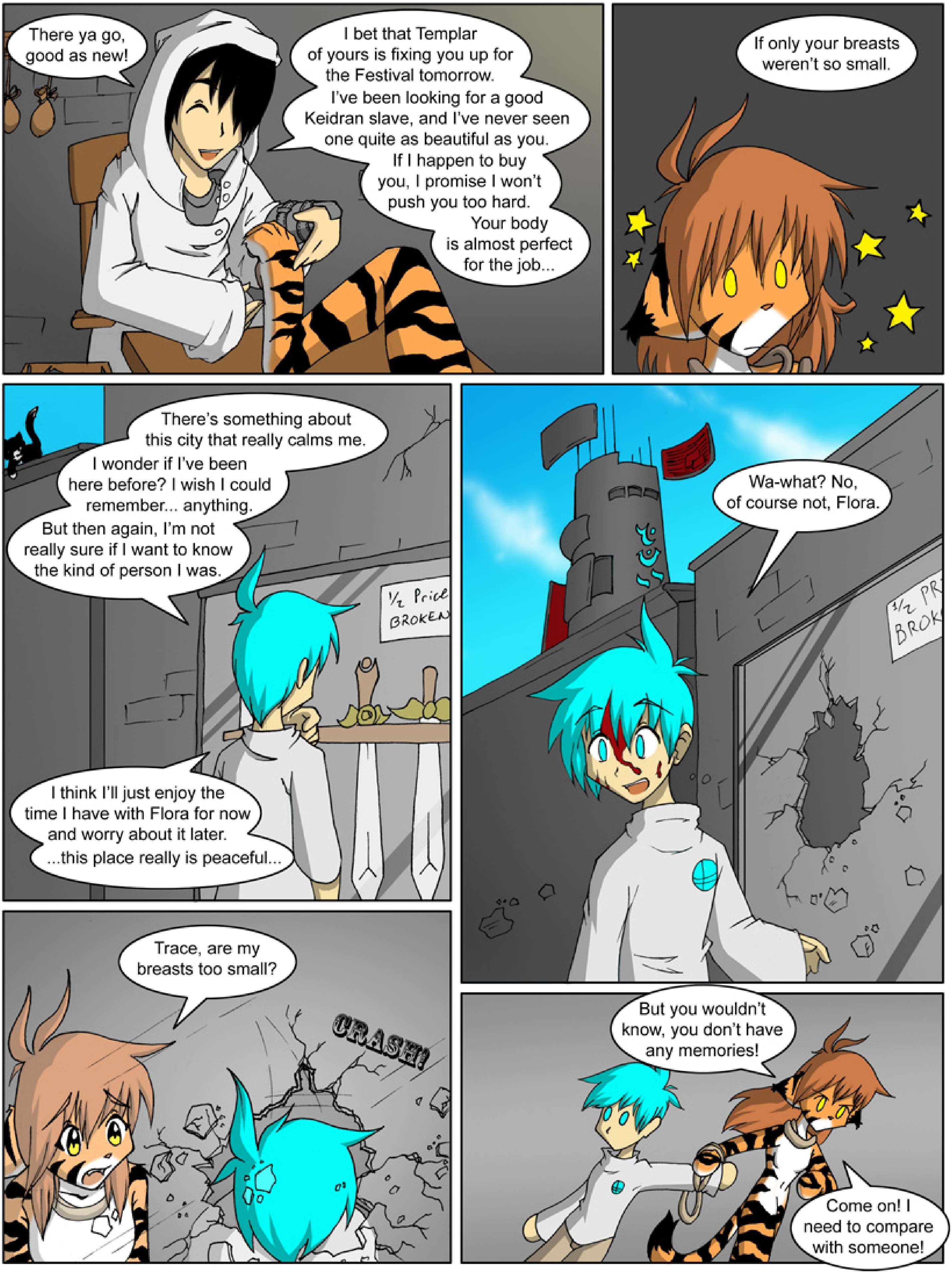

So, Raine, what were you doing out here by yourself, anyway?
Karen was saying you seemed to be in a hurry.
Me? Um, well, I was a slave to some... uh... Keidran. B-but... then I escaped.
Oh, so that's why you smell like a Keidran.
Er, yeah...
But isn't she a Keidran... or part Keidran...?
Karen? No, of course not.
Everyone knows it's not possible for Keidran and Humans to crossbreed.
She was cursed by Trace years ago.
Karen seemed to like it though, and has had the ears ever since.
But that's history. We need to find out where Trace is now. He headed this way.
There's a city nearby where we can get supplies. Then we can continue.
A - a city? No, no! I think I'll just be going now-
Oh, no you don't! You're coming with us! It'll be fun! Like an adventure.
To the city!
Nooooo!

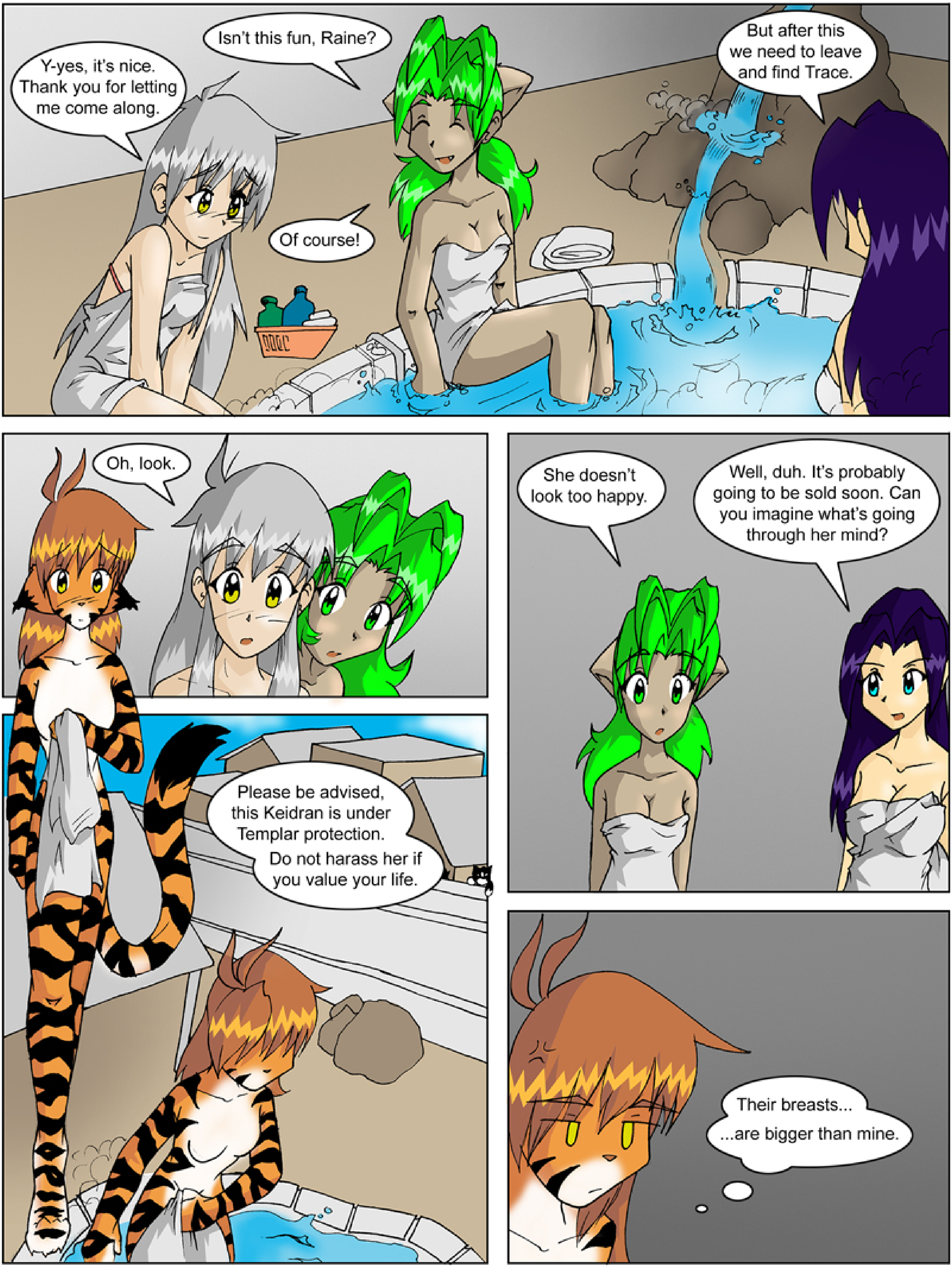

I can see the city across the trees.
What is that?
Oh, that? It's a Templar Mana Battery. They call them "Towers." It's scary...
They started building them right around... when you became Grand Templar.
When I became Grand Templar?
Huh... Trace?
Four years ago.
Please, Stop this, Trace!
You can't do this to me! I am the grand Templar!
If you kill me, they'll never let you become Grand Templar! You're insane!
I think they'll have little choice in the matter.
But you're right. I'm not going to kill you. There are far worse fates.
W-what are you-
Aaah! What... what are you doing to me, Trace?!
Urg... this can't be happening!

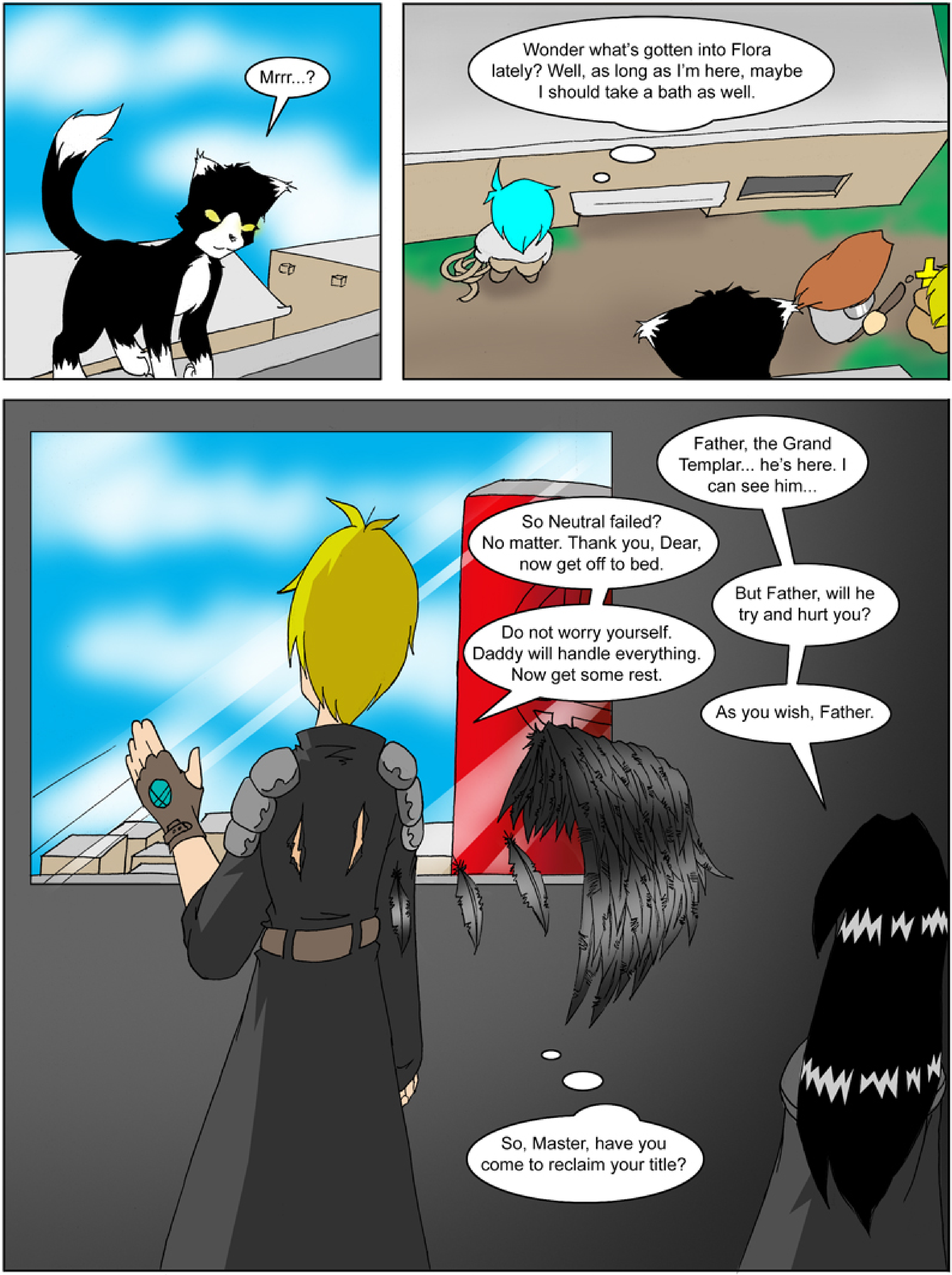

Aaaah! Please, stop it! I'll do anything, just please...
Hurts like hell, doesn't it? Now you know how I've felt all these years.
Trace, you bast-... aaah!
Aaaaaahhh!
Heh, you look good as a wolf.
Won't your daughter be surprised when she sees you now. I'll be sure she does.
Posing as a shopkeeper
5000 Cn
No! Not Raine! she's just a child! You monster!
You're the monster now.
This is only the beginning.
Trace?
Trace!
Trace?
It's me, Flora!
Huh? Keidran?
Oh, Flora!
Sorry, I must have been day dreaming.
Heh heh. I must still be...
'Cause it looks like you're naked again.
Mrrrr...


Remember, Trace.
I don't have to wear my clothes all the time.
Anyway, the easiest way to get me into the city is for you to pretend I'm your slave.
S-slave?! Flora, I can't...
Here, tie me up. It'll be more convincing. It'll be okay...
Are you sure...?
Free Keidran are not aloud in this city. It's the only way.
Alright...
I won't let anyone hurt you, Flora. I promise.


Oooh, look over there!
Karen, would you please calm down?
But look at all the neat stuff! Look! They're selling Keidran!
And clothes! Jewelry!
We're just here to get supplies. Keep your ears down.
What's the fun in that?
Settle down! And be on the look out for Trace. He might have come here too.
Okay, but can we at least stay at the bath house for a little while?
Oh, fine.
Oh, hey. There's a cleric. He should be able to heal you.
Excuse me, can you help us? She's hurt.
What is this?
Do I look like a vet? I don't treat Keidran.
Who do you think you are?
I am Grand Templar Trace, and you *will* heal her.
Gah! G-grand Templar?


There ya go, good as new!
I bet that Templar of yours is fixing you up for the Festival tomorrow. I've been looking for a good Keidran slave, and I've never seen one quite as beautiful as you. If I happen to buy you, I promise I won't push you too hard. Your body is almost perfect for the job...
If only your breasts weren't so small.
There's something about this city that really calms me. I wonder if I've been here before? I wish I could remember... anything. But then again, I'm not really sure if I want to know the kind of person I was.
½ Price BROKEN
I think I'll just enjoy the time I have with Flora for now and worry about it later. ...this place really is peaceful...
Trace, are my breasts too small?
CRASH!
Wa-what? No, of course not, Flora.
½ PRI BROK
But you wouldn't know, you don't have any memories!
Come on! I need to compare with someone!


Isn't this fun, Raine?
Y-yes, it's nice. Thank you for letting me come along.
Of course!
But after this we need to leave and find Trace.
Oh, look.
Please be advised, this Keidran is under Templar protection.
Do not harass her if you value your life.
She doesn't look too happy.
Well, duh. It's probably going to be sold soon. Can you imagine what's going through her mind?
Their breasts...
...are bigger than mine.


Mrrr...?
Wonder what's gotten into Flora lately? Well, as long as I'm here, maybe I should take a bath as well.
Father, the Grand Templar... he's here. I can see him...
So Neutral failed? No matter. Thank you, Dear, now get off to bed.
But Father, will he try and hurt you?
Do not worry yourself. Daddy will handle everything. Now get some rest.
As you wish, Father.
So, Master, have you come to reclaim your title?

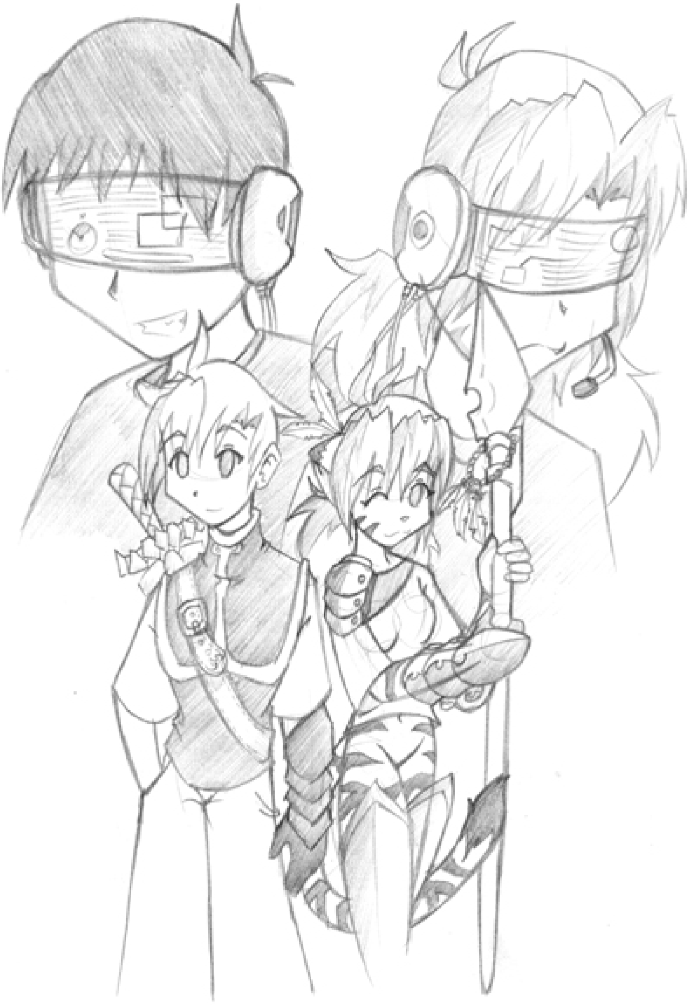
Well, I'm off to Korea.

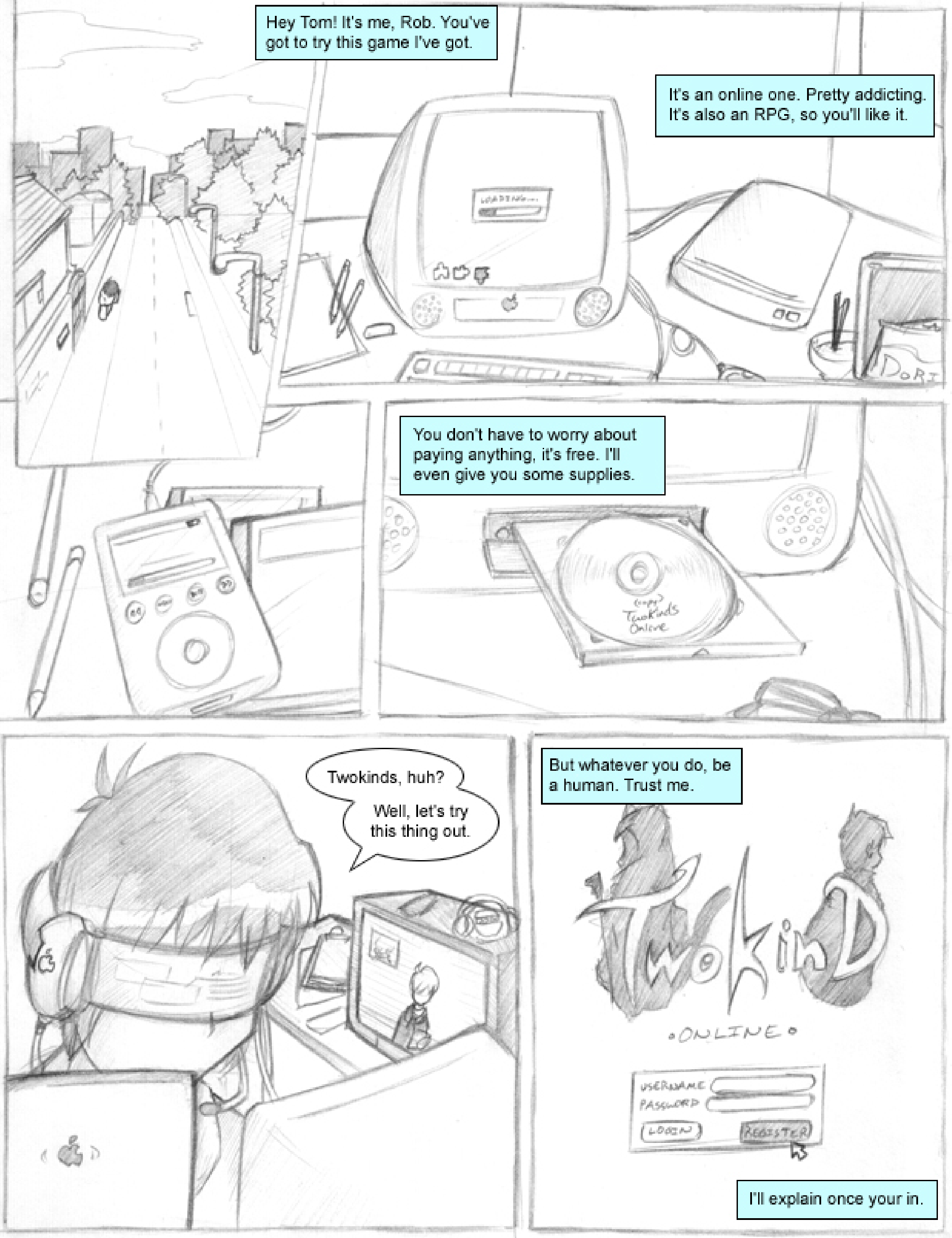
But in the meantime, please enjoy this special sketch comic that I've prepared for you. It's like TwoKinds, but different.

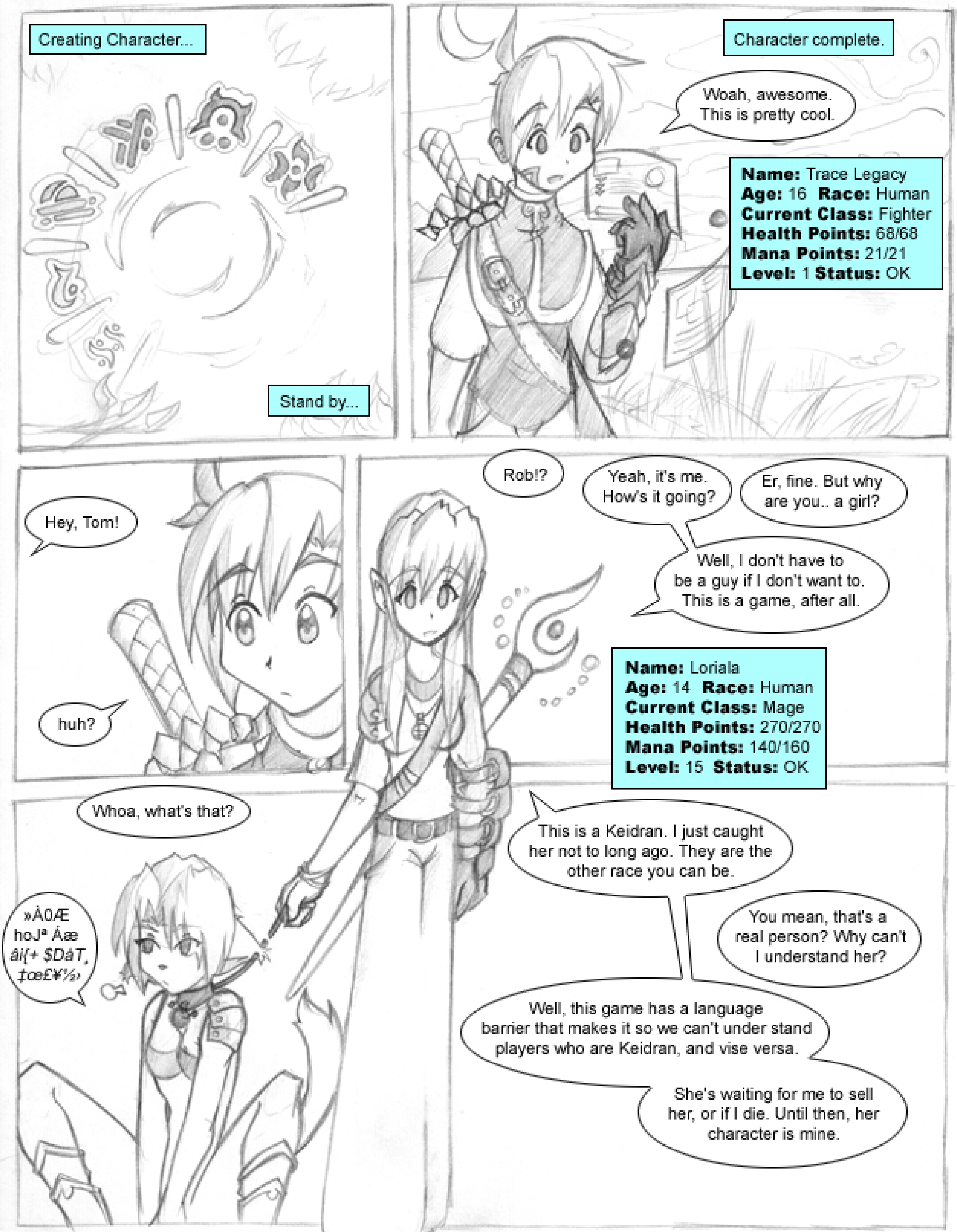
-Tom

Twokinds Online

A short sketch comic by Tom Fischbach

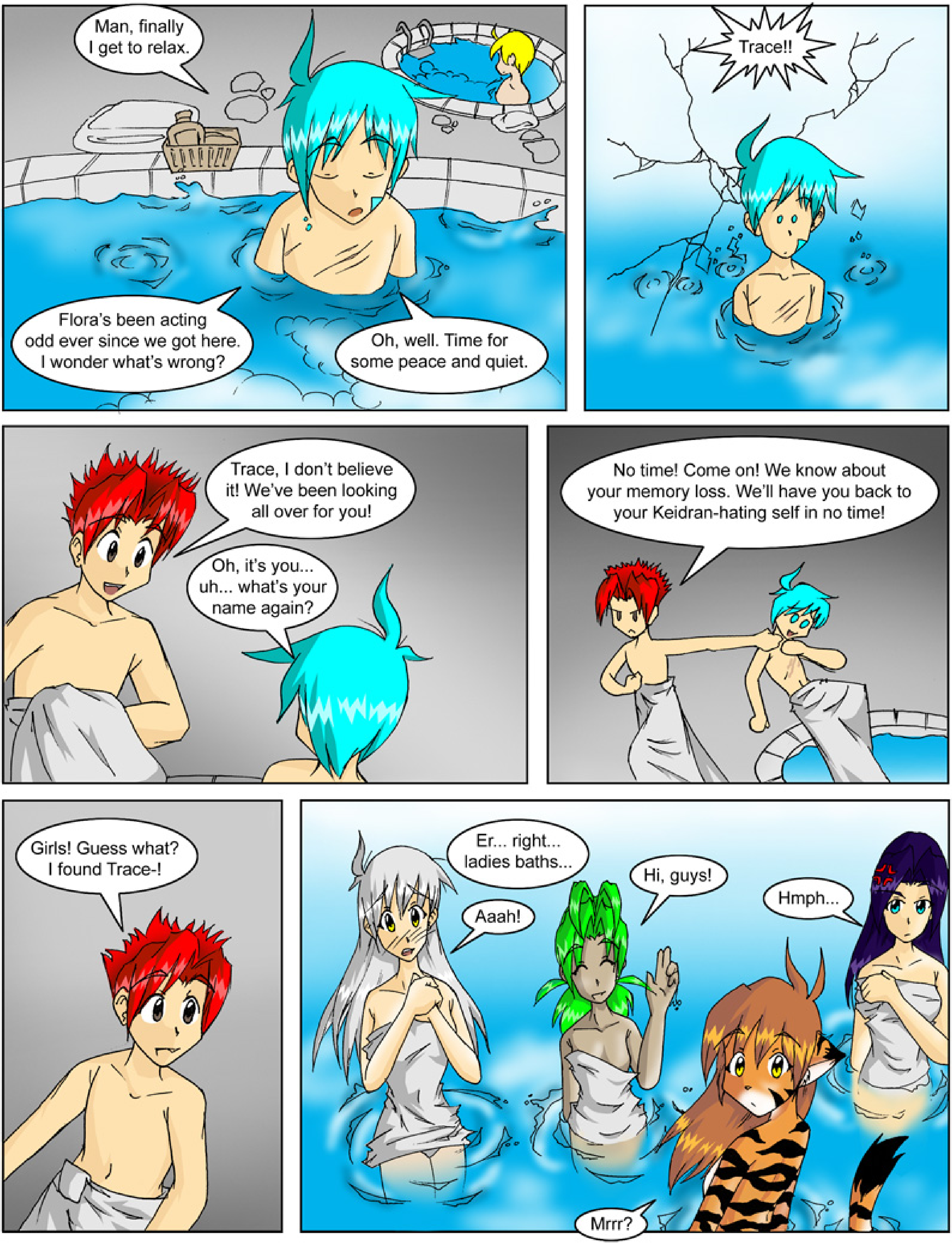


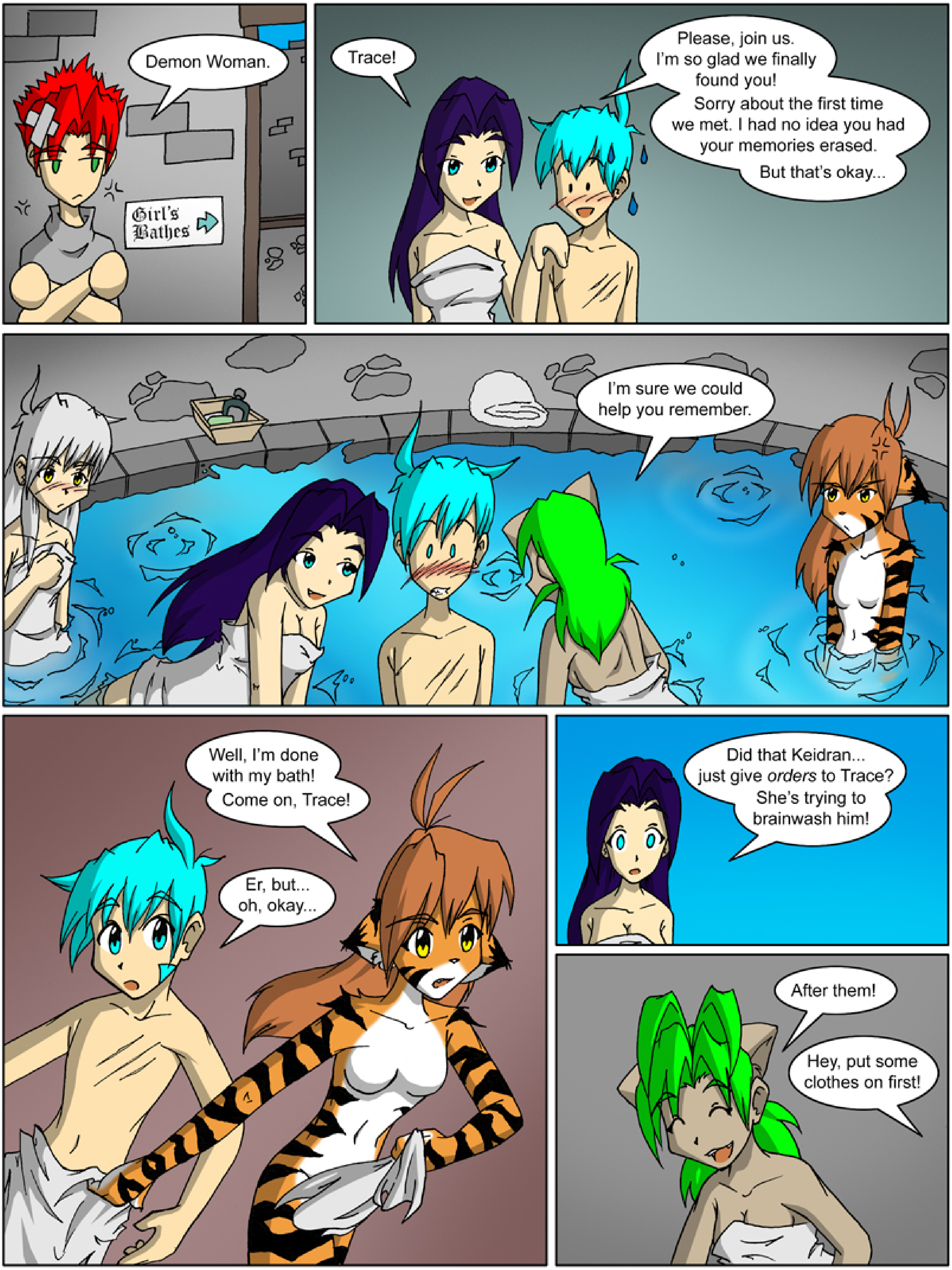

Hey Tom! It's me, Rob. You've got to try this game I've got.
It's an online one. Pretty addicting. It's also an RPG, so you'll like it.
LOADING...
DORI
You don't have to worry about paying anything, it's free. I'll even give you some supplies.
(copy) TwoKinds Online
Twokinds, huh?
Well, let's try this thing out.
But whatever you do, be a human. Trust me.
TwoKinD
ONLINE
USERNAME
PASSWORD
LOGIN
REGISTER
I'll explain once your in.

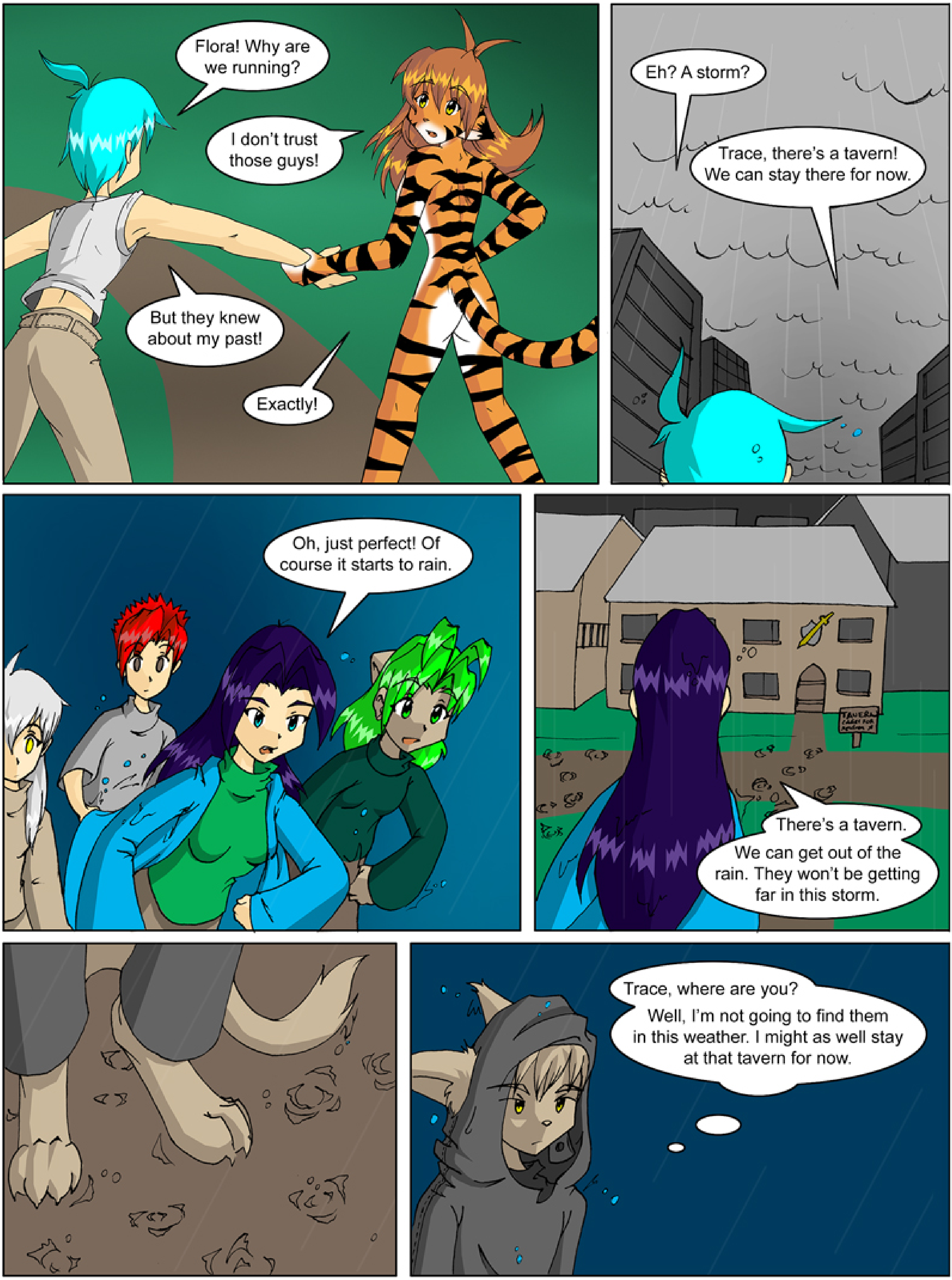

Creating Character...
Stand by...
Character complete.
Woah, awesome. This is pretty cool.
Hey, Tom!
huh?
Rob!?
Yeah, it's me. How's it going?
Er, fine. But why are you.. a girl?
Well, I don't have to be a guy if I don't want to. This is a game, after all.
Whoa, what's that?
This is a Keidran. I just caught her not to long ago. They are the other race you can be.
»À0Æ hoJª Áæ âl{+ $DáT‚ ‡œ£¥½›
You mean, that's a real person? Why can't I understand her?
Well, this game has a language barrier that makes it so we can't under stand players who are Keidran, and vise versa.
She's waiting for me to sell her, or if I die. Until then, her character is mine.

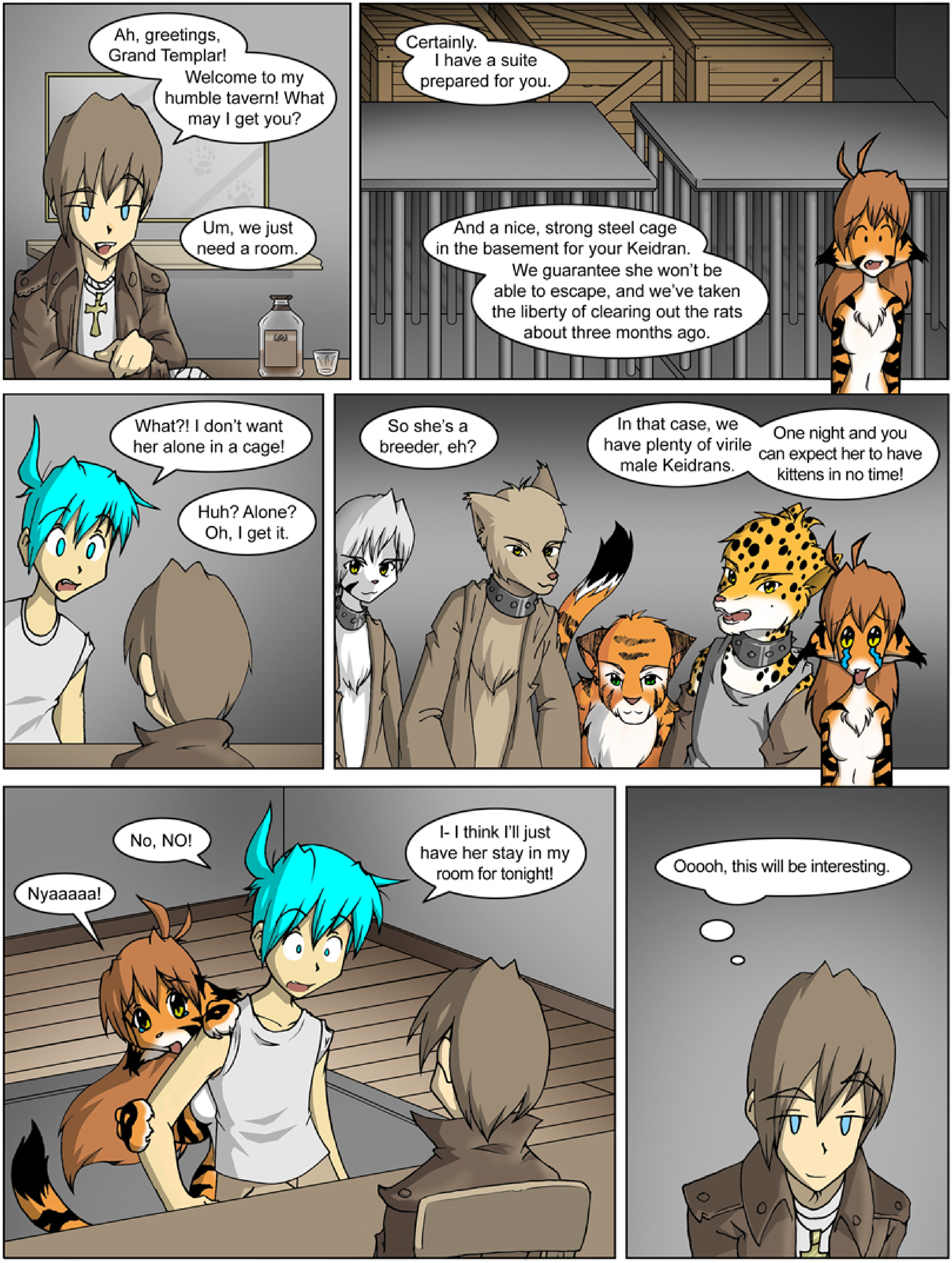
Name: Trace Legacy
Age: 16 **Race:** Human
Current Class: Fighter
Health Points: 68/68
Mana Points: 21/21
Level: 1 **Status:** OK

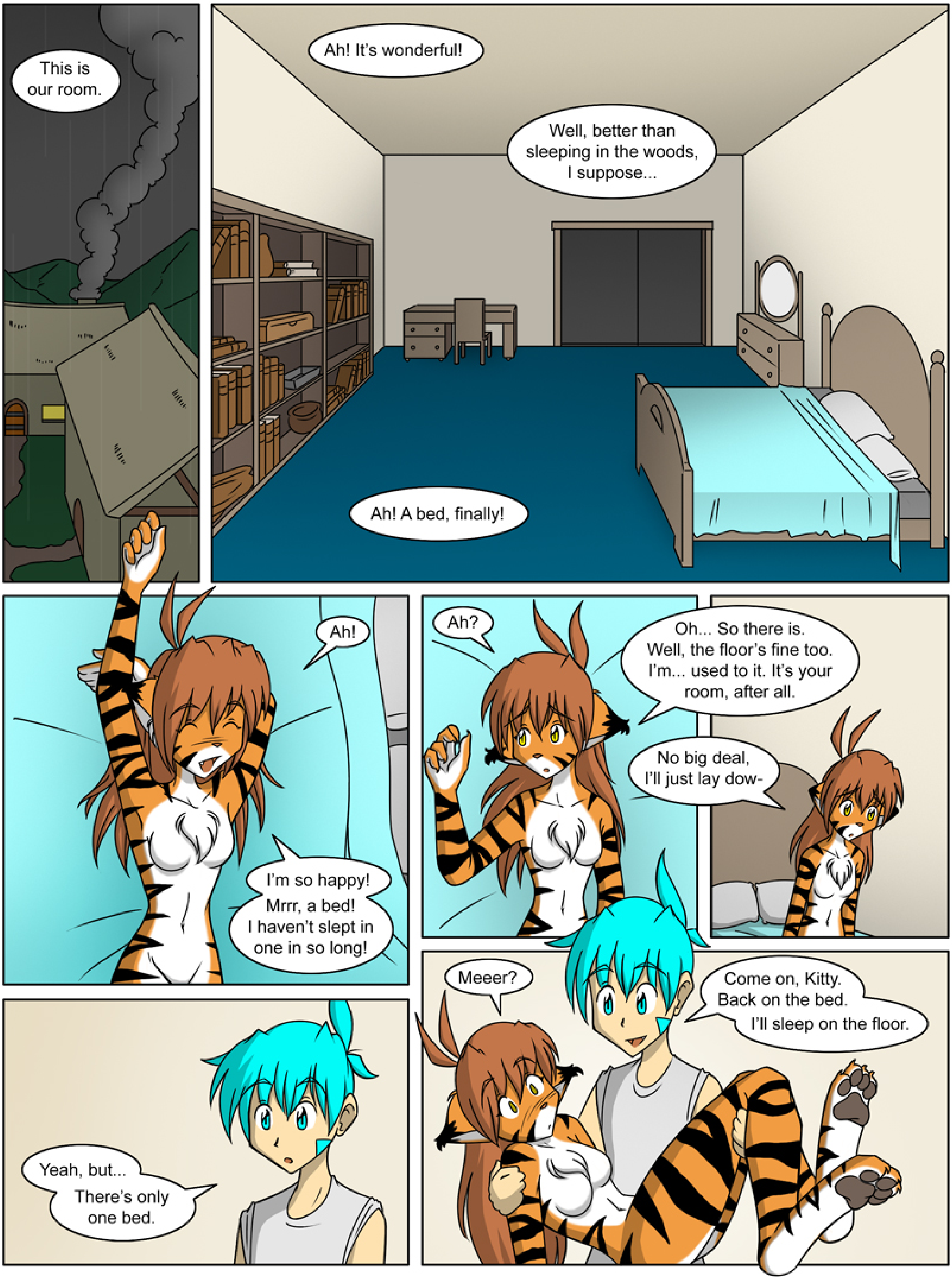
Name: Loriala
Age: 14 **Race:** Human
Current Class: Mage
Health Points: 270/270
Mana Points: 140/160
Level: 15 **Status:** OK

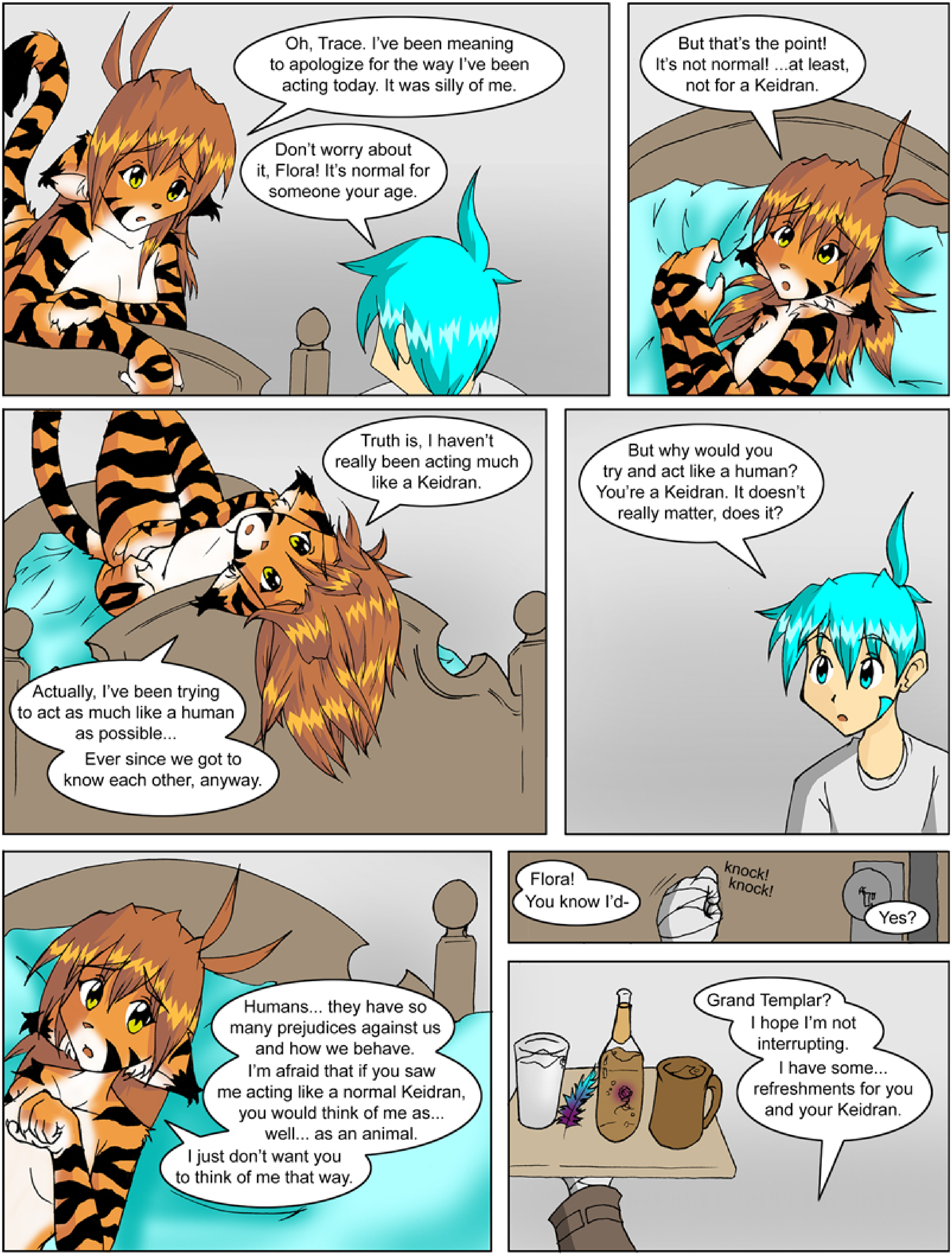

Man, finally I get to relax.
Flora's been acting odd ever since we got here. I wonder what's wrong?
Oh, well. Time for some peace and quiet.
Trace!!
Trace, I don't believe it! We've been looking all over for you!
Oh, it's you... uh... what's your name again?
No time! Come on! We know about your memory loss. We'll have you back to your Keidran-hating self in no time!
Girls! Guess what? I found Trace-!
Er... right... ladies baths...
Aaah!
Hi, guys!
Hmph...
Mrrr?

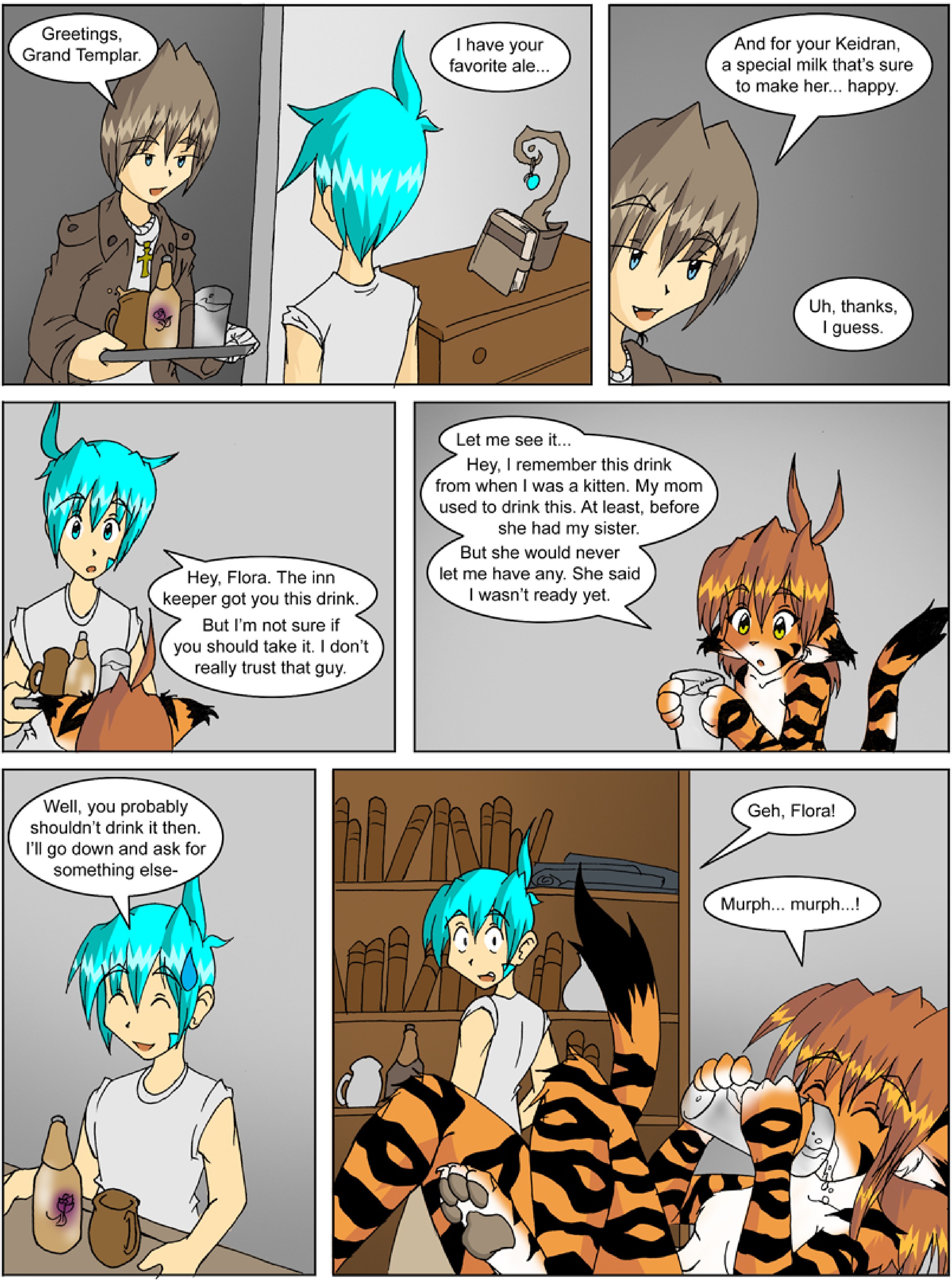

Demon Woman.
Girl's Bathes
Trace!
Please, join us. I'm so glad we finally found you!
Sorry about the first time we met. I had no idea you had your memories erased.
But that's okay...
I'm sure we could help you remember.
Well, I'm done with my bath! Come on, Trace!
Er, but... oh, okay...
Did that Keidran... just give *orders* to Trace?
She's trying to brainwash him!
After them!
Hey, put some clothes on first!

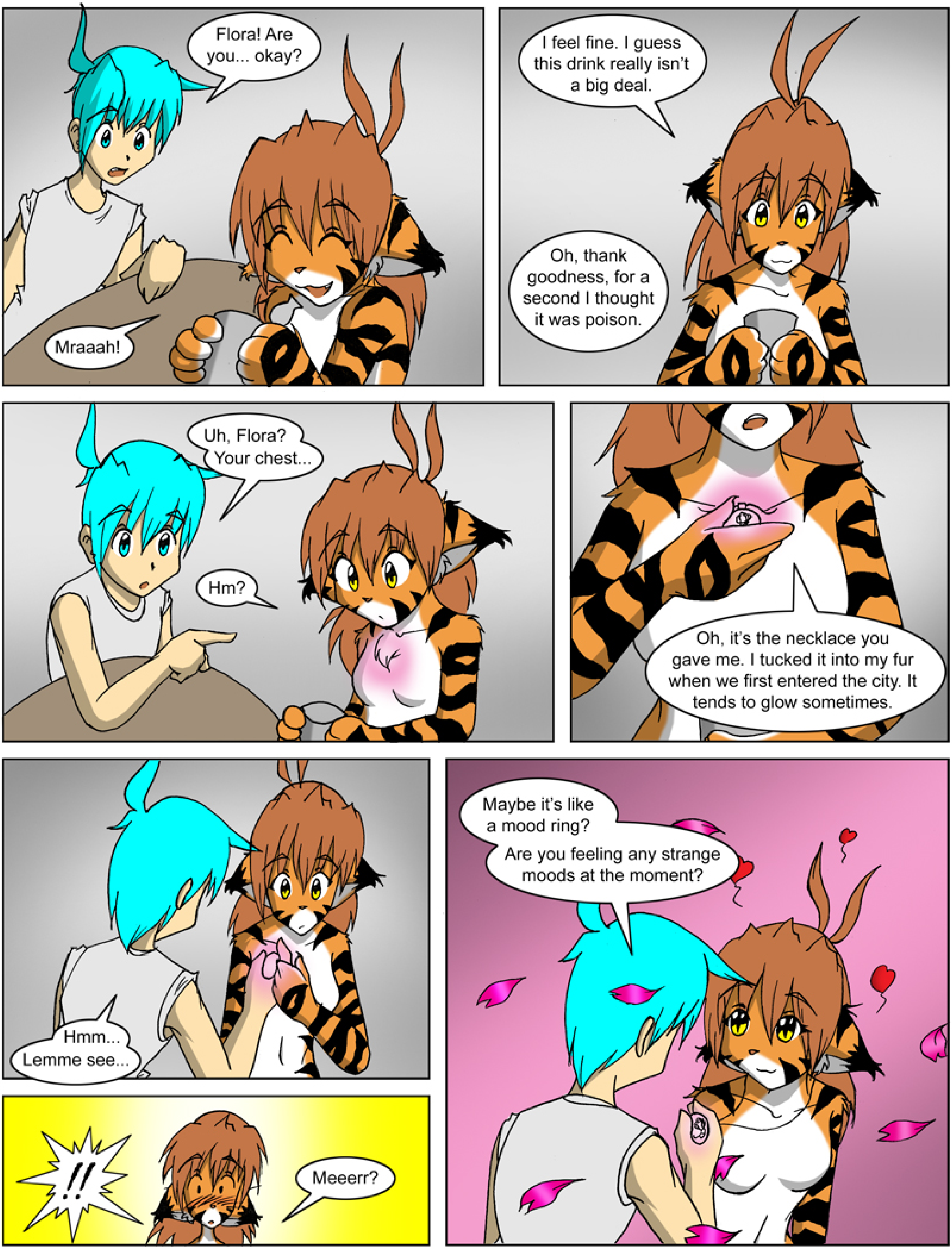

Flora! Why are we running?
I don't trust those guys!
But they knew about my past!
Exactly!
Eh? A storm?
Trace, there's a tavern! We can stay there for now.
Oh, just perfect! Of course it starts to rain.
TAVERN
There's a tavern.
We can get out of the rain. They won't be getting far in this storm.
Trace, where are you?
Well, I'm not going to find them in this weather. I might as well stay at that tavern for now.

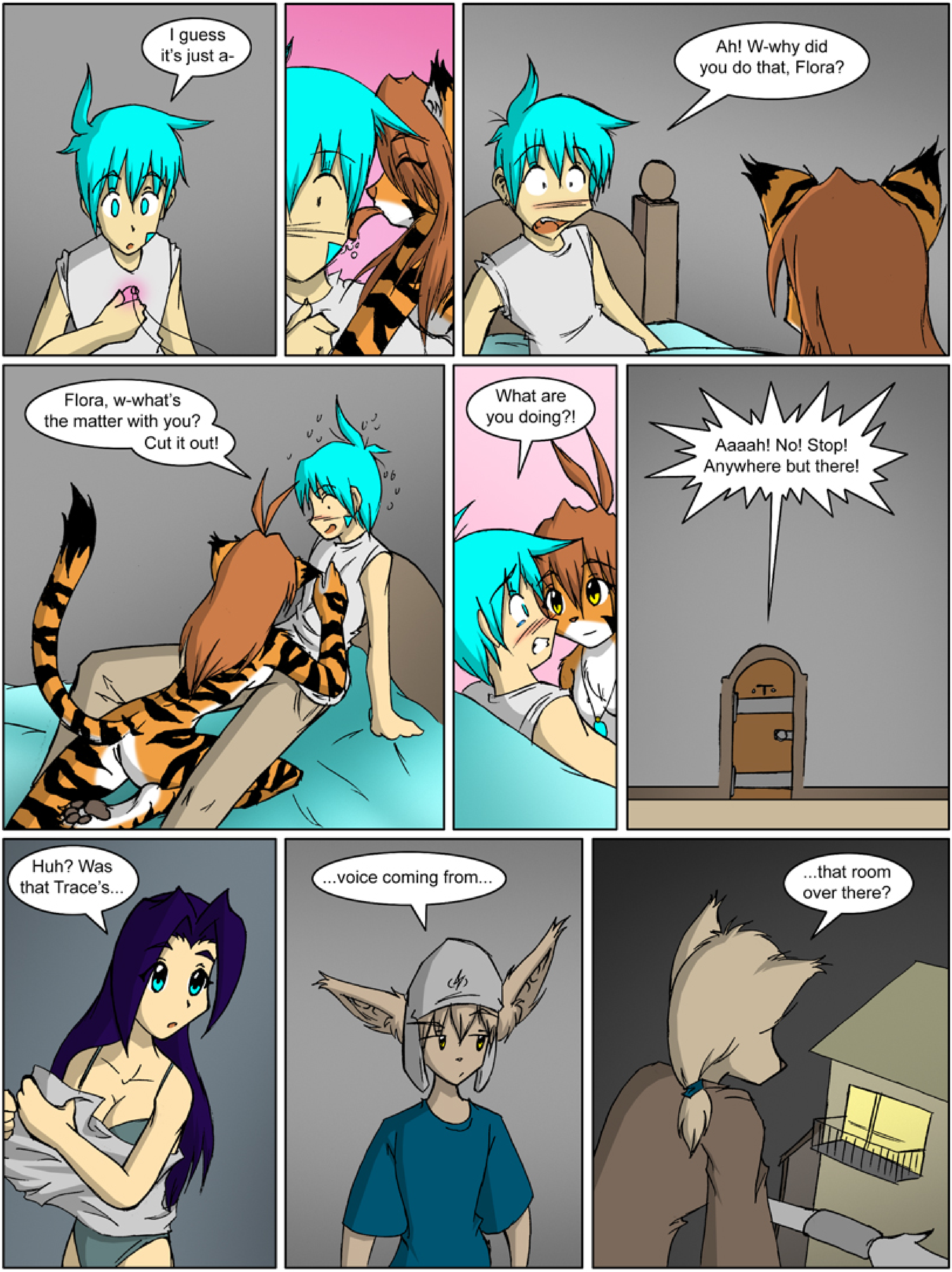

Ah, greetings, Grand Templar!
Welcome to my humble tavern! What may I get you?
Um, we just need a room.
Certainly. I have a suite prepared for you.
And a nice, strong steel cage in the basement for your Keidran.
We guarantee she won't be able to escape, and we've taken the liberty of clearing out the rats about three months ago.
What?! I don't want her alone in a cage!
Huh? Alone? Oh, I get it.
So she's a breeder, eh?
In that case, we have plenty of virile male Keidrans.
One night and you can expect her to have kittens in no time!
No, NO!
Nyaaaaa!
I- I think I'll just have her stay in my room for tonight!
Ooooh, this will be interesting.

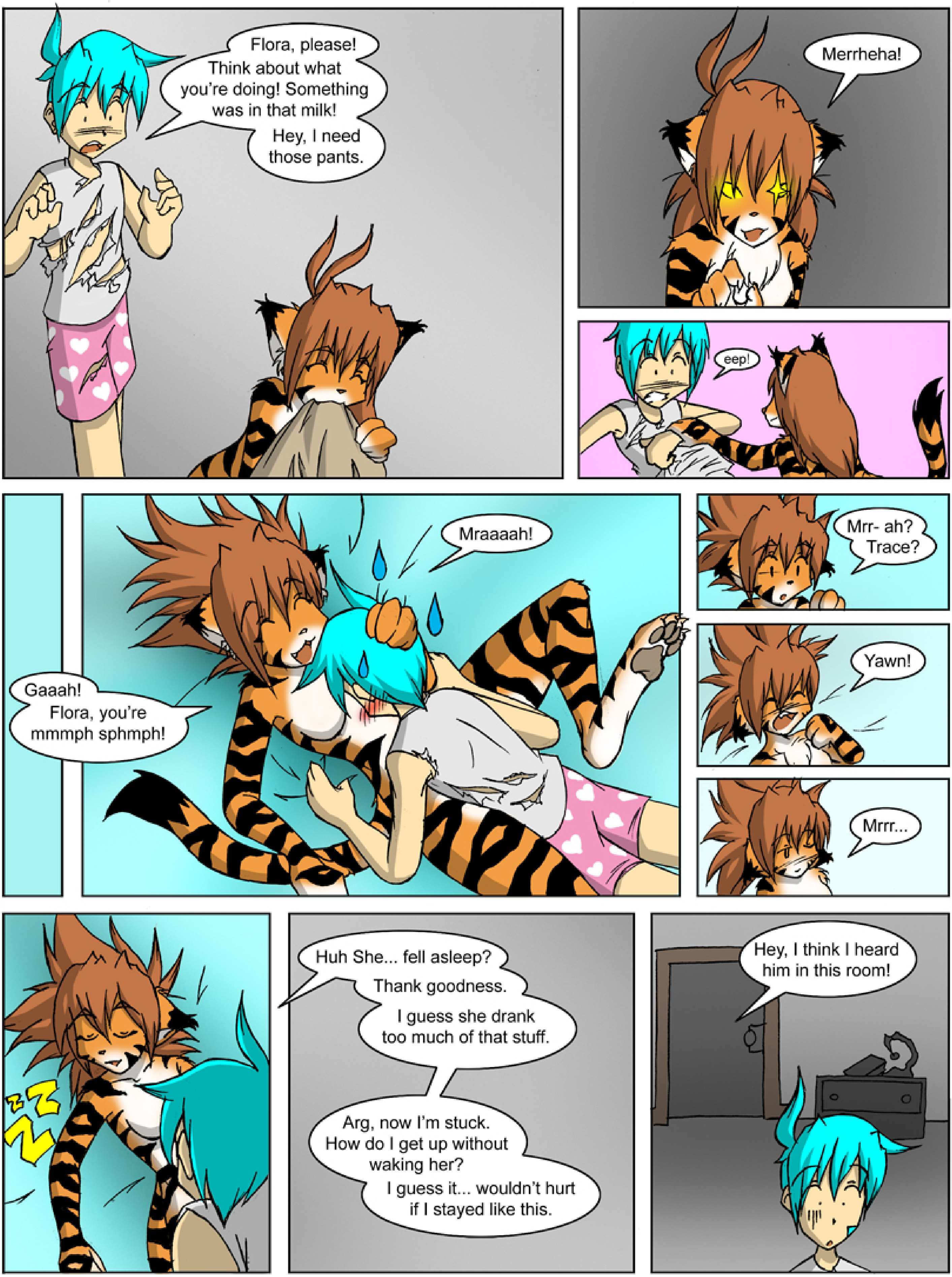

This is our room.
Ah! It's wonderful!
Well, better than sleeping in the woods, I suppose...
Ah! A bed, finally!
Ah!
I'm so happy! Mrrr, a bed! I haven't slept in one in so long!
Yeah, but... There's only one bed.
Ah?
Oh... So there is. Well, the floor's fine too. I'm... used to it. It's your room, after all.
No big deal, I'll just lay dow-
Meeer?
Come on, Kitty. Back on the bed. I'll sleep on the floor.

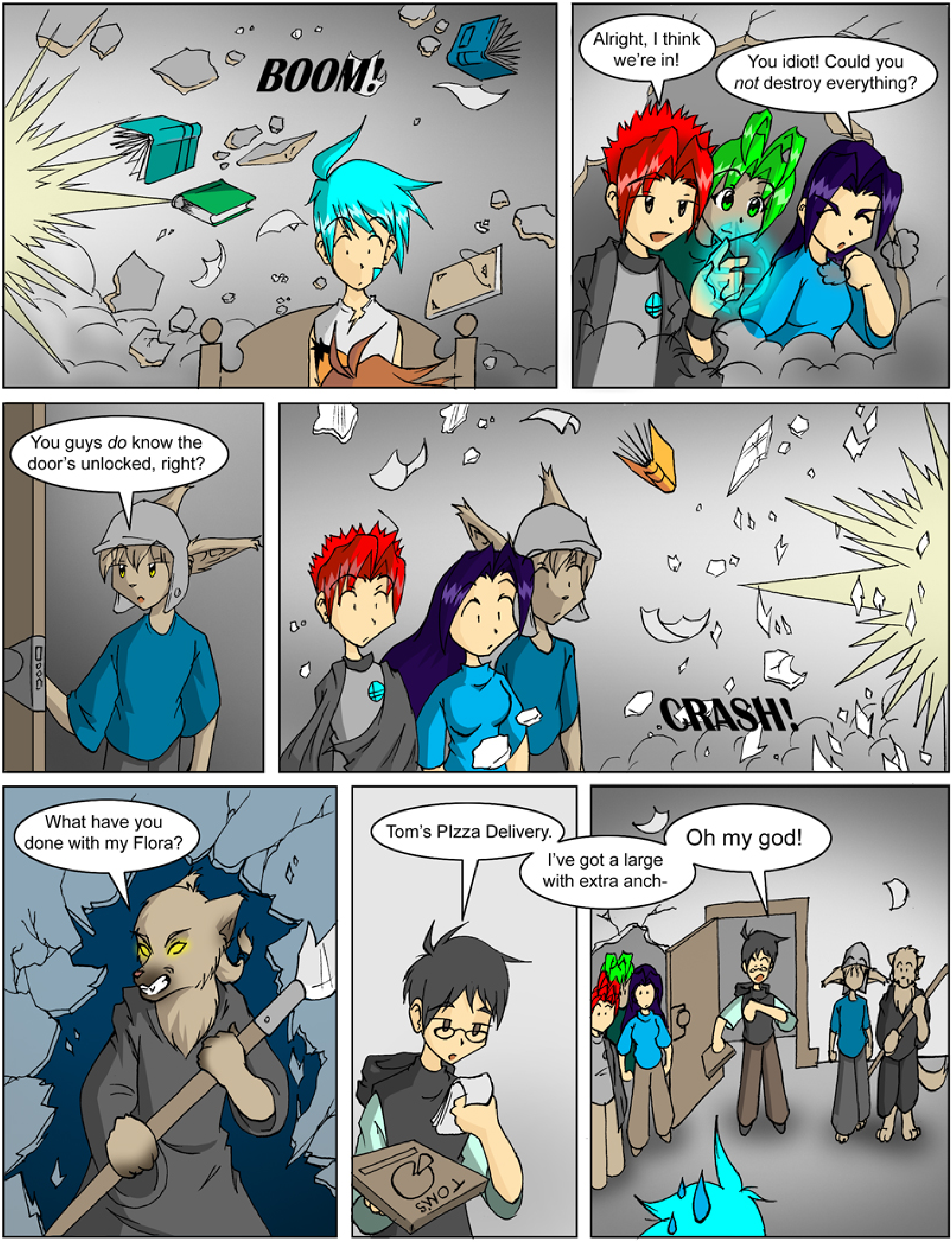

Oh, Trace. I've been meaning to apologize for the way I've been acting today. It was silly of me.
Don't worry about it, Flora! It's normal for someone your age.
But that's the point! It's not normal! ...at least, not for a Keidran.
Truth is, I haven't really been acting much like a Keidran.
Actually, I've been trying to act as much like a human as possible...
Ever since we got to know each other, anyway.
But why would you try and act like a human? You're a Keidran. It doesn't really matter, does it?
Humans... they have so many prejudices against us and how we behave. I'm afraid that if you saw me acting like a normal Keidran, you would think of me as... well... as an animal.
I just don't want you to think of me that way.
Flora! You know I'd-
knock! knock!
Yes?
Grand Templar? I hope I'm not interrupting.
I have some... refreshments for you and your Keidran.

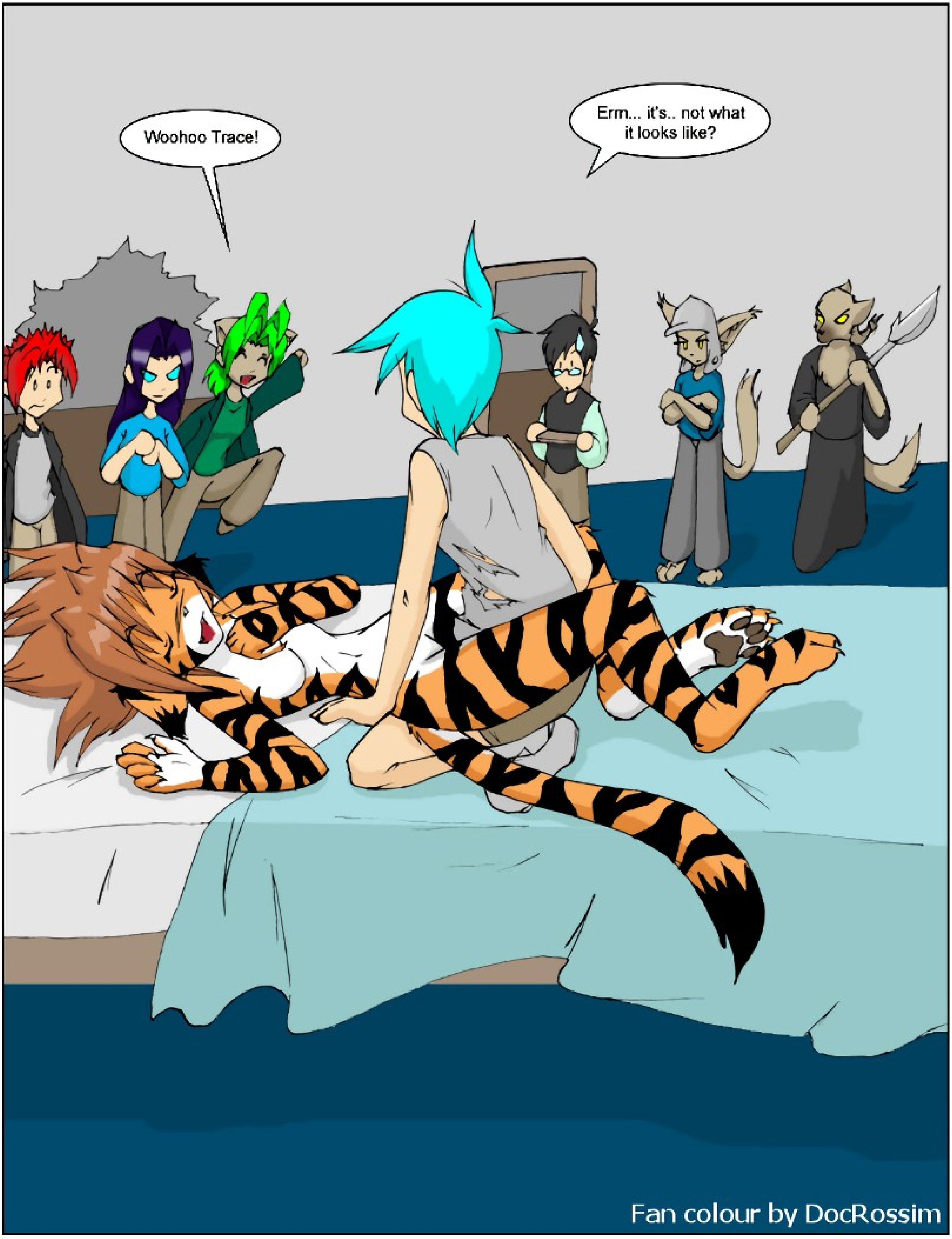

Greetings, Grand Templar.
I have your favorite ale...
And for your Keidran, a special milk that's sure to make her... happy.
Uh, thanks, I guess.
Hey, Flora. The inn keeper got you this drink.
But I'm not sure if you should take it. I don't really trust that guy.
Let me see it...
Hey, I remember this drink from when I was a kitten. My mom used to drink this. At least, before she had my sister.
But she would never let me have any. She said I wasn't ready yet.
Well, you probably shouldn't drink it then. I'll go down and ask for something else-
Geh, Flora!
Murph... murph...!

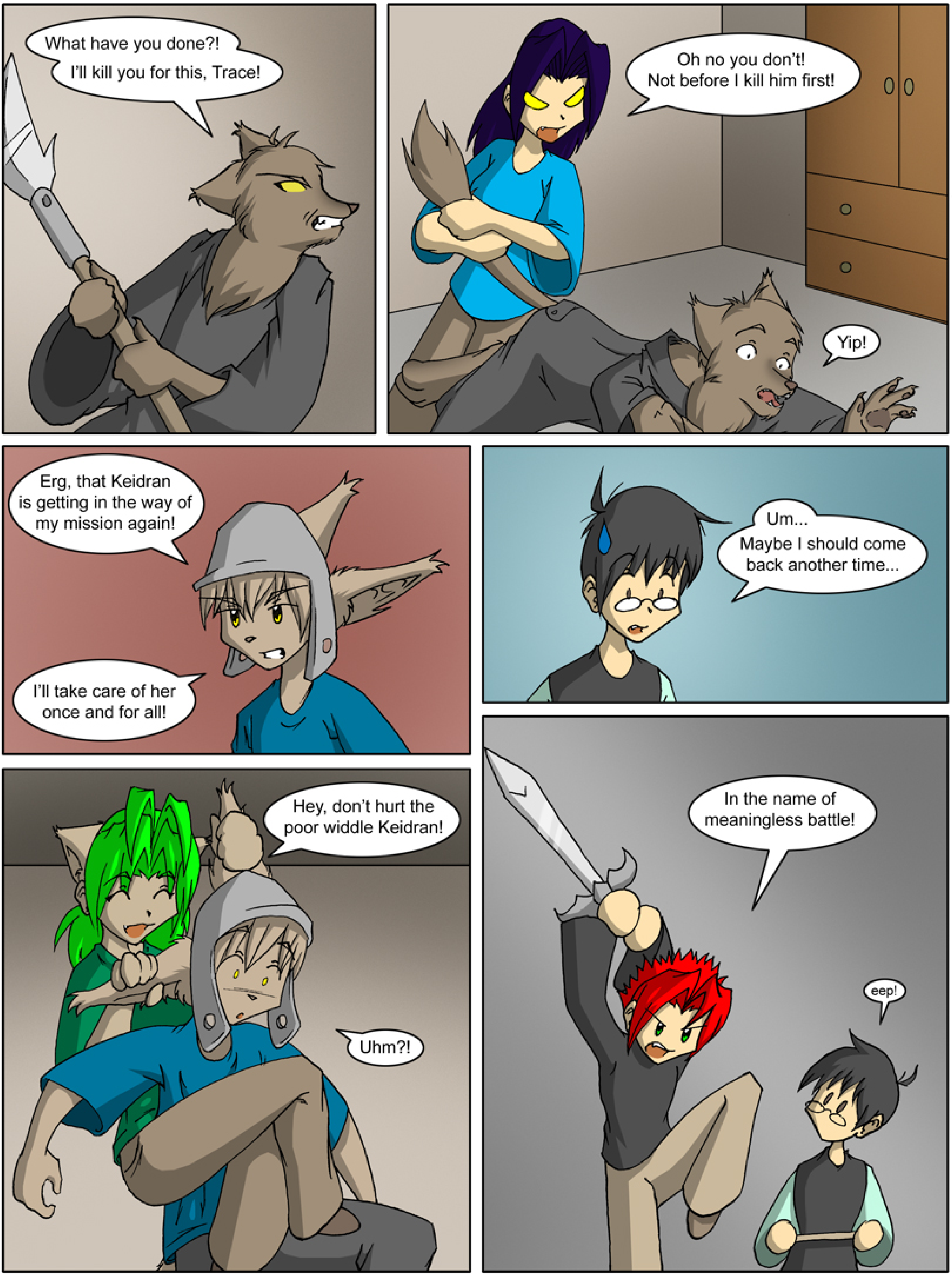

Flora! Are you... okay?
Mraaah!
I feel fine. I guess this drink really isn't a big deal.
Oh, thank goodness, for a second I thought it was poison.
Uh, Flora? Your chest...
Hm?
Oh, it's the necklace you gave me. I tucked it into my fur when we first entered the city. It tends to glow sometimes.
Hmm... Lemme see...
Maybe it's like a mood ring?
Are you feeling any strange moods at the moment?
!!
Meeerr?

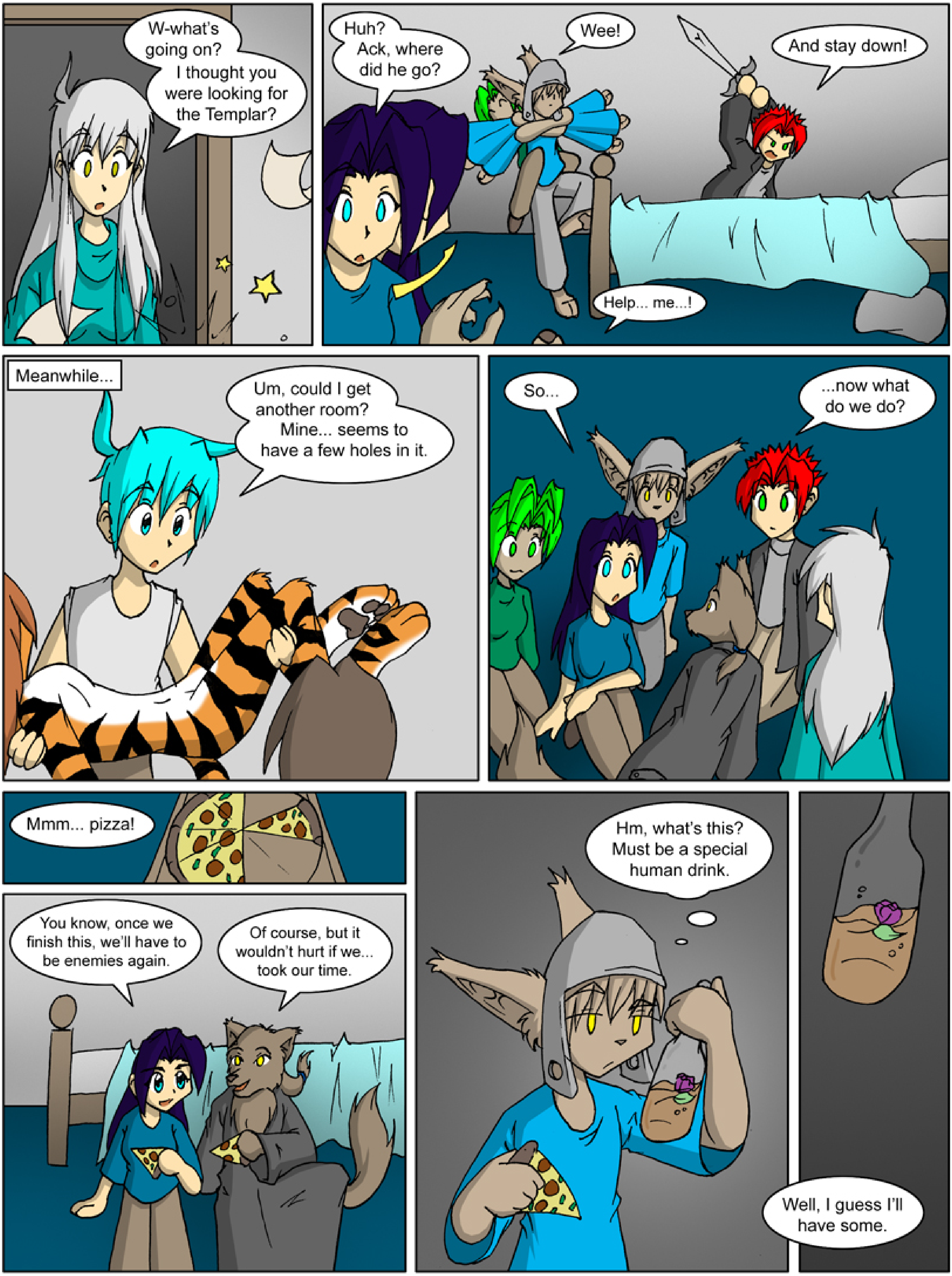

I guess it's just a-
Ah! W-why did you do that, Flora?
Flora, w-what's the matter with you? Cut it out!
What are you doing?!
Aaaah! No! Stop! Anywhere but there!
Huh? Was that Trace's...
...voice coming from...
...that room over there?

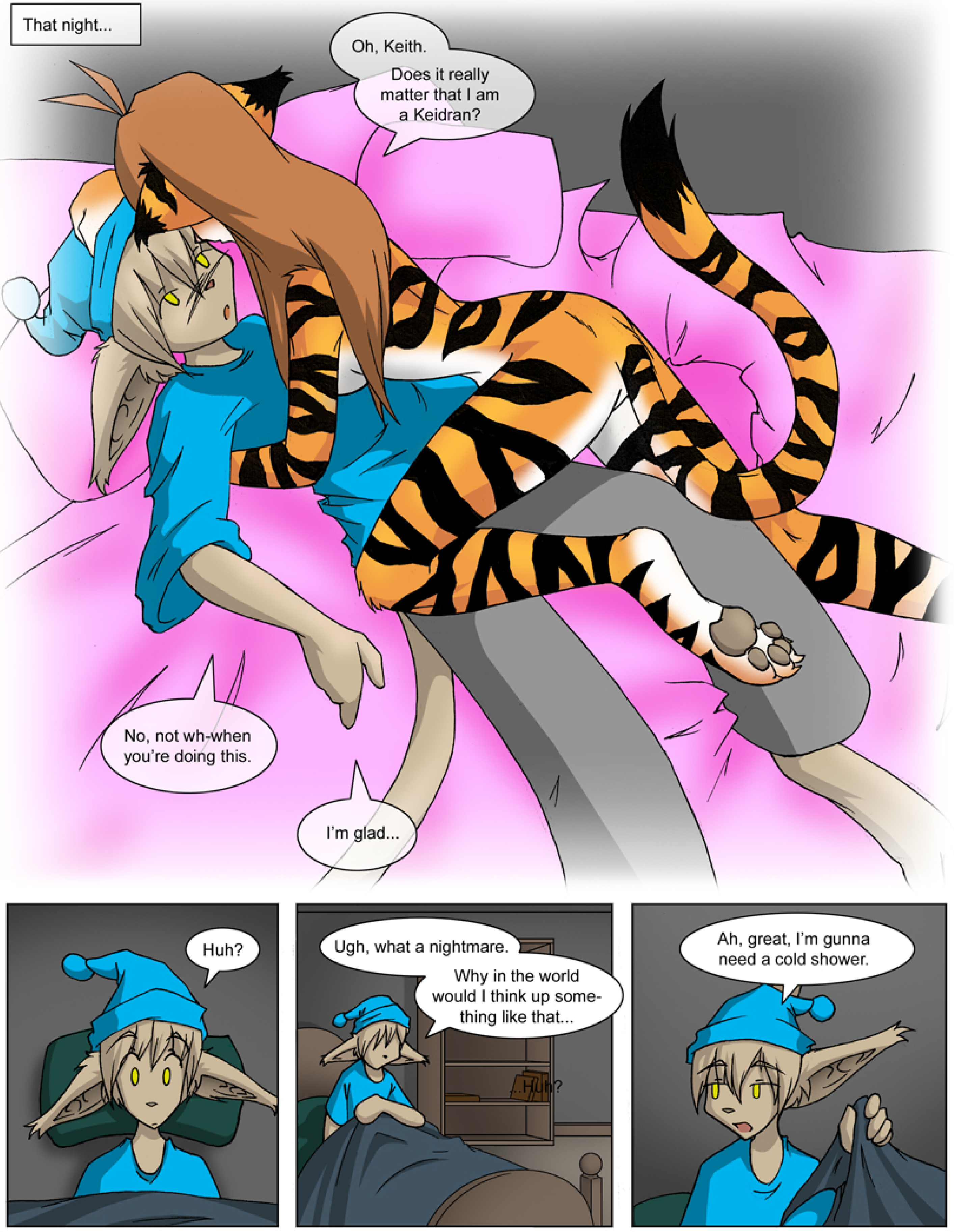

Flora, please! Think about what you're doing! Something was in that milk!
Hey, I need those pants.
Merrheha!
eep!
Mraaaah!
Gaaah! Flora, you're mmmph sphmph!
Mrr- ah? Trace?
Yawn!
Mrrr...
Z Z Z
Huh She... fell asleep?
Thank goodness.
I guess she drank too much of that stuff.
Arg, now I'm stuck. How do I get up without waking her?
I guess it... wouldn't hurt if I stayed like this.
Hey, I think I heard him in this room!

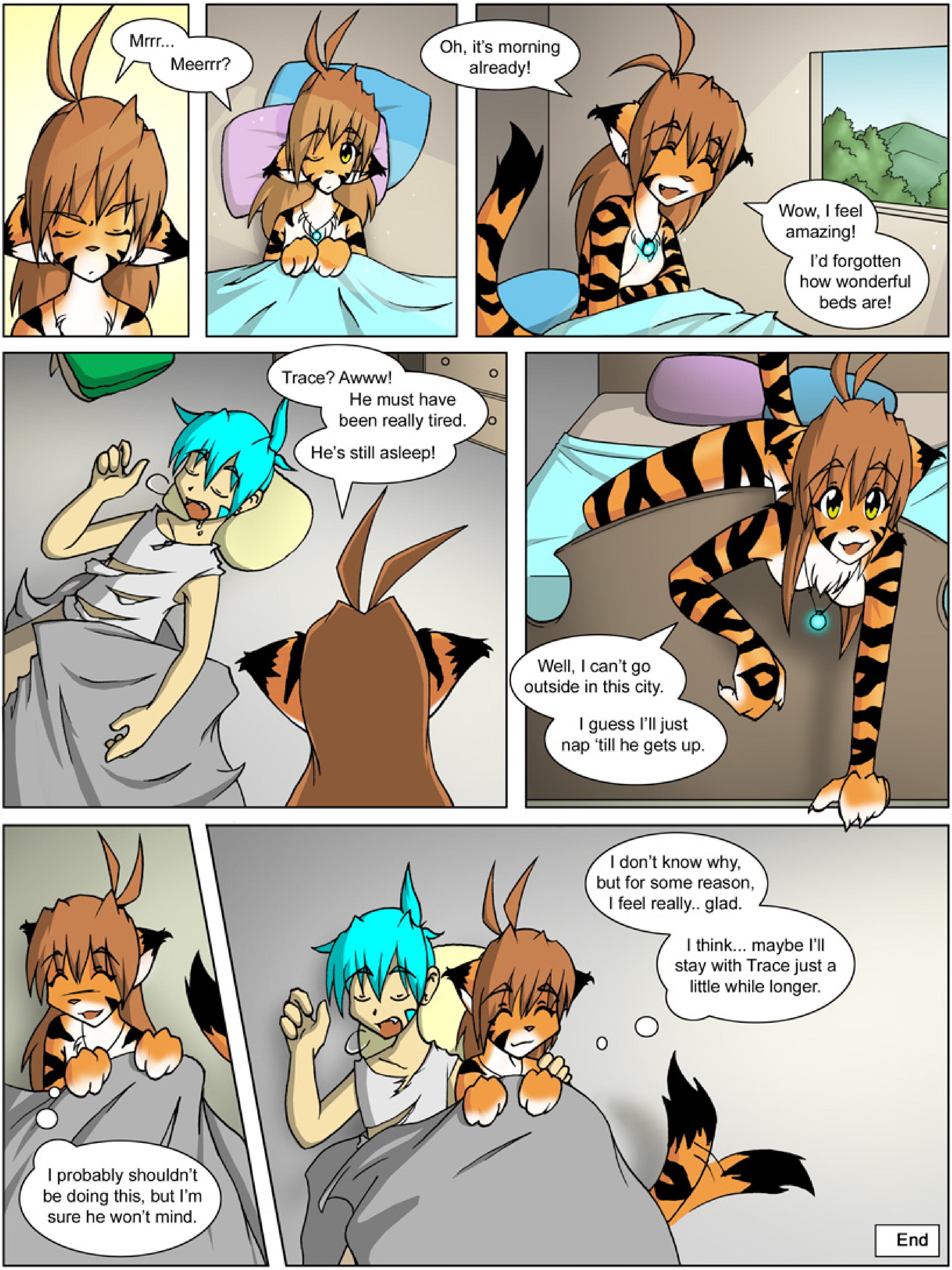

BOOM!
Alright, I think we're in!
You idiot! Could you *not* destroy everything?
You guys *do* know the door's unlocked, right?
CRASH!
What have you done with my Flora?
Tom's PIzza Delivery.
I've got a large with extra anch-
Oh my god!
TOM'S


Woohoo Trace!
Erm... it's.. not what it looks like?
Fan colour by DocRossim


What have you done?!
I'll kill you for this, Trace!
Oh no you don't!
Not before I kill him first!
Yip!
Erg, that Keidran is getting in the way of my mission again!
I'll take care of her once and for all!
Um...
Maybe I should come back another time...
Hey, don't hurt the poor widdle Keidran!
Uhm?!
In the name of meaningless battle!
eep!

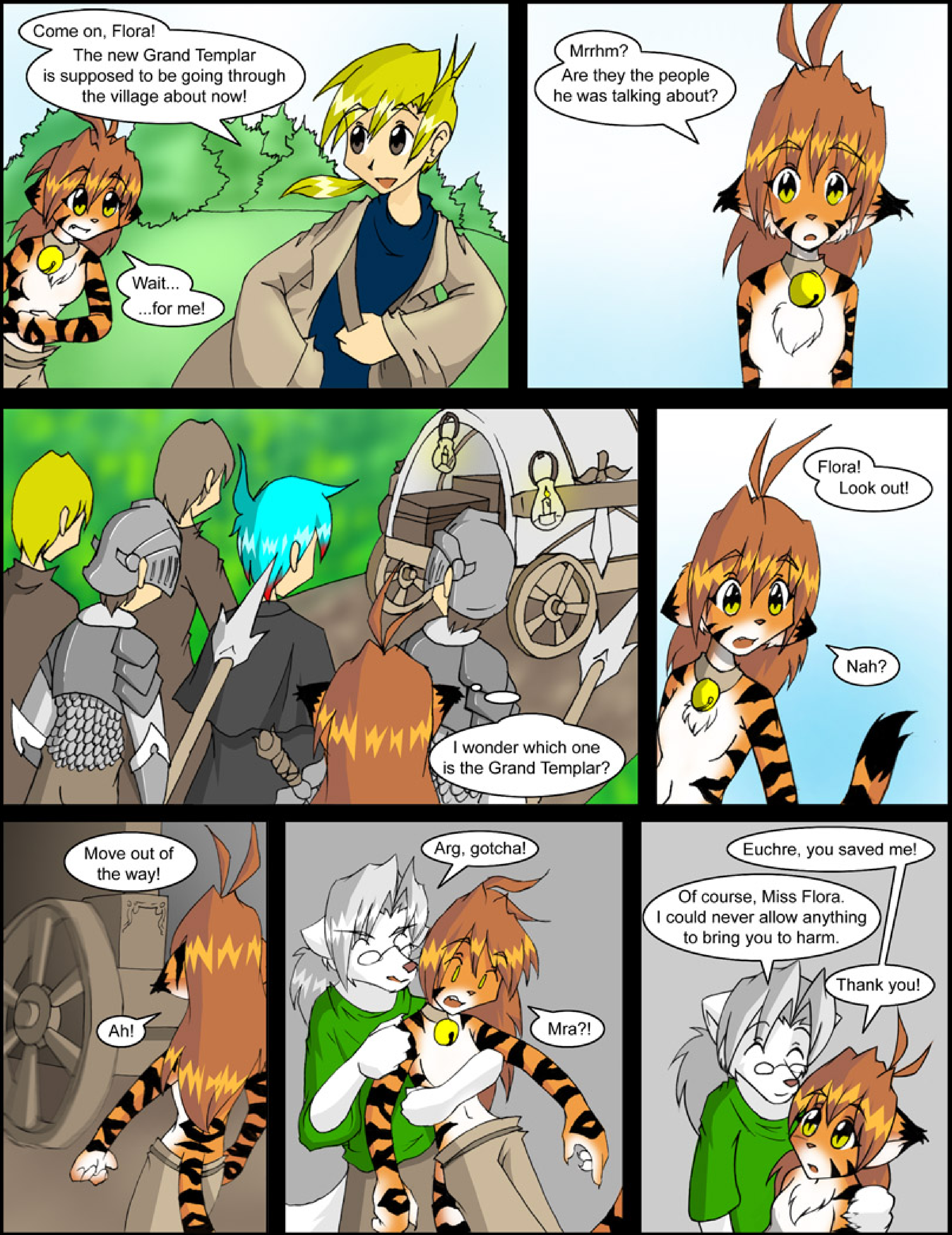

W-what's going on? I thought you were looking for the Templar?
Huh? Ack, where did he go?
Wee!
And stay down!
Help... me...!
Meanwhile...
Um, could I get another room? Mine... seems to have a few holes in it.
So...
...now what do we do?
Mmm... pizza!
You know, once we finish this, we'll have to be enemies again.
Of course, but it wouldn't hurt if we... took our time.
Hm, what's this? Must be a special human drink.
Well, I guess I'll have some.

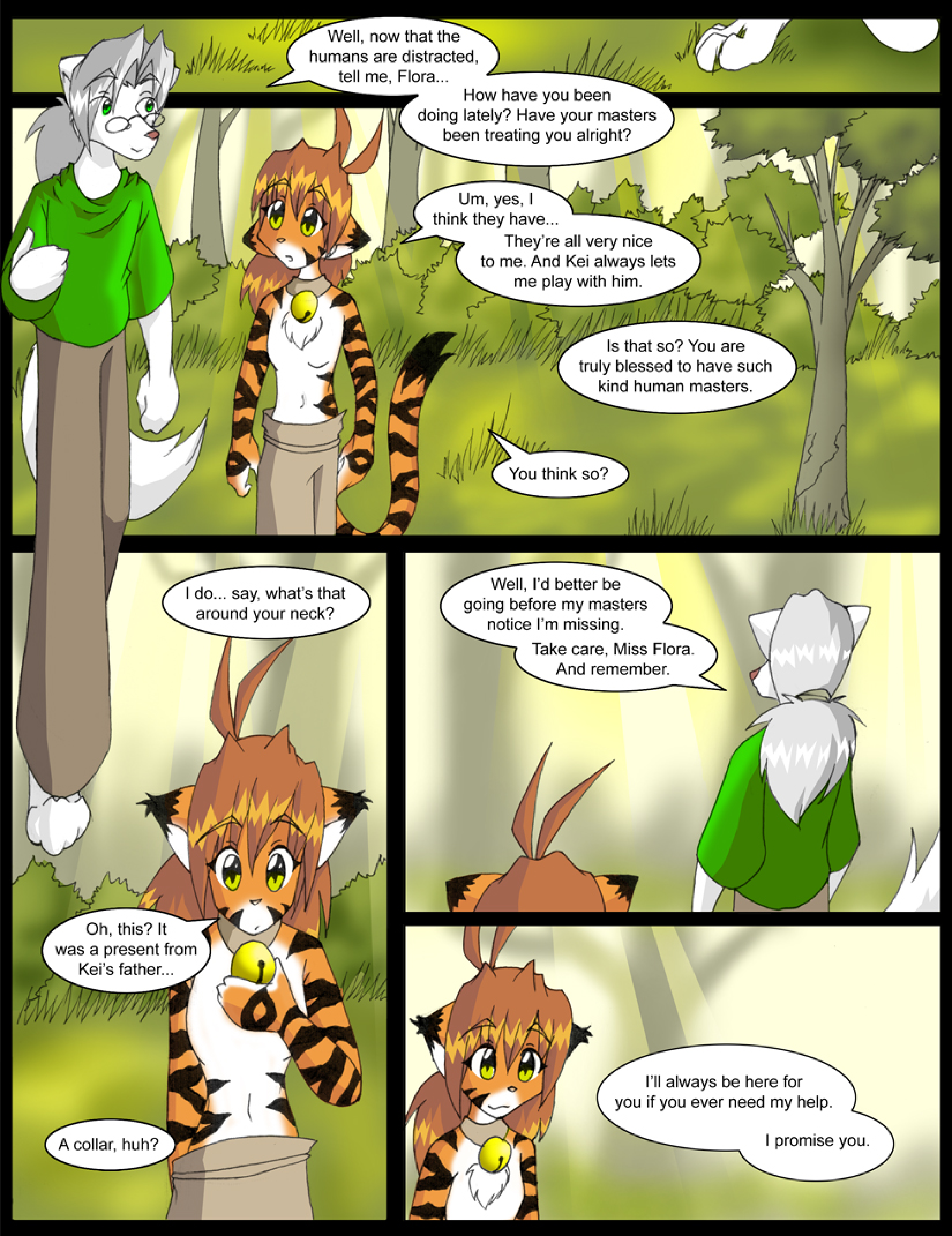

That night...
Oh, Keith.
Does it really matter that I am a Keidran?
No, not wh-when you're doing this.
I'm glad...
Huh?
Ugh, what a nightmare.
Why in the world would I think up something like that...
..Huh?
Ah, great, I'm gunna need a cold shower.

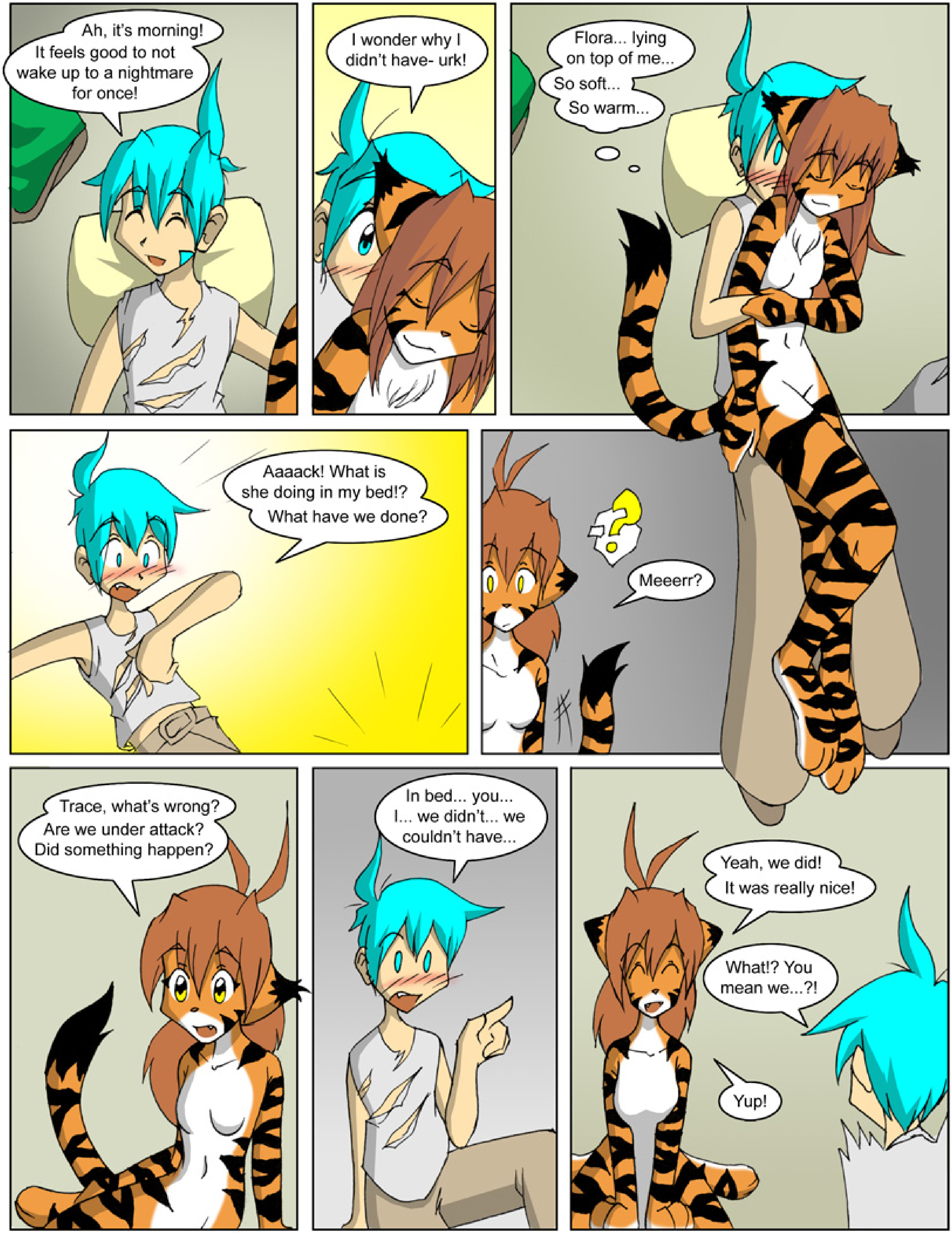

Mrrr...
Meerrr?
Oh, it's morning already!
Wow, I feel amazing!
I'd forgotten how wonderful beds are!
Trace? Awww!
He must have been really tired.
He's still asleep!
Well, I can't go outside in this city.
I guess I'll just nap 'till he gets up.
I probably shouldn't be doing this, but I'm sure he won't mind.
I don't know why, but for some reason, I feel really.. glad.
I think... maybe I'll stay with Trace just a little while longer.
End

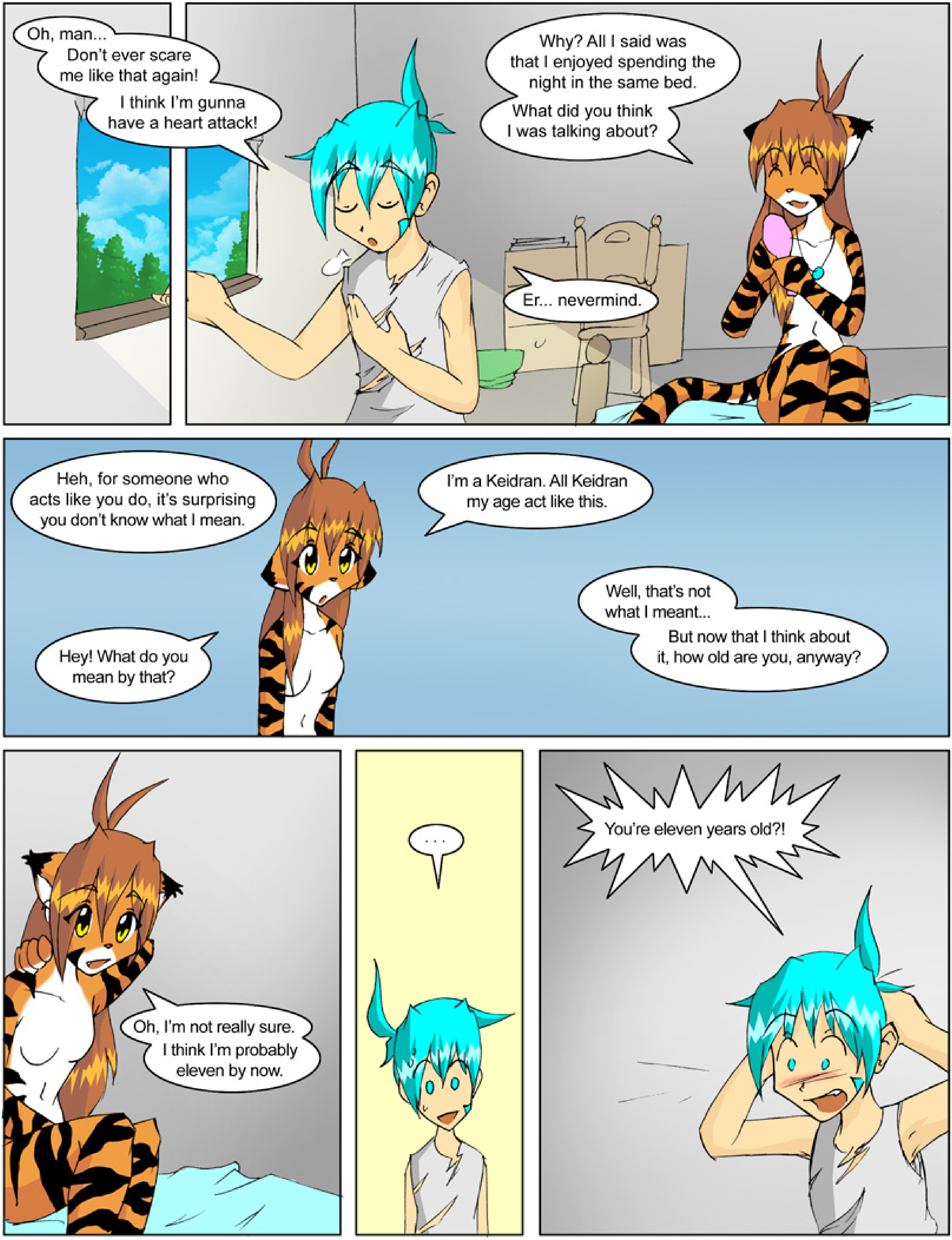
TwoKinds

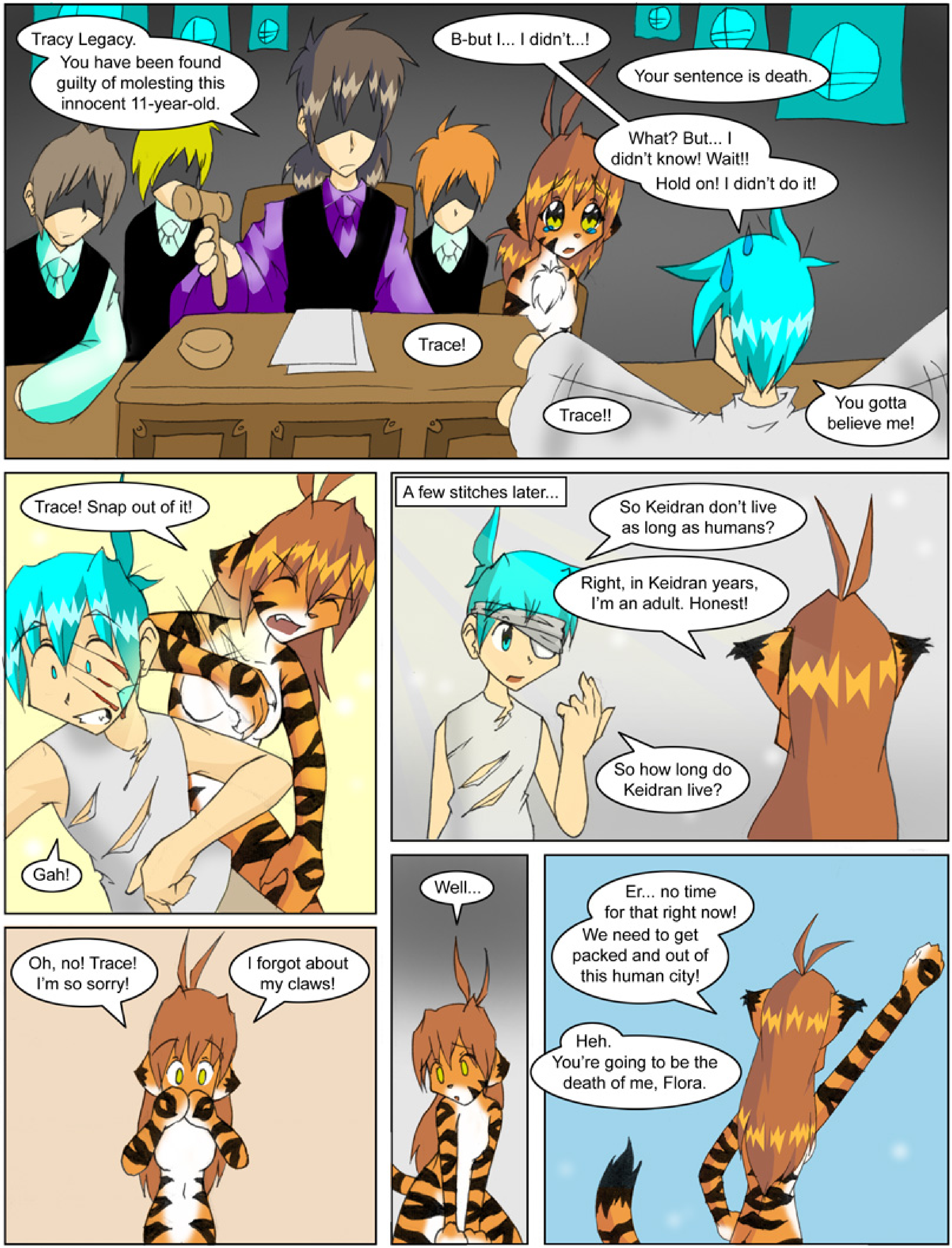
Chapter Four

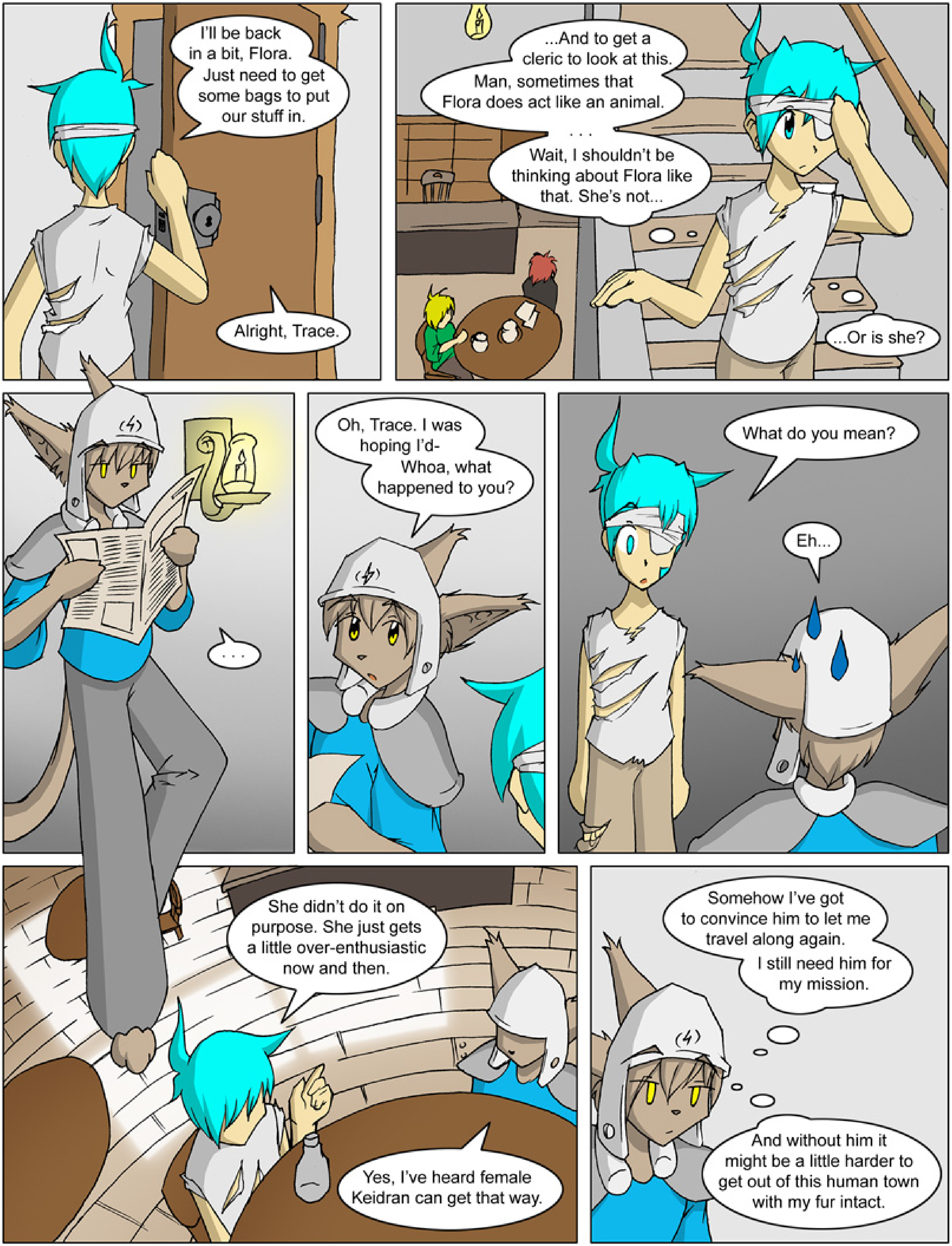

Come on, Flora!
The new Grand Templar is supposed to be going through the village about now!
Wait... ...for me!
Mrrhm? Are they the people he was talking about?
I wonder which one is the Grand Templar?
Flora! Look out!
Nah?
Move out of the way!
Ah!
Arg, gotcha!
Mra?!
Euchre, you saved me!
Of course, Miss Flora. I could never allow anything to bring you to harm.
Thank you!

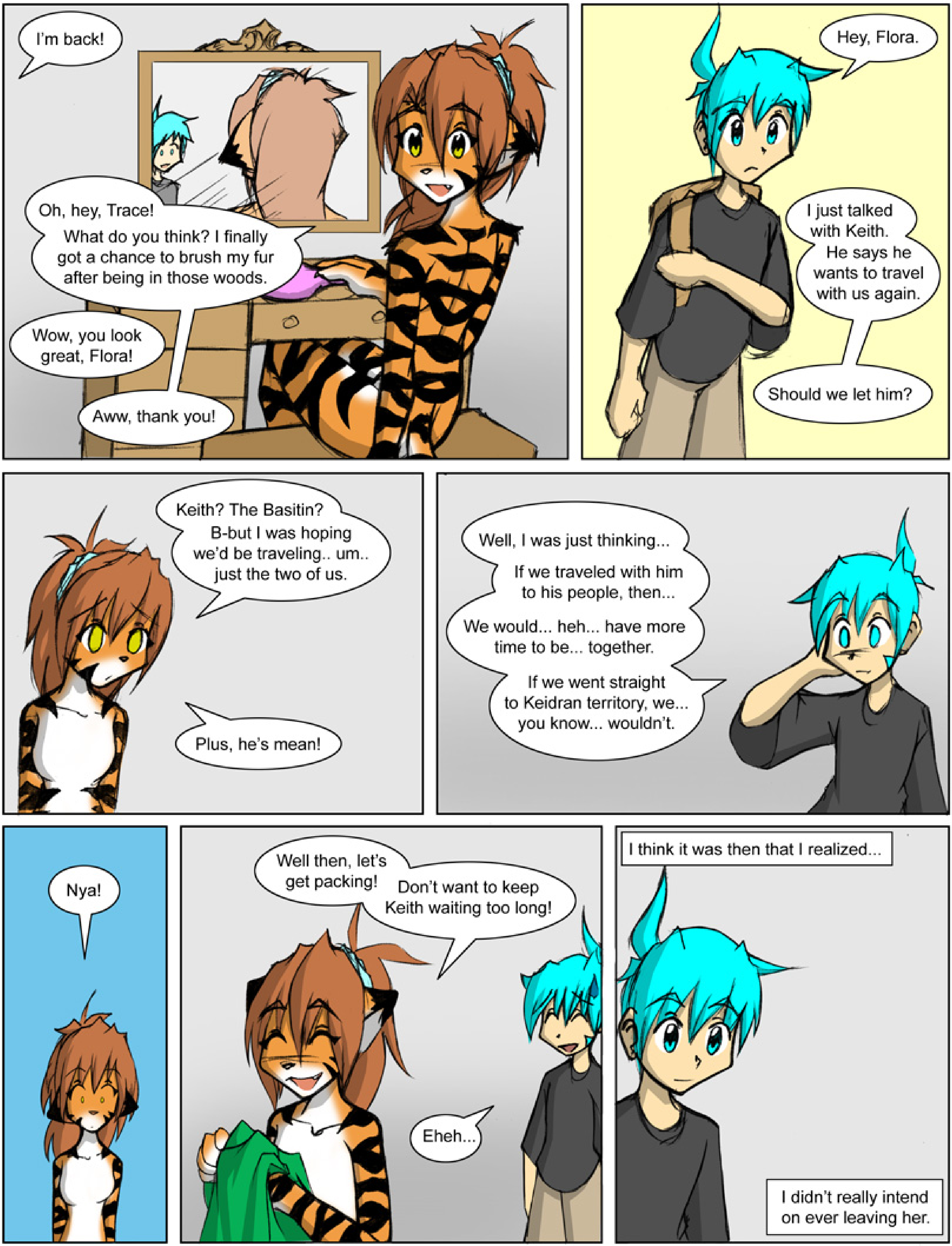

Well, now that the humans are distracted, tell me, Flora...
How have you been doing lately? Have your masters been treating you alright?
Um, yes, I think they have...
They're all very nice to me. And Kei always lets me play with him.
Is that so? You are truly blessed to have such kind human masters.
You think so?
I do... say, what's that around your neck?
Oh, this? It was a present from Kei's father...
A collar, huh?
Well, I'd better be going before my masters notice I'm missing.
Take care, Miss Flora. And remember.
I'll always be here for you if you ever need my help.
I promise you.

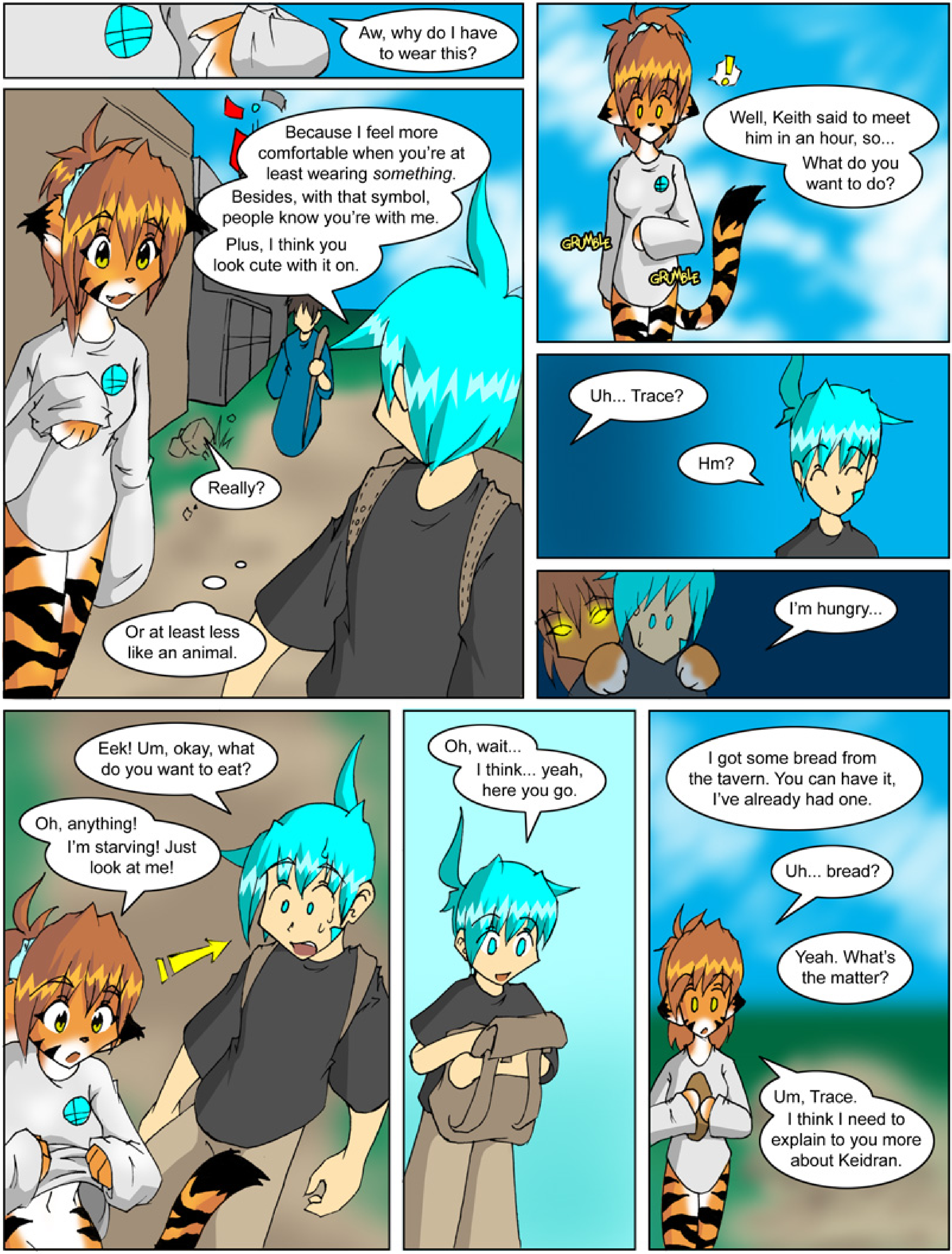

Ah, it's morning! It feels good to not wake up to a nightmare for once!
I wonder why I didn't have- urk!
Flora... lying on top of me... So soft... So warm...
Aaaack! What is she doing in my bed!? What have we done?
?
Meeerr?
Trace, what's wrong? Are we under attack? Did something happen?
In bed... you... I... we didn't... we couldn't have...
Yeah, we did! It was really nice!
What!? You mean we...?!
Yup!

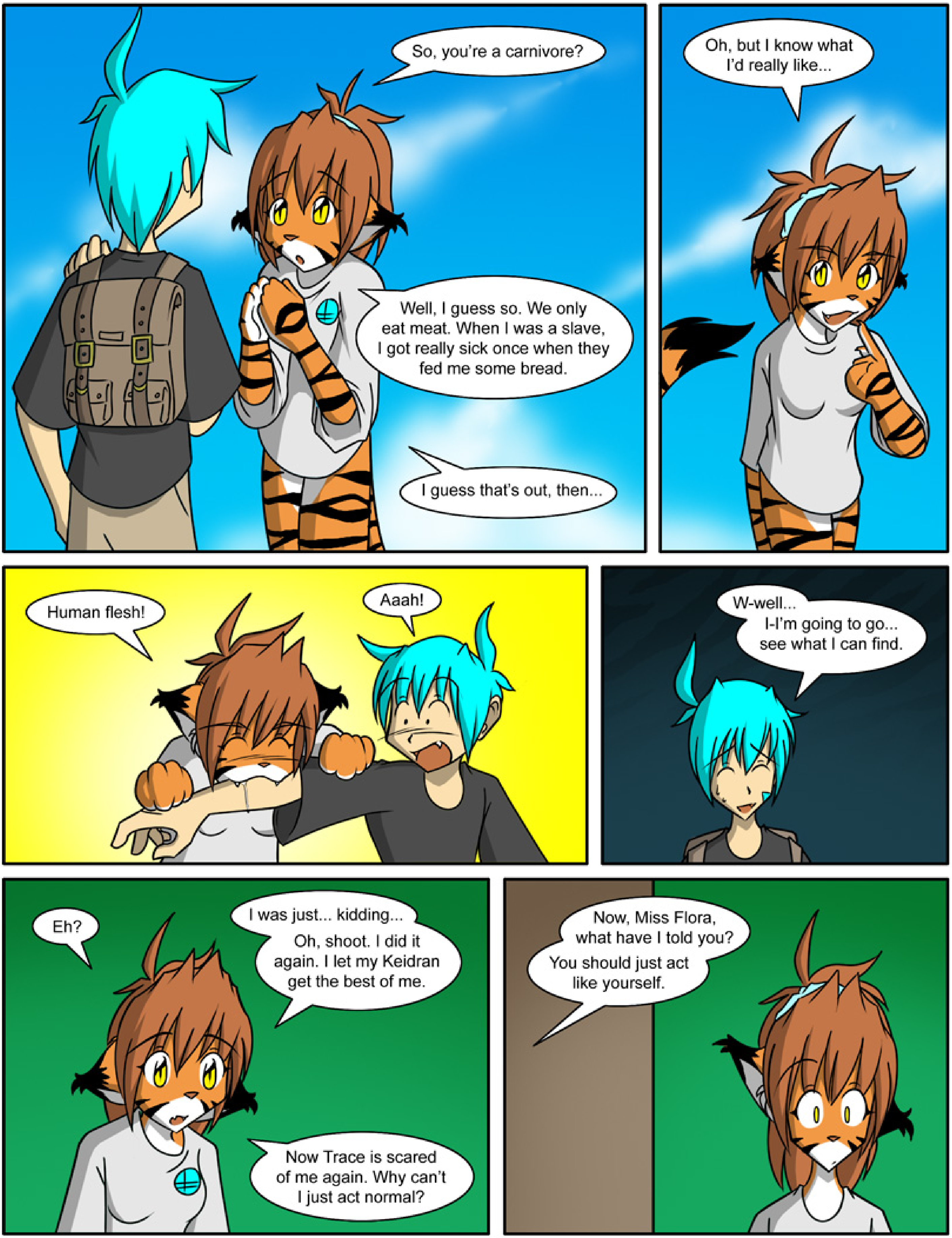

Oh, man...
Don't ever scare me like that again!
I think I'm gunna have a heart attack!
Why? All I said was that I enjoyed spending the night in the same bed.
What did you think I was talking about?
Er... nevermind.
Heh, for someone who acts like you do, it's surprising you don't know what I mean.
I'm a Keidran. All Keidran my age act like this.
Hey! What do you mean by that?
Well, that's not what I meant...
But now that I think about it, how old are you, anyway?
Oh, I'm not really sure. I think I'm probably eleven by now.
...
You're eleven years old?!

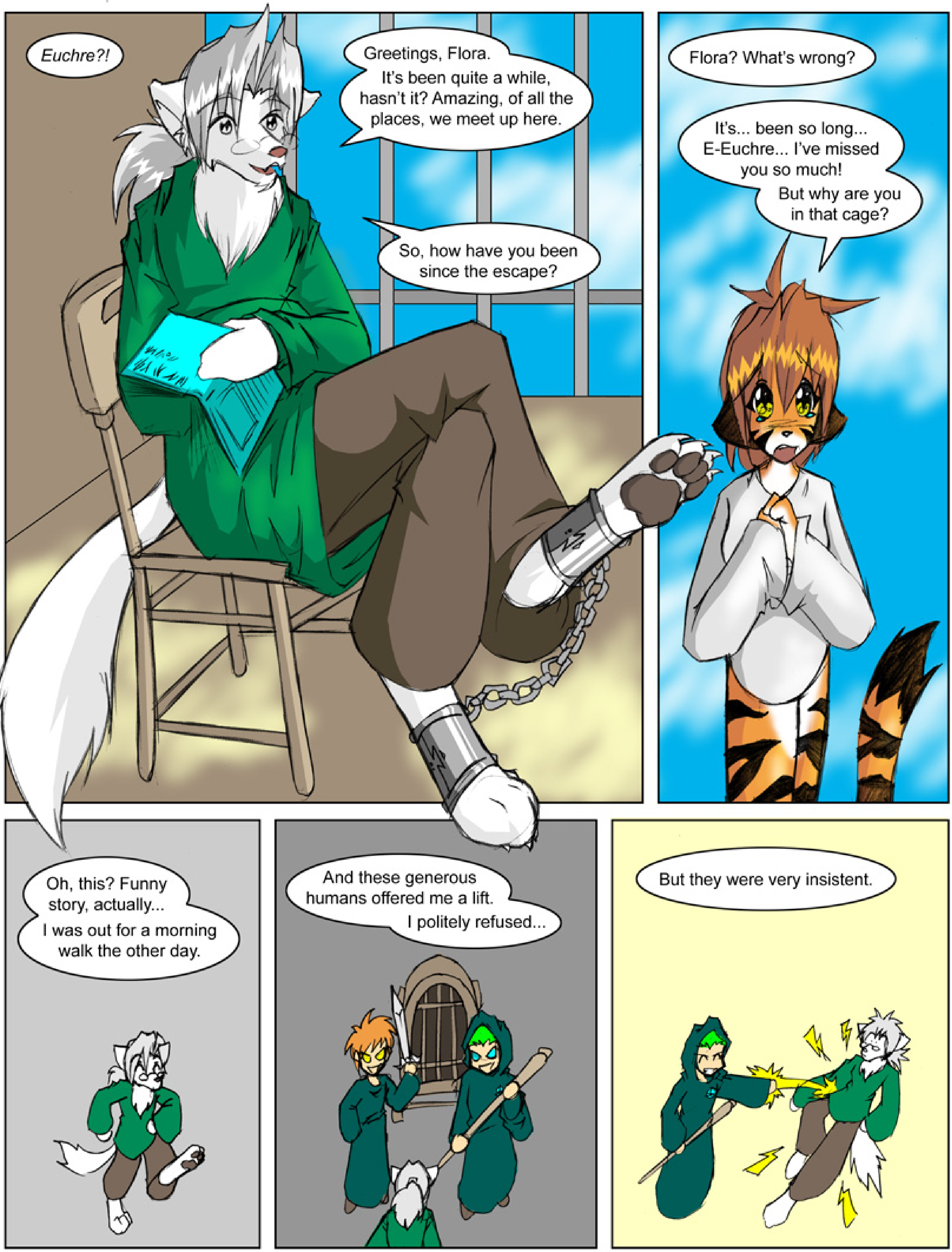

Tracy Legacy. You have been found guilty of molesting this innocent 11-year-old.
B-but I... I didn't...!
Your sentence is death.
What? But... I didn't know! Wait!!
Hold on! I didn't do it!
Trace!
Trace!!
You gotta believe me!
Trace! Snap out of it!
Gah!
Oh, no! Trace! I'm so sorry!
I forgot about my claws!
A few stitches later...
So Keidran don't live as long as humans?
Right, in Keidran years, I'm an adult. Honest!
So how long do Keidran live?
Well...
Er... no time for that right now!
We need to get packed and out of this human city!
Heh. You're going to be the death of me, Flora.

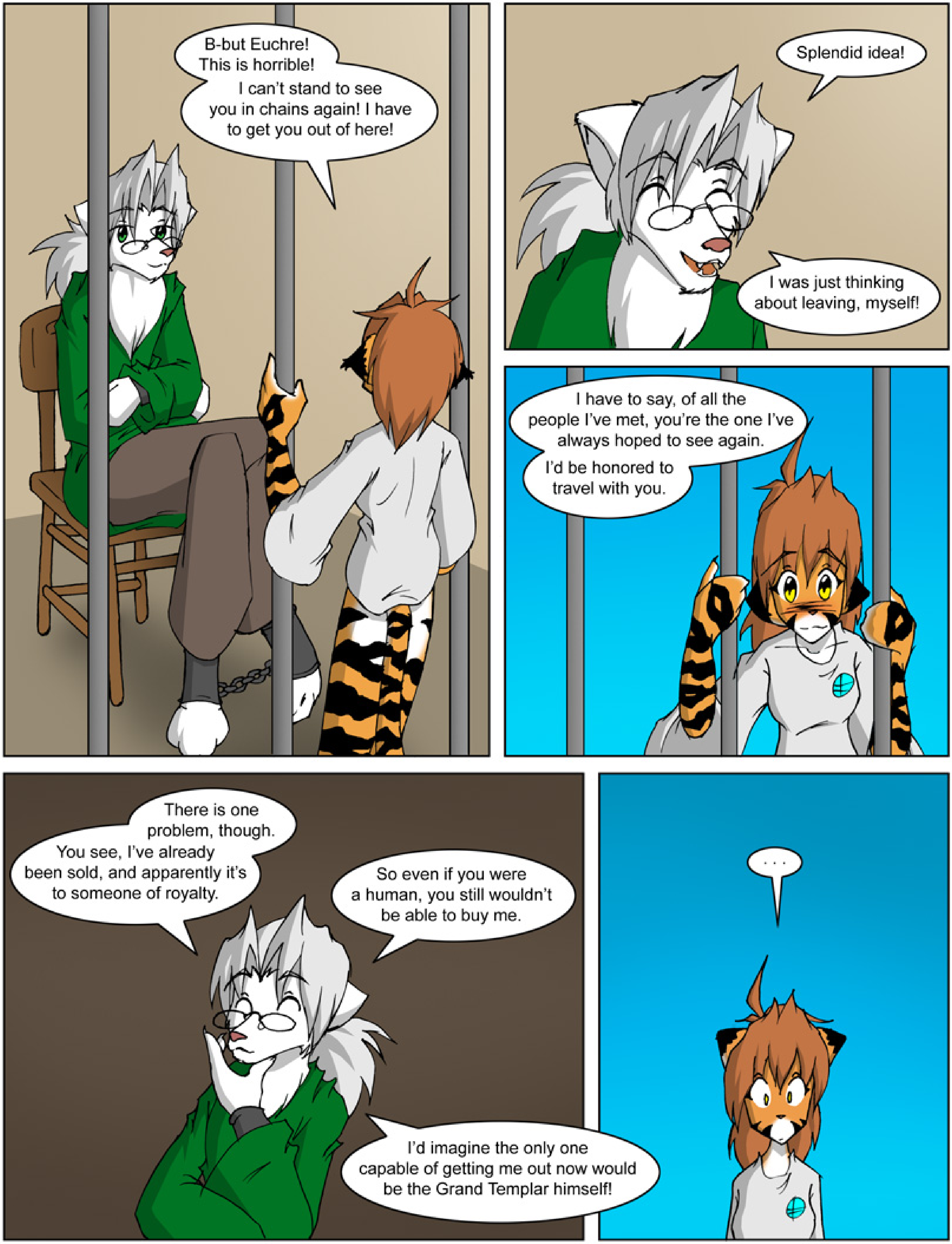

I'll be back in a bit, Flora. Just need to get some bags to put our stuff in.
Alright, Trace.
...And to get a cleric to look at this.
Man, sometimes that Flora does act like an animal.
. . .
Wait, I shouldn't be thinking about Flora like that. She's not...
...Or is she?
. . .
Oh, Trace. I was hoping I'd-
Whoa, what happened to you?
What do you mean?
Eh...
She didn't do it on purpose. She just gets a little over-enthusiastic now and then.
Yes, I've heard female Keidran can get that way.
Somehow I've got to convince him to let me travel along again.
I still need him for my mission.
And without him it might be a little harder to get out of this human town with my fur intact.

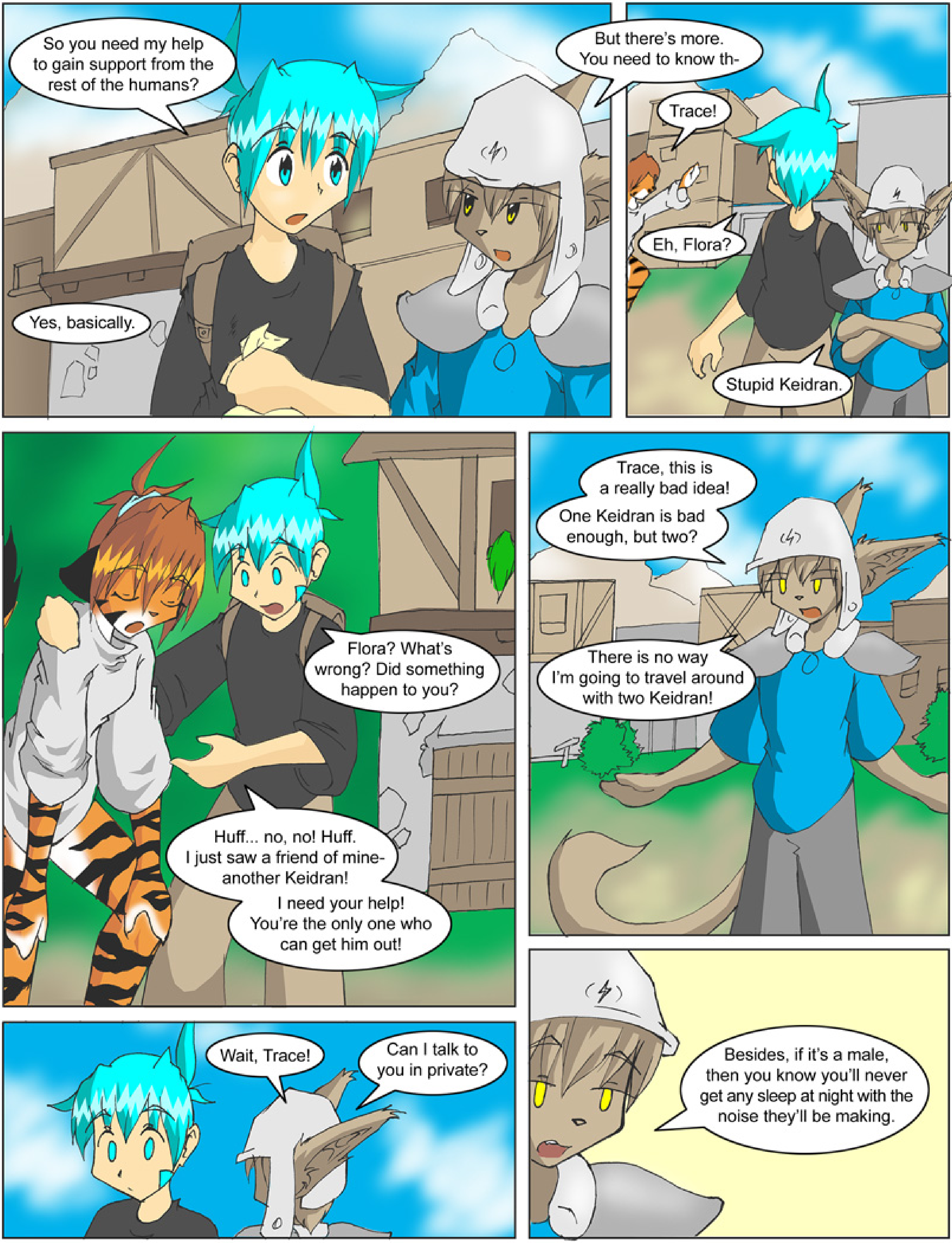

I'm back!
Oh, hey, Trace!
What do you think? I finally got a chance to brush my fur after being in those woods.
Wow, you look great, Flora!
Aww, thank you!
Hey, Flora.
I just talked with Keith.
He says he wants to travel with us again.
Should we let him?
Keith? The Basitin?
B-but I was hoping we'd be traveling.. um.. just the two of us.
Plus, he's mean!
Well, I was just thinking...
If we traveled with him to his people, then...
We would... heh... have more time to be... together.
If we went straight to Keidran territory, we... you know... wouldn't.
Nya!
Well then, let's get packing!
Don't want to keep Keith waiting too long!
Eheh...
I think it was then that I realized...
I didn't really intend on ever leaving her.

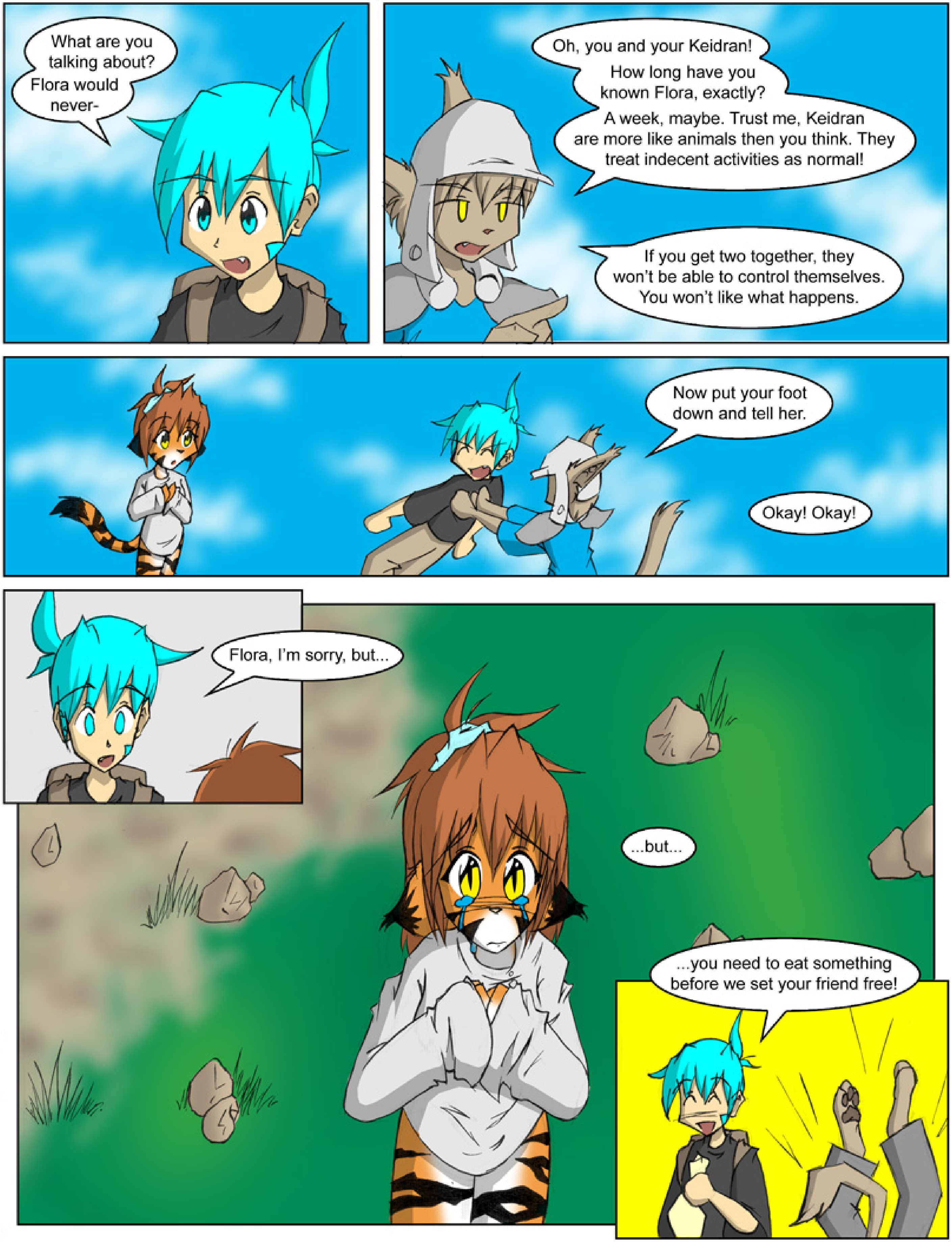

Aw, why do I have to wear this?
Because I feel more comfortable when you're at least wearing *something*.
Besides, with that symbol, people know you're with me.
Plus, I think you look cute with it on.
Really?
Or at least less like an animal.
!
Well, Keith said to meet him in an hour, so...
What do you want to do?
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
Uh... Trace?
Hm?
I'm hungry...
Eek! Um, okay, what do you want to eat?
Oh, anything!
I'm starving! Just look at me!
Oh, wait...
I think... yeah, here you go.
I got some bread from the tavern. You can have it, I've already had one.
Uh... bread?
Yeah. What's the matter?
Um, Trace.
I think I need to explain to you more about Keidran.

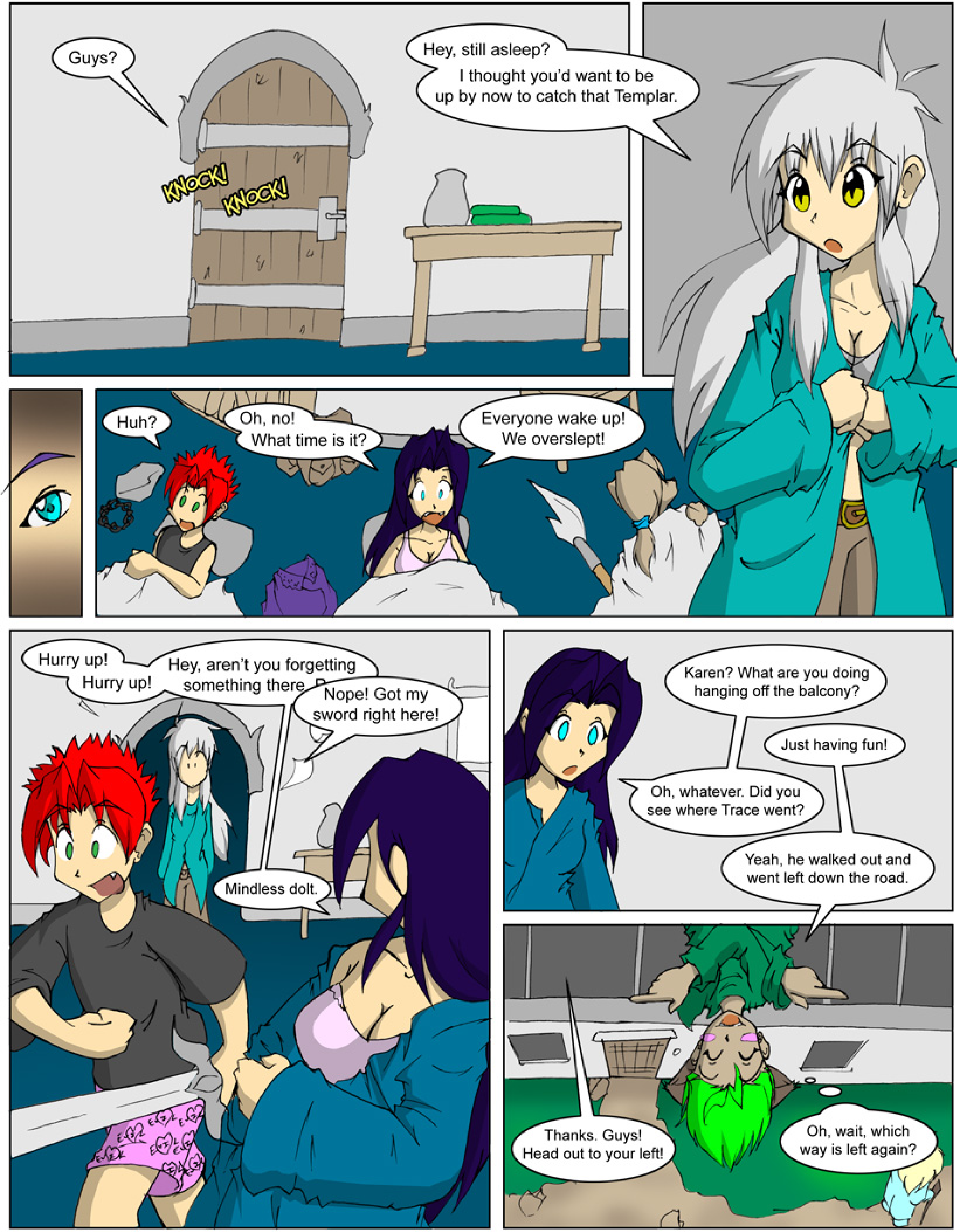

So, you're a carnivore?
Well, I guess so. We only eat meat. When I was a slave, I got really sick once when they fed me some bread.
I guess that's out, then...
Oh, but I know what I'd really like...
Human flesh!
Aaah!
W-well... I-I'm going to go... see what I can find.
Eh?
I was just... kidding...
Oh, shoot. I did it again. I let my Keidran get the best of me.
Now Trace is scared of me again. Why can't I just act normal?
Now, Miss Flora, what have I told you?
You should just act like yourself.

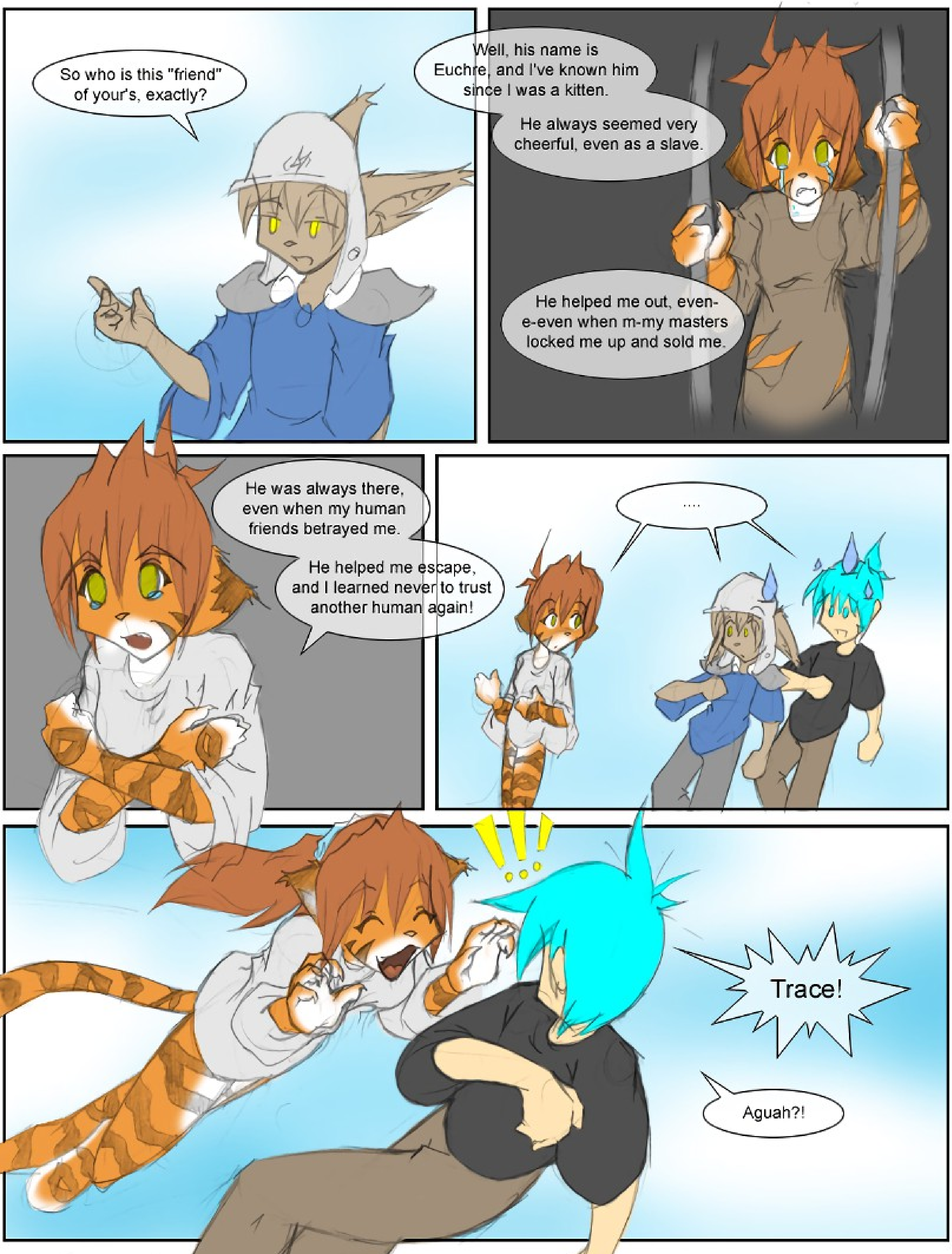

Euchre?!
Greetings, Flora. It's been quite a while, hasn't it? Amazing, of all the places, we meet up here.
So, how have you been since the escape?
Flora? What's wrong?
It's... been so long... E-Euchre... I've missed you so much!
But why are you in that cage?
Oh, this? Funny story, actually...
I was out for a morning walk the other day.
And these generous humans offered me a lift.
I politely refused...
But they were very insistent.

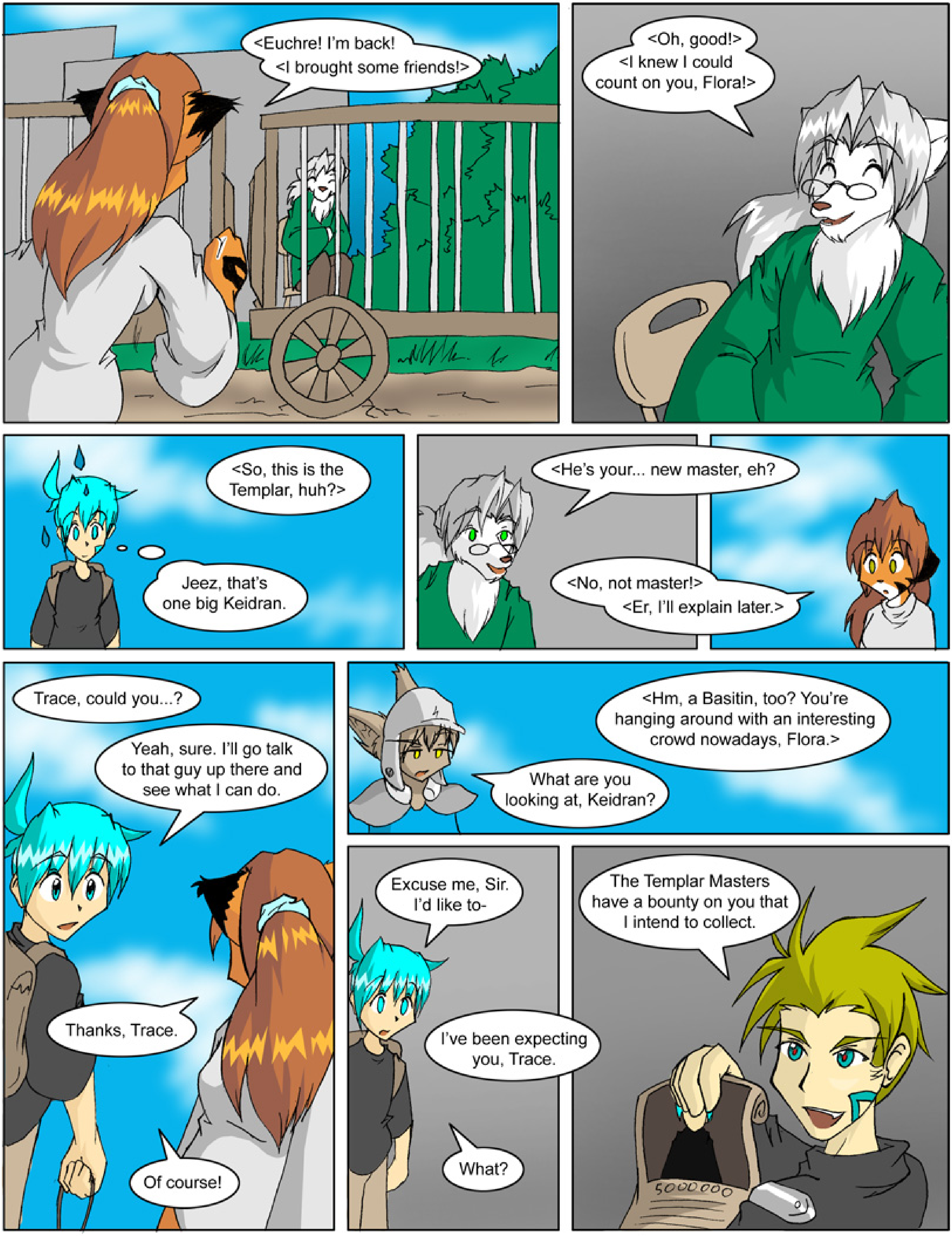

B-but Euchre! This is horrible!
I can't stand to see you in chains again! I have to get you out of here!
Splendid idea!
I was just thinking about leaving, myself!
I have to say, of all the people I've met, you're the one I've always hoped to see again.
I'd be honored to travel with you.
There is one problem, though.
You see, I've already been sold, and apparently it's to someone of royalty.
So even if you were a human, you still wouldn't be able to buy me.
I'd imagine the only one capable of getting me out now would be the Grand Templar himself!
. . .

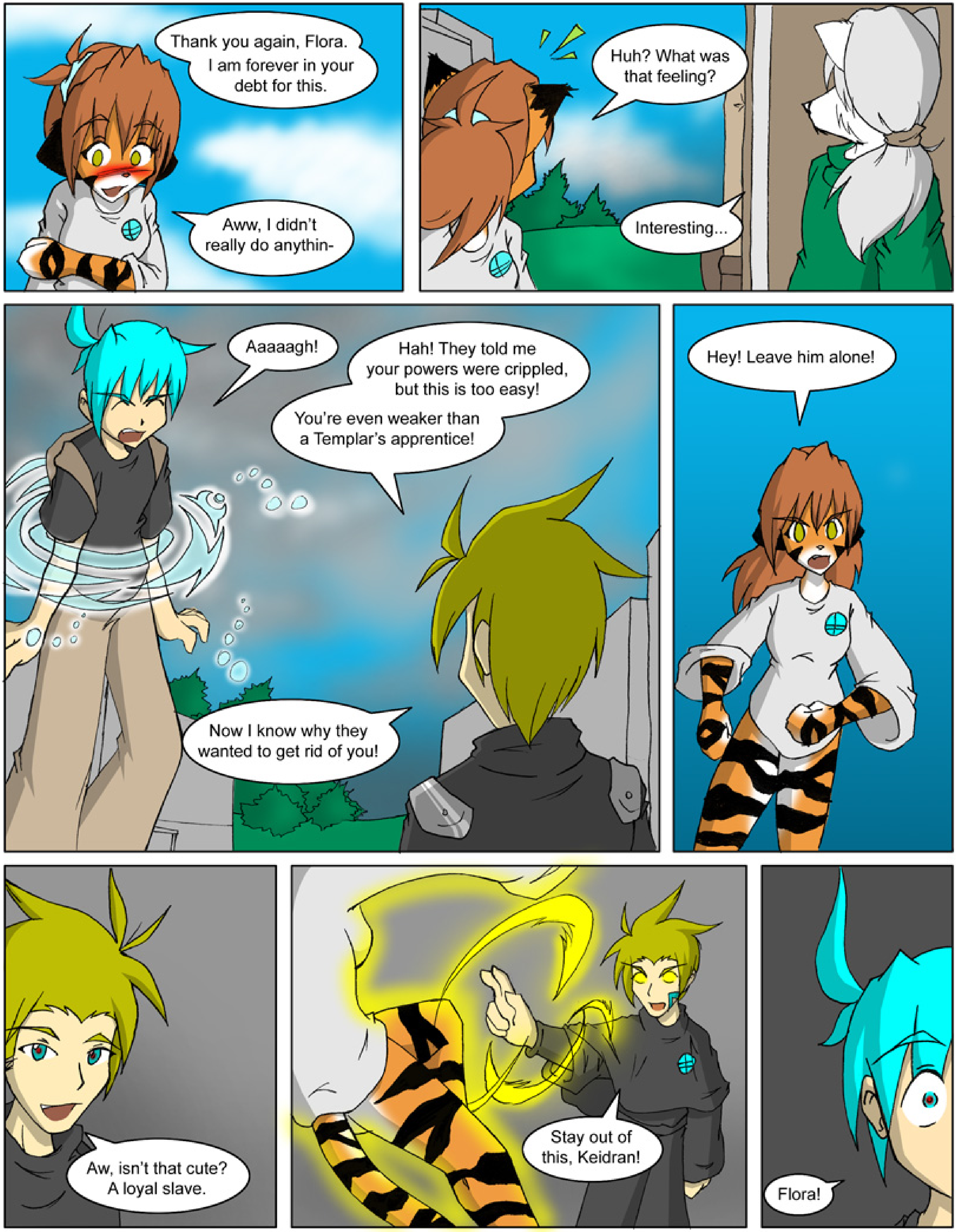

So you need my help to gain support from the rest of the humans?
Yes, basically.
But there's more. You need to know th-
Trace!
Eh, Flora?
Stupid Keidran.
Flora? What's wrong? Did something happen to you?
Huff... no, no! Huff. I just saw a friend of mine- another Keidran!
I need your help! You're the only one who can get him out!
Trace, this is a really bad idea!
One Keidran is bad enough, but two?
There is no way I'm going to travel around with two Keidran!
Wait, Trace!
Can I talk to you in private?
Besides, if it's a male, then you know you'll never get any sleep at night with the noise they'll be making.

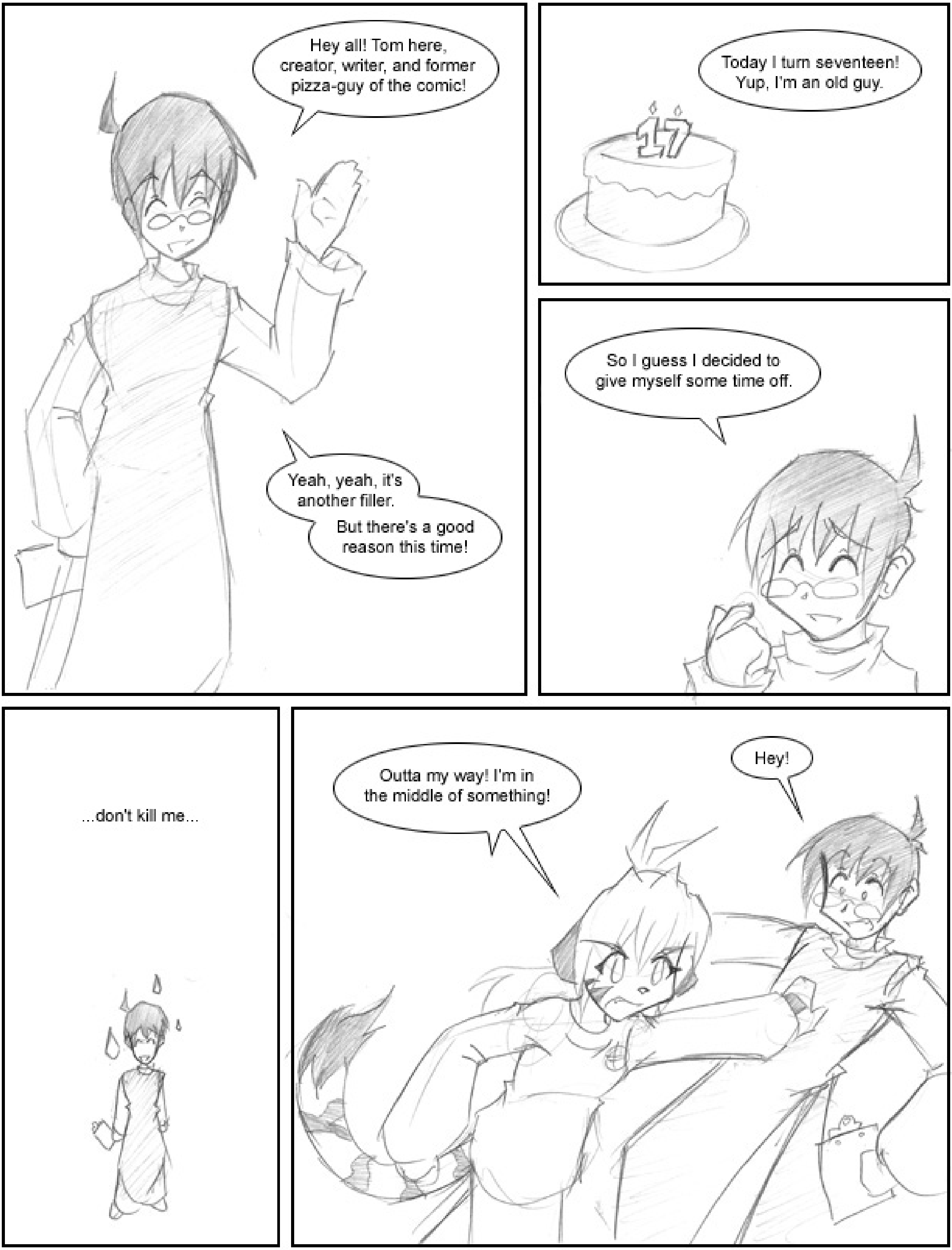

What are you talking about? Flora would never-
Oh, you and your Keidran!
How long have you known Flora, exactly?
A week, maybe. Trust me, Keidran are more like animals then you think. They treat indecent activities as normal!
If you get two together, they won't be able to control themselves. You won't like what happens.
Now put your foot down and tell her.
Okay! Okay!
Flora, I'm sorry, but...
...but...
...you need to eat something before we set your friend free!

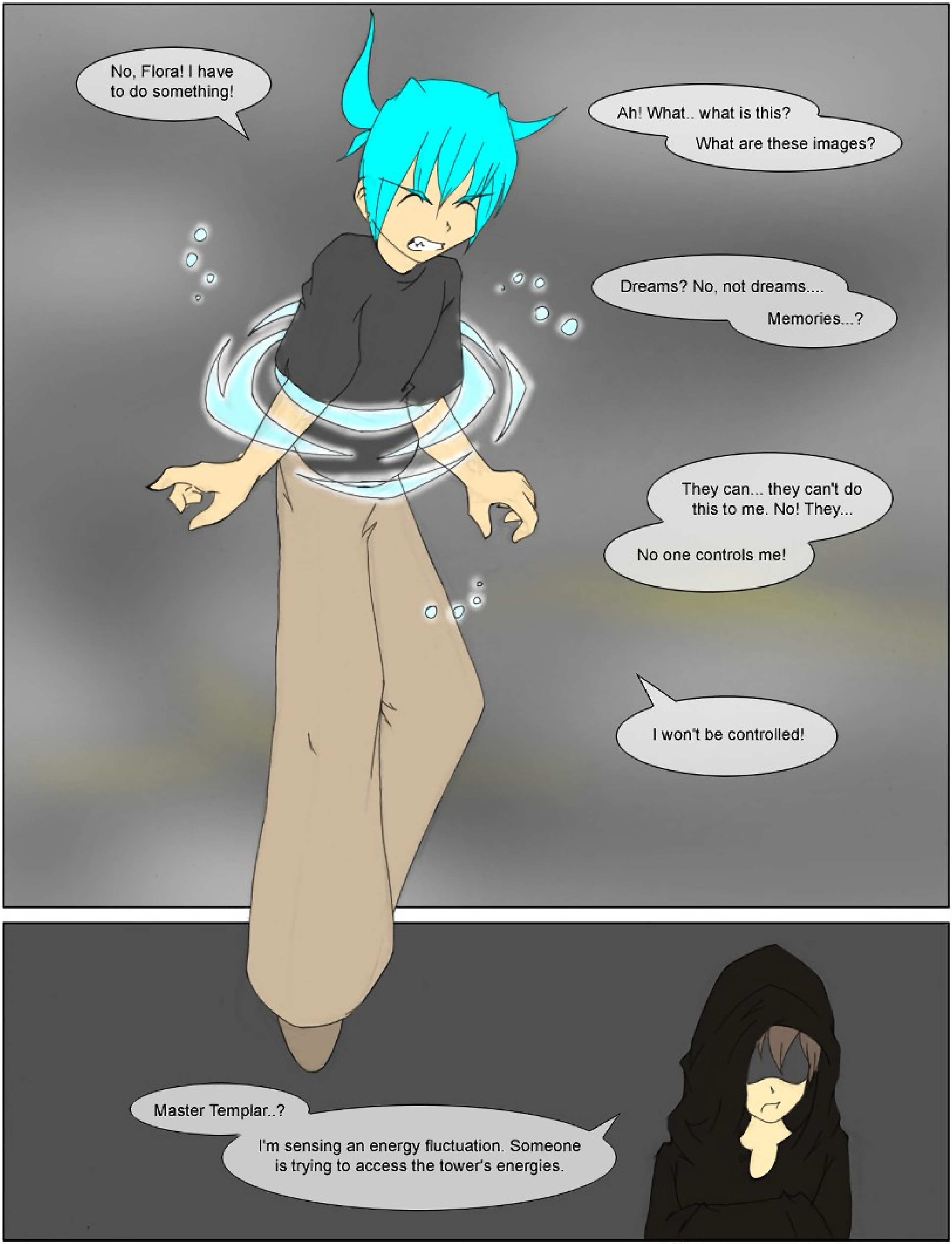

Guys?
KNOCK! KNOCK!
Hey, still asleep?
I thought you'd want to be up by now to catch that Templar.
Huh?
Oh, no! What time is it?
Everyone wake up! We overslept!
Hurry up! Hurry up!
Hey, aren't you forgetting something there, B
Nope! Got my sword right here!
Mindless dolt.
Karen? What are you doing hanging off the balcony?
Just having fun!
Oh, whatever. Did you see where Trace went?
Yeah, he walked out and went left down the road.
Thanks. Guys! Head out to your left!
Oh, wait, which way is left again?

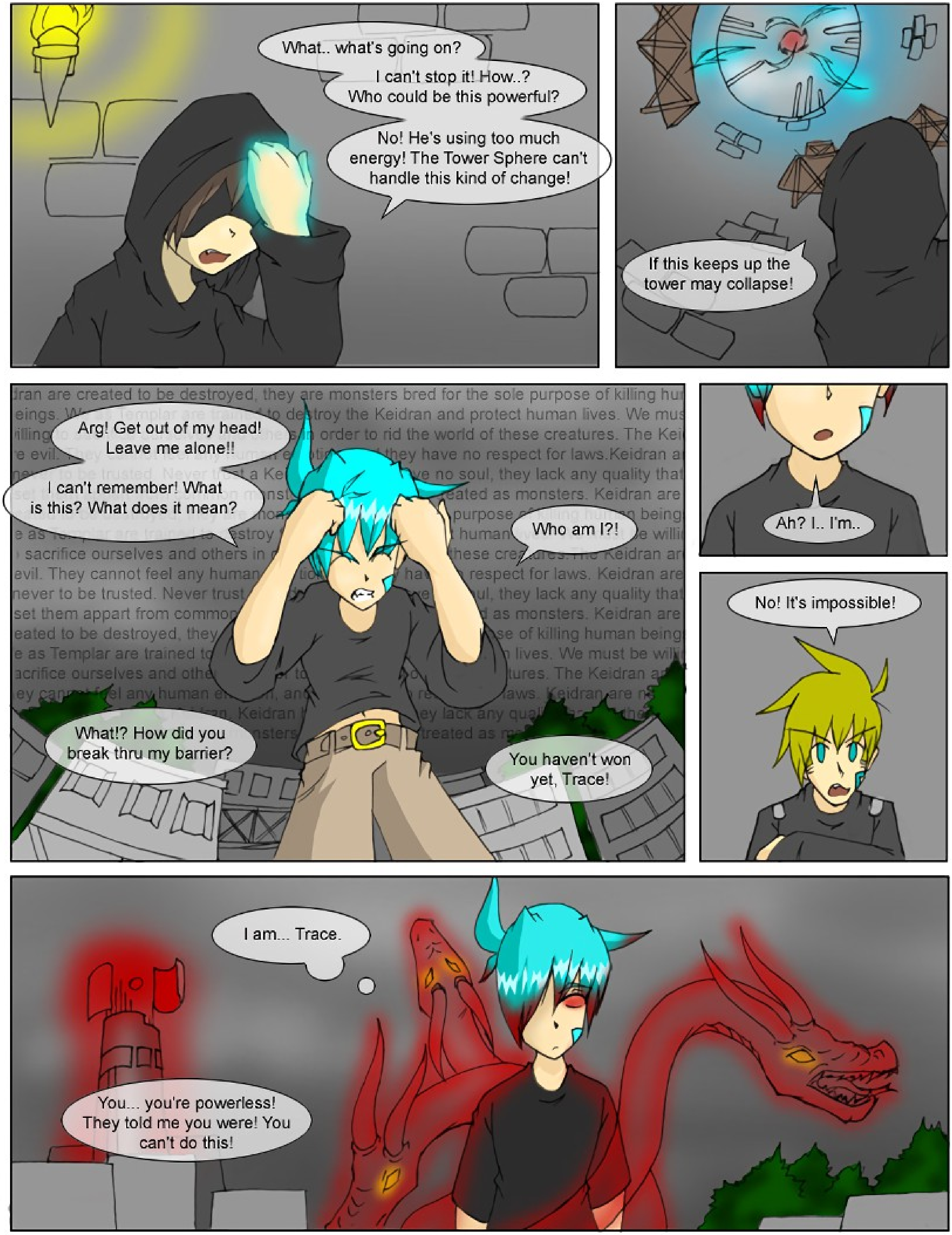

So who is this "friend" of your's, exactly?
Well, his name is Euchre, and I've known him since I was a kitten.
He always seemed very cheerful, even as a slave.
He helped me out, even-e-even when m-my masters locked me up and sold me.
He was always there, even when my human friends betrayed me.
He helped me escape, and I learned never to trust another human again!
....
!!!
Trace!
Aguah?!

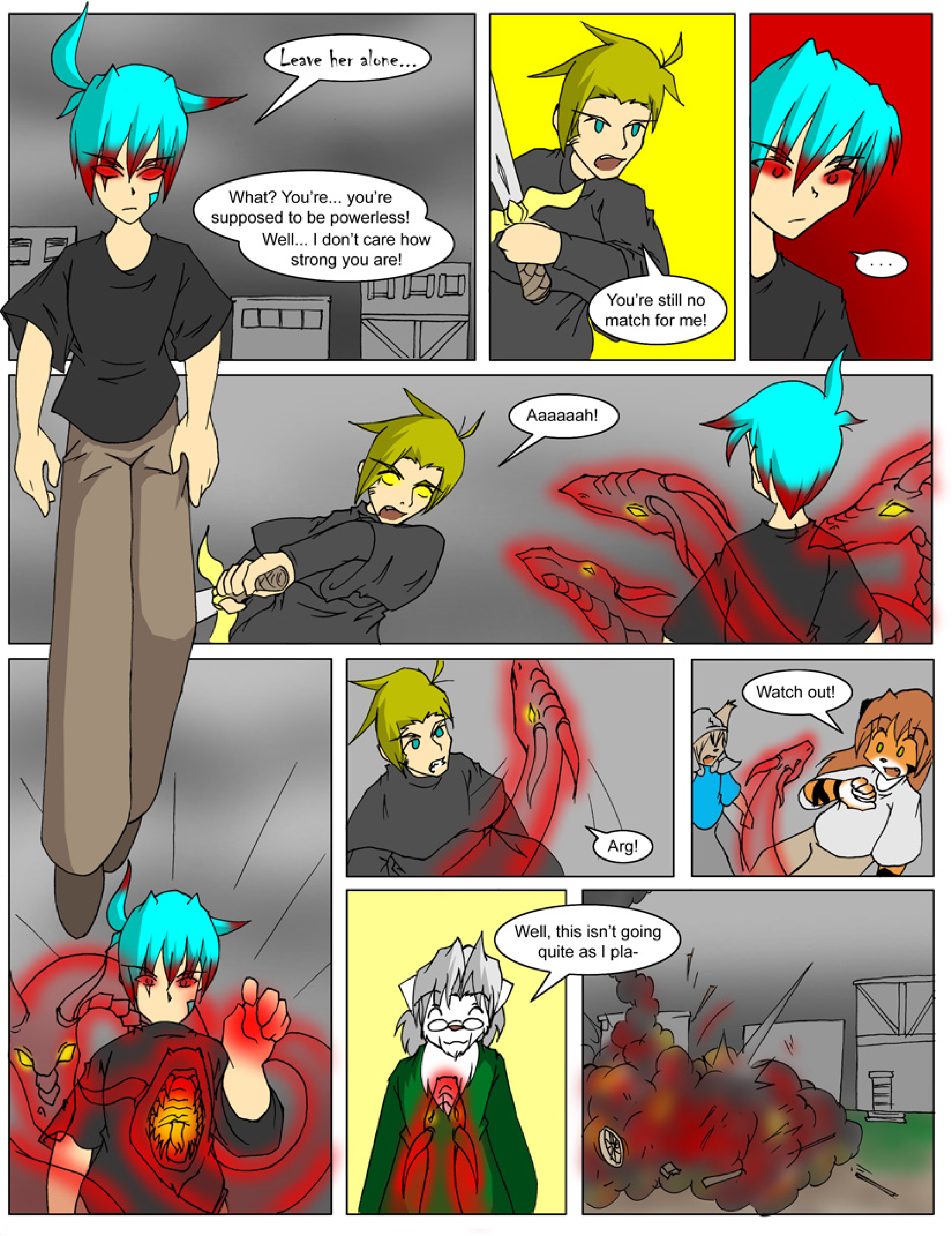

<Euchre! I'm back!
<I brought some friends!>
<Oh, good!>
<I knew I could count on you, Flora!>
<So, this is the Templar, huh?>
Jeez, that's one big Keidran.
<He's your... new master, eh?
<No, not master!>
<Er, I'll explain later.>
Trace, could you...?
Yeah, sure. I'll go talk to that guy up there and see what I can do.
Thanks, Trace.
Of course!
<Hm, a Basitin, too? You're hanging around with an interesting crowd nowadays, Flora.>
What are you looking at, Keidran?
Excuse me, Sir. I'd like to-
I've been expecting you, Trace.
What?
The Templar Masters have a bounty on you that I intend to collect.
5000000

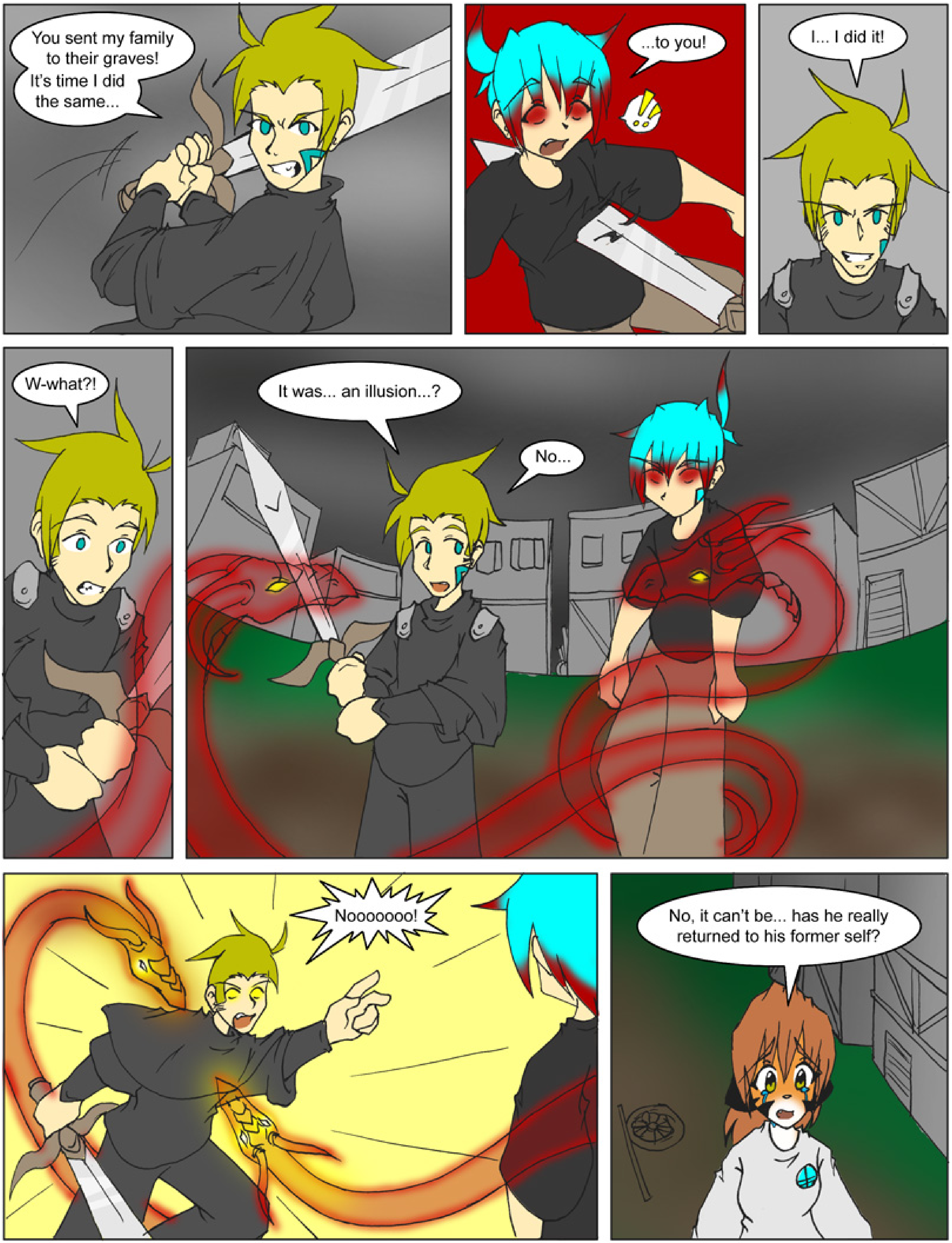

Thank you again, Flora. I am forever in your debt for this.
Aww, I didn't really do anythin-
Huh? What was that feeling?
Interesting...
Aaaaagh!
Hah! They told me your powers were crippled, but this is too easy!
You're even weaker than a Templar's apprentice!
Now I know why they wanted to get rid of you!
Hey! Leave him alone!
Aw, isn't that cute? A loyal slave.
Stay out of this, Keidran!
Flora!

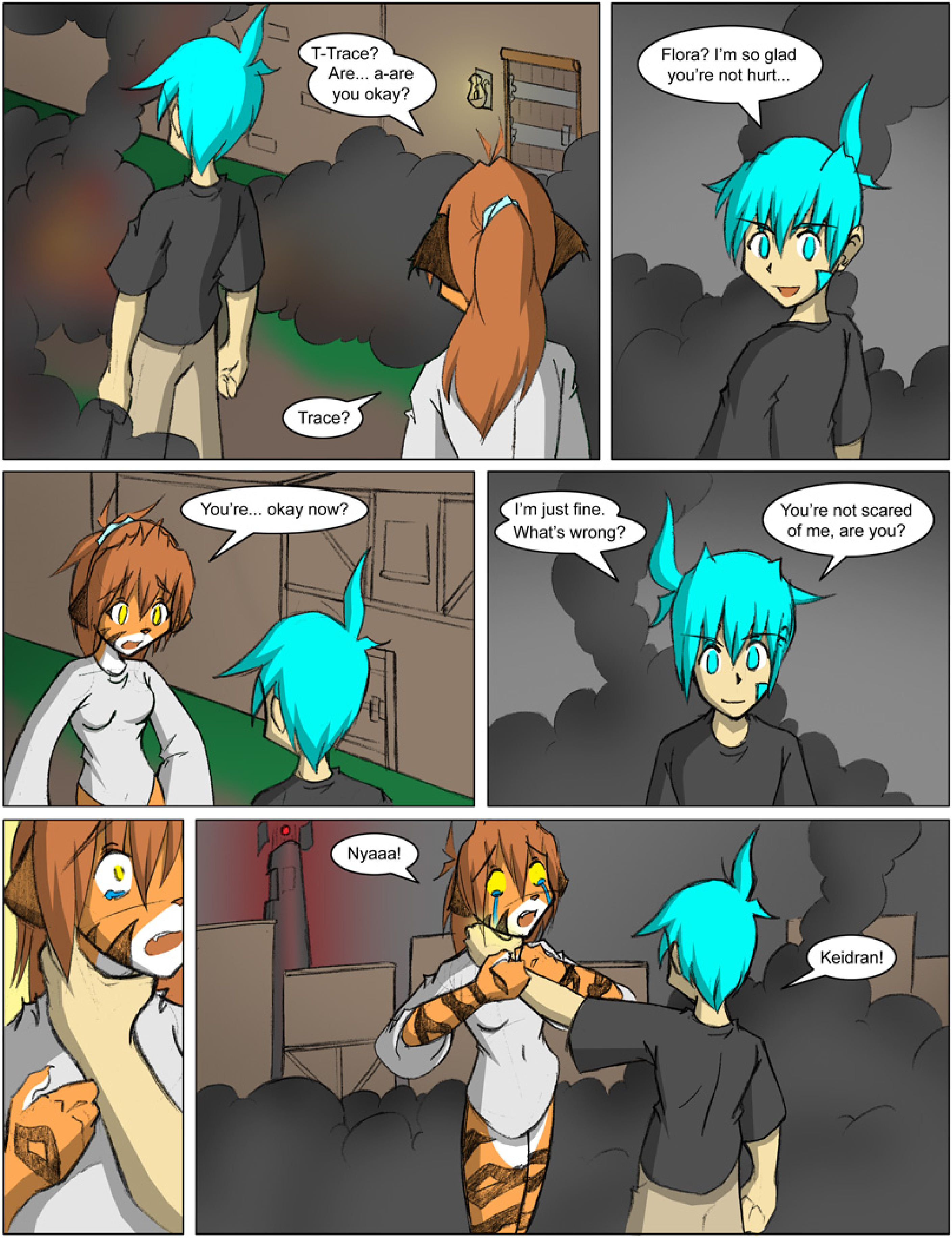

Hey all! Tom here, creator, writer, and former pizza-guy of the comic!
Yeah, yeah, it's another filler.
But there's a good reason this time!
Today I turn seventeen! Yup, I'm an old guy.
17
So I guess I decided to give myself some time off.
...don't kill me...
Outta my way! I'm in the middle of something!
Hey!

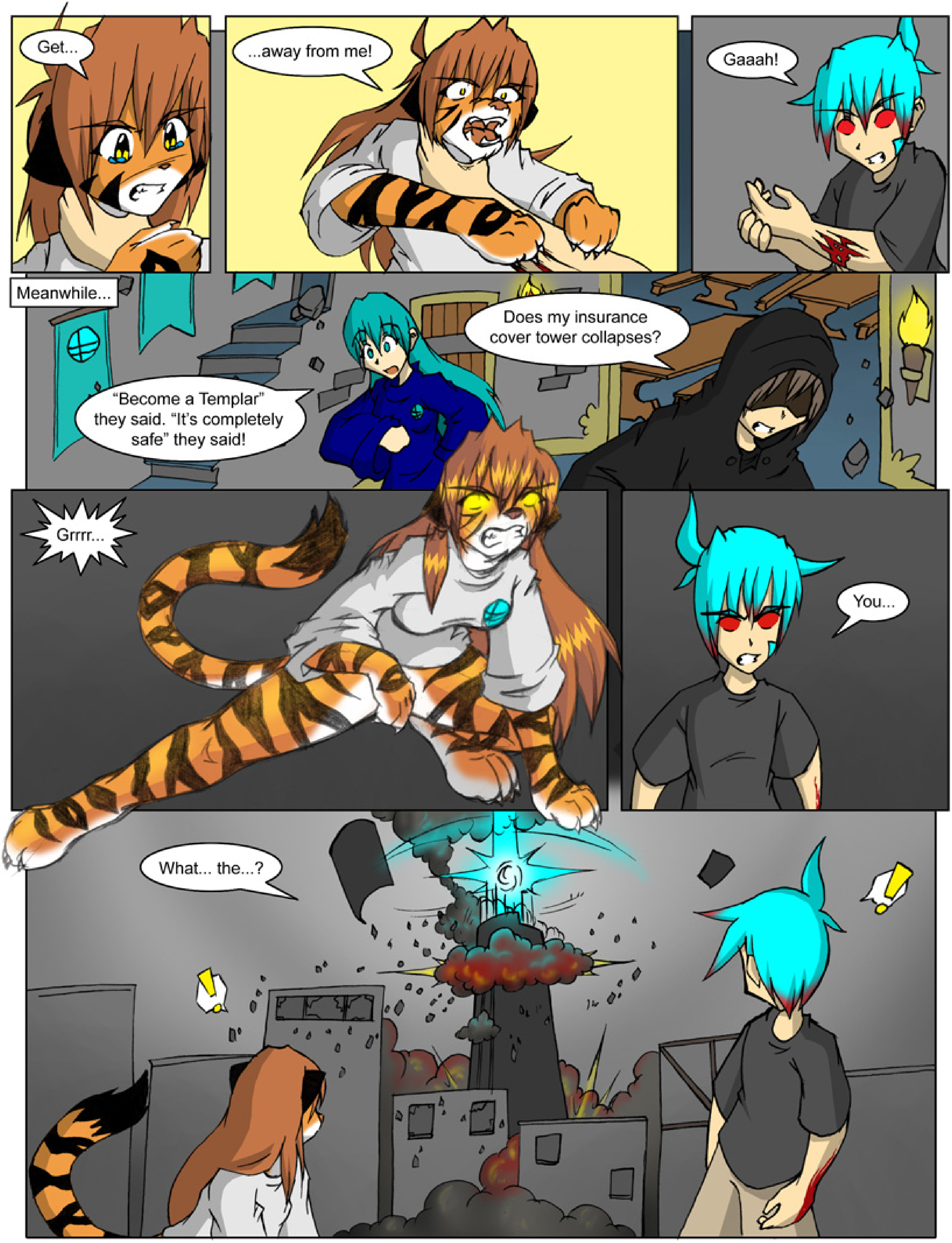

No, Flora! I have to do something!
Ah! What.. what is this?
What are these images?
Dreams? No, not dreams....
Memories...?
They can... they can't do this to me. No! They...
No one controls me!
I won't be controlled!
Master Templar..?
I'm sensing an energy fluctuation. Someone is trying to access the tower's energies.

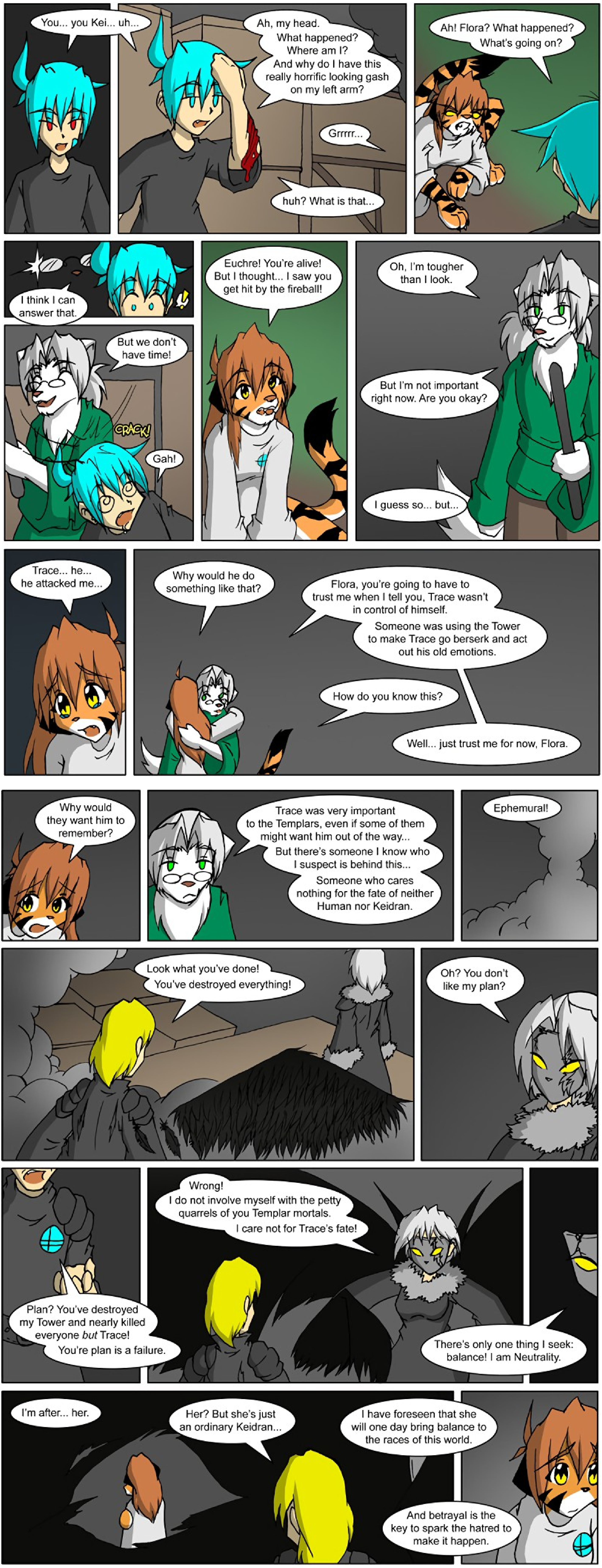

What.. what's going on?
I can't stop it! How..? Who could be this powerful?
No! He's using too much energy! The Tower Sphere can't handle this kind of change!
If this keeps up the tower may collapse!
Arg! Get out of my head! Leave me alone!!
I can't remember! What is this? What does it mean?
Who am I?!
What!? How did you break thru my barrier?
You haven't won yet, Trace!
Ah? I.. I'm..
No! It's impossible!
I am... Trace.
You... you're powerless! They told me you were! You can't do this!

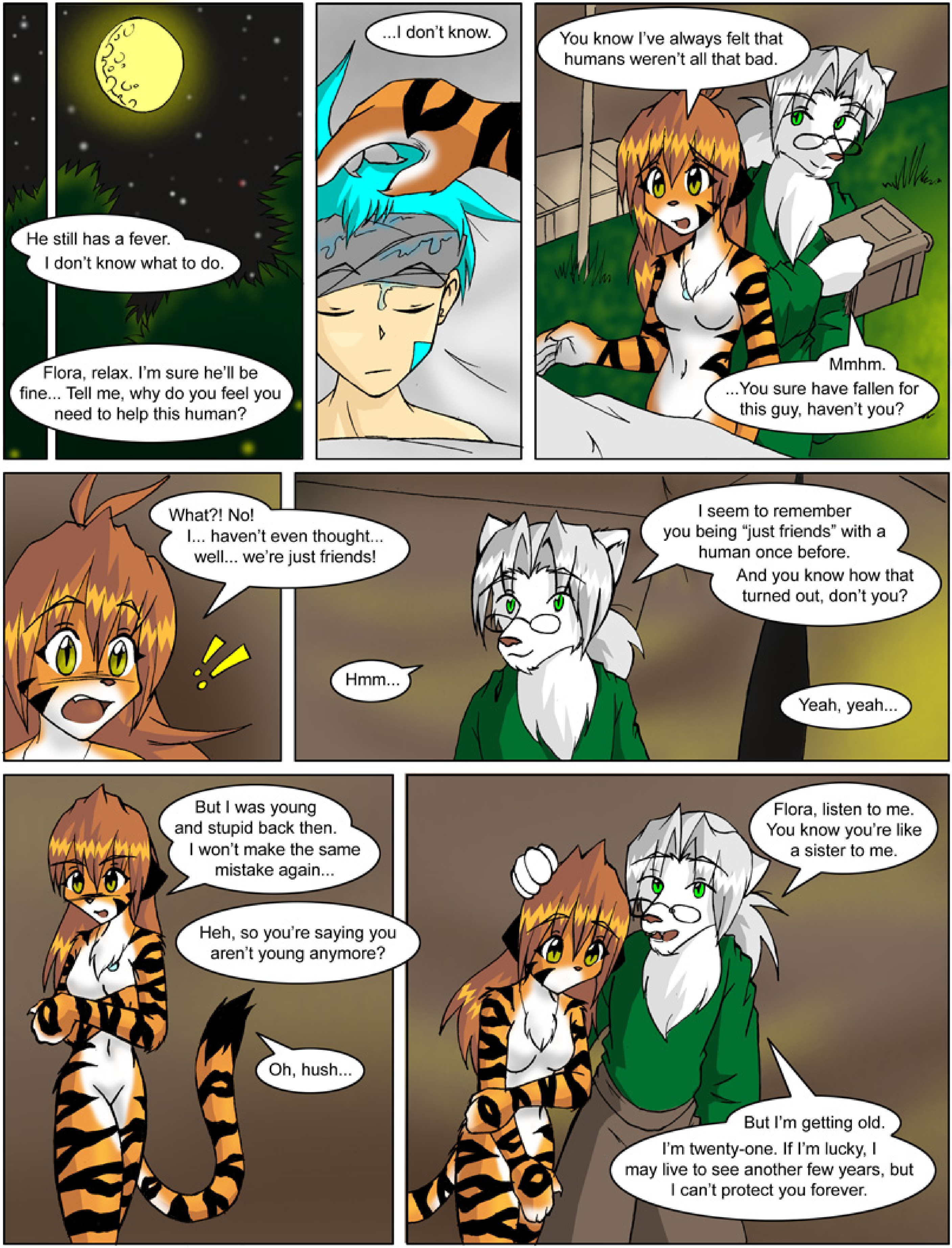

Leave her alone...
What? You're... you're supposed to be powerless!
Well... I don't care how strong you are!
You're still no match for me!
. . .
Aaaaaah!
Arg!
Watch out!
Well, this isn't going quite as I pla-

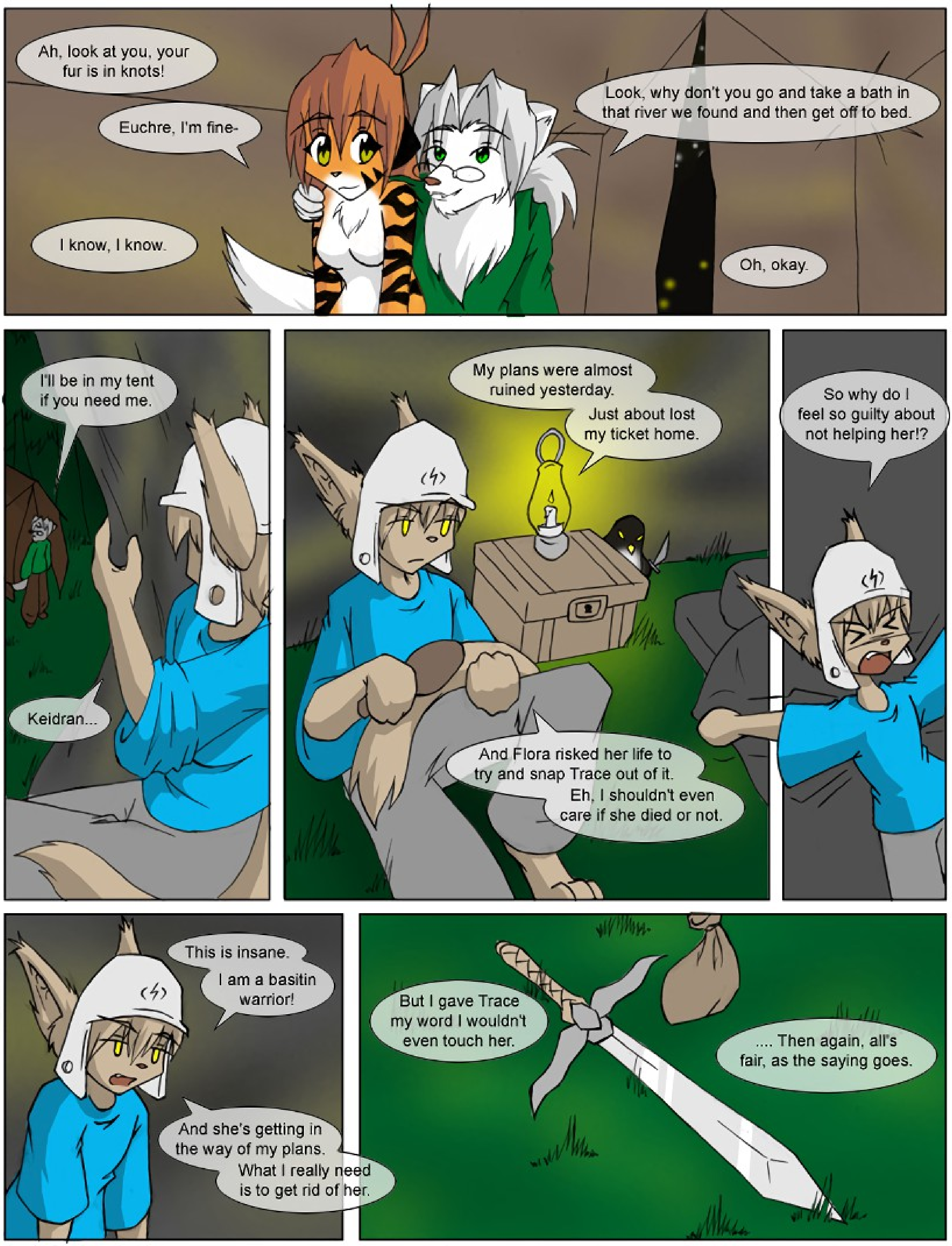

You sent my family to their graves!
It's time I did the same...
...to you!
!
I... I did it!
W-what?!
It was... an illusion...?
No...
Nooooooo!
No, it can't be... has he really returned to his former self?

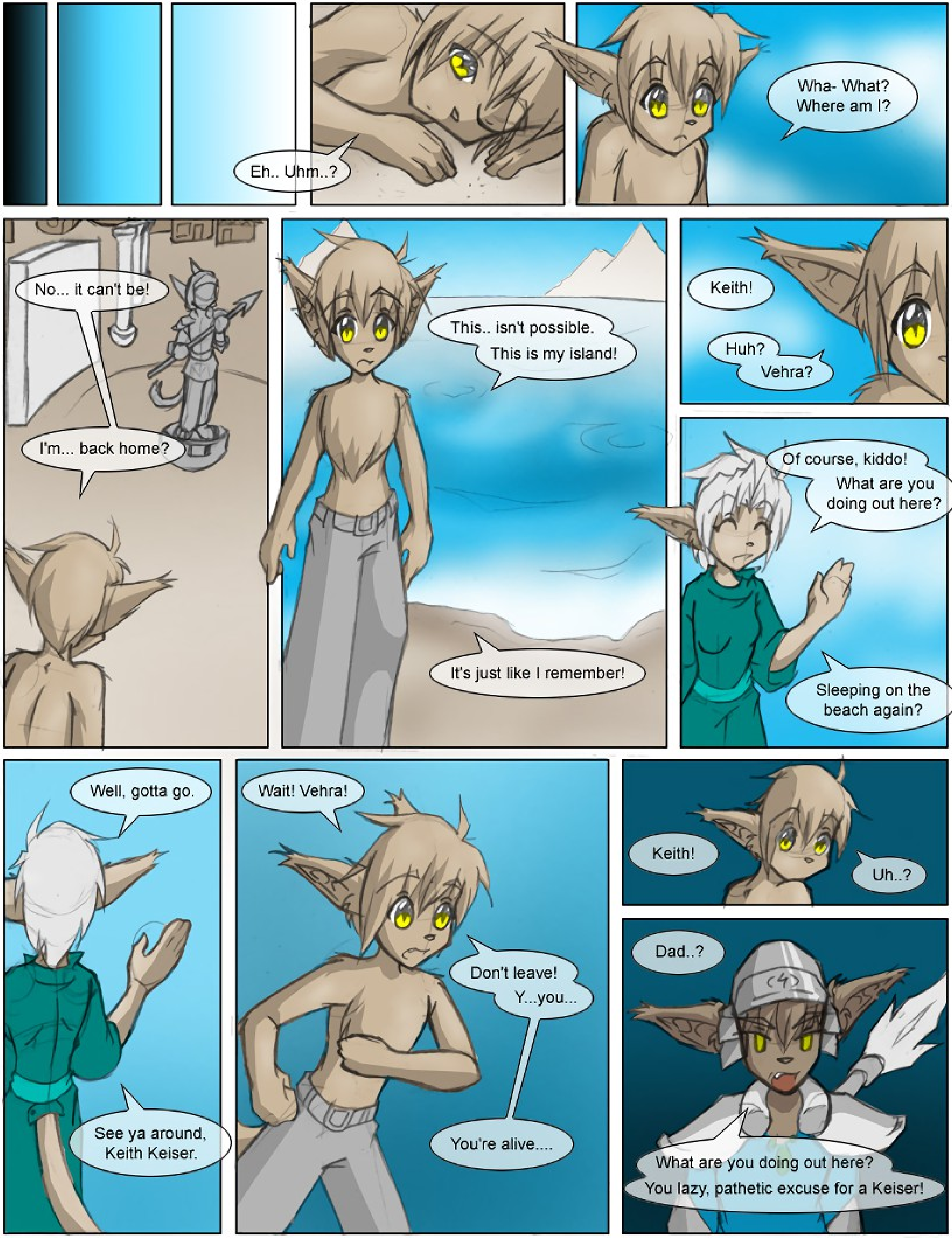

T-Trace? Are... a-are you okay?
Trace?
Flora? I'm so glad you're not hurt...
You're... okay now?
I'm just fine. What's wrong?
You're not scared of me, are you?
Nyaaa!
Keidran!

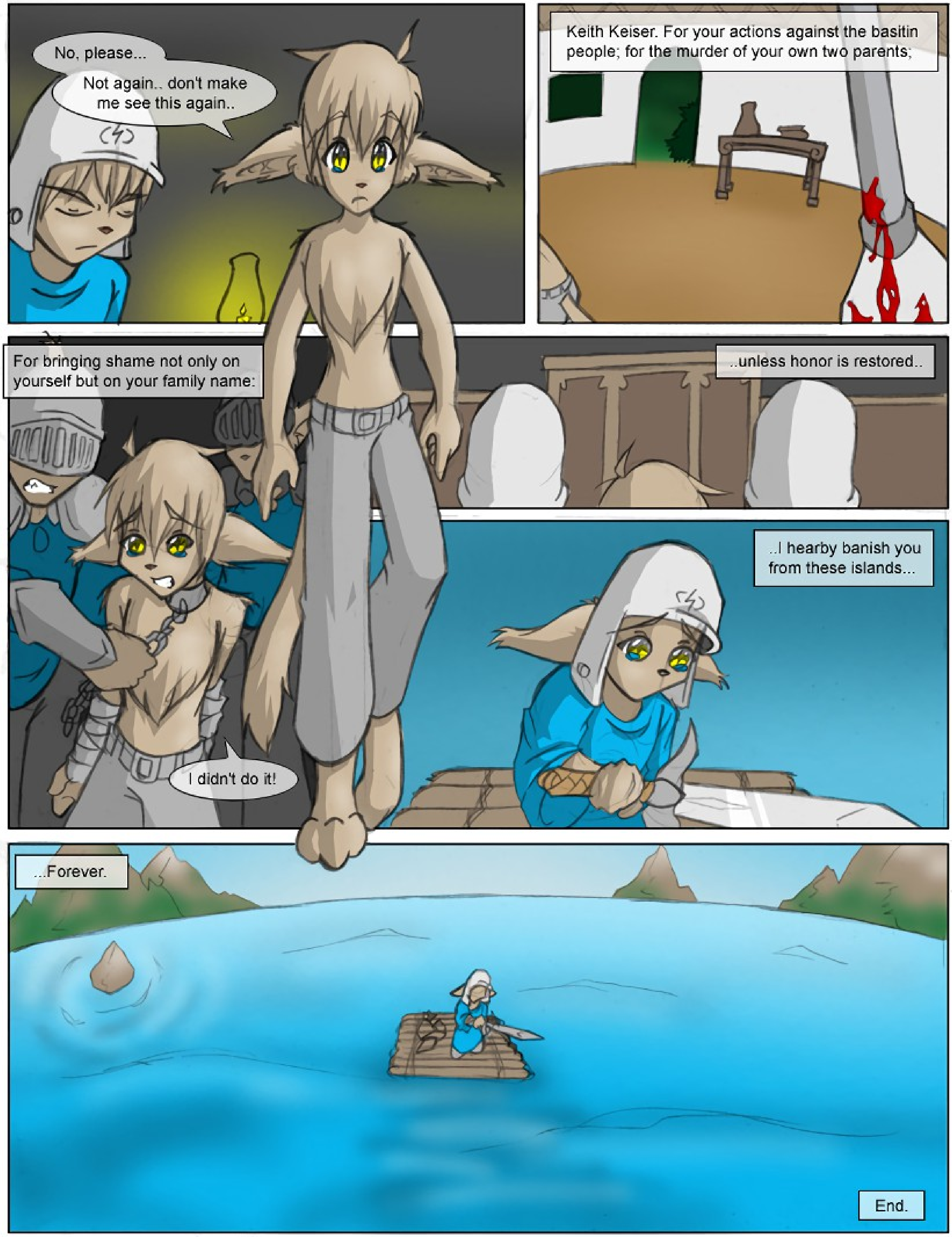

Get...
...away from me!
Gaaah!
Meanwhile...
Does my insurance cover tower collapses?
"Become a Templar" they said. "It's completely safe" they said!
Grrrr...
You...
What... the...?


You... you Kei... uh...
Ah, my head. What happened? Where am I? And why do I have this really horrific looking gash on my left arm?
Grrrr...
huh? What is that...
Ah! Flora? What happened? What's going on?
I think I can answer that.
But we don't have time!
CRACK!
Gah!
Euchre! You're alive! But I thought... I saw you get hit by the fireball!
Oh, I'm tougher than I look.
But I'm not important right now. Are you okay?
I guess so... but...
Trace... he... he attacked me...
Why would he do something like that?
Flora, you're going to have to trust me when I tell you, Trace wasn't in control of himself.
Someone was using the Tower to make Trace go berserk and act out his old emotions.
How do you know this?
Well... just trust me for now, Flora.
Why would they want him to remember?
Trace was very important to the Templars, even if some of them might want him out of the way...
But there's someone I know who I suspect is behind this...
Someone who cares nothing for the fate of neither Human nor Keidran.
Ephemural!
Look what you've done! You've destroyed everything!
Oh? You don't like my plan?
Plan? You've destroyed my Tower and nearly killed everyone *but* Trace!
You're plan is a failure.
Wrong! I do not involve myself with the petty quarrels of you Templar mortals.
I care not for Trace's fate!
There's only one thing I seek: balance! I am Neutrality.
I'm after... her.
Her? But she's just an ordinary Keidran...
I have foreseen that she will one day bring balance to the races of this world.
And betrayal is the key to spark the hatred to make it happen.


He still has a fever. I don't know what to do.
Flora, relax. I'm sure he'll be fine... Tell me, why do you feel you need to help this human?
...I don't know.
You know I've always felt that humans weren't all that bad.
Mmhm. ...You sure have fallen for this guy, haven't you?
What?! No! I... haven't even thought... well... we're just friends!
I seem to remember you being "just friends" with a human once before. And you know how that turned out, don't you?
Hmm...
Yeah, yeah...
But I was young and stupid back then. I won't make the same mistake again...
Heh, so you're saying you aren't young anymore?
Oh, hush...
Flora, listen to me. You know you're like a sister to me.
But I'm getting old. I'm twenty-one. If I'm lucky, I may live to see another few years, but I can't protect you forever.


Ah, look at you, your fur is in knots!
Euchre, I'm fine-
I know, I know.
Look, why don't you go and take a bath in that river we found and then get off to bed.
Oh, okay.
I'll be in my tent if you need me.
Keidran...
My plans were almost ruined yesterday.
Just about lost my ticket home.
And Flora risked her life to try and snap Trace out of it.
Eh, I shouldn't even care if she died or not.
So why do I feel so guilty about not helping her!?
This is insane.
I am a basitin warrior!
And she's getting in the way of my plans.
What I really need is to get rid of her.
But I gave Trace my word I wouldn't even touch her.
.... Then again, all's fair, as the saying goes.

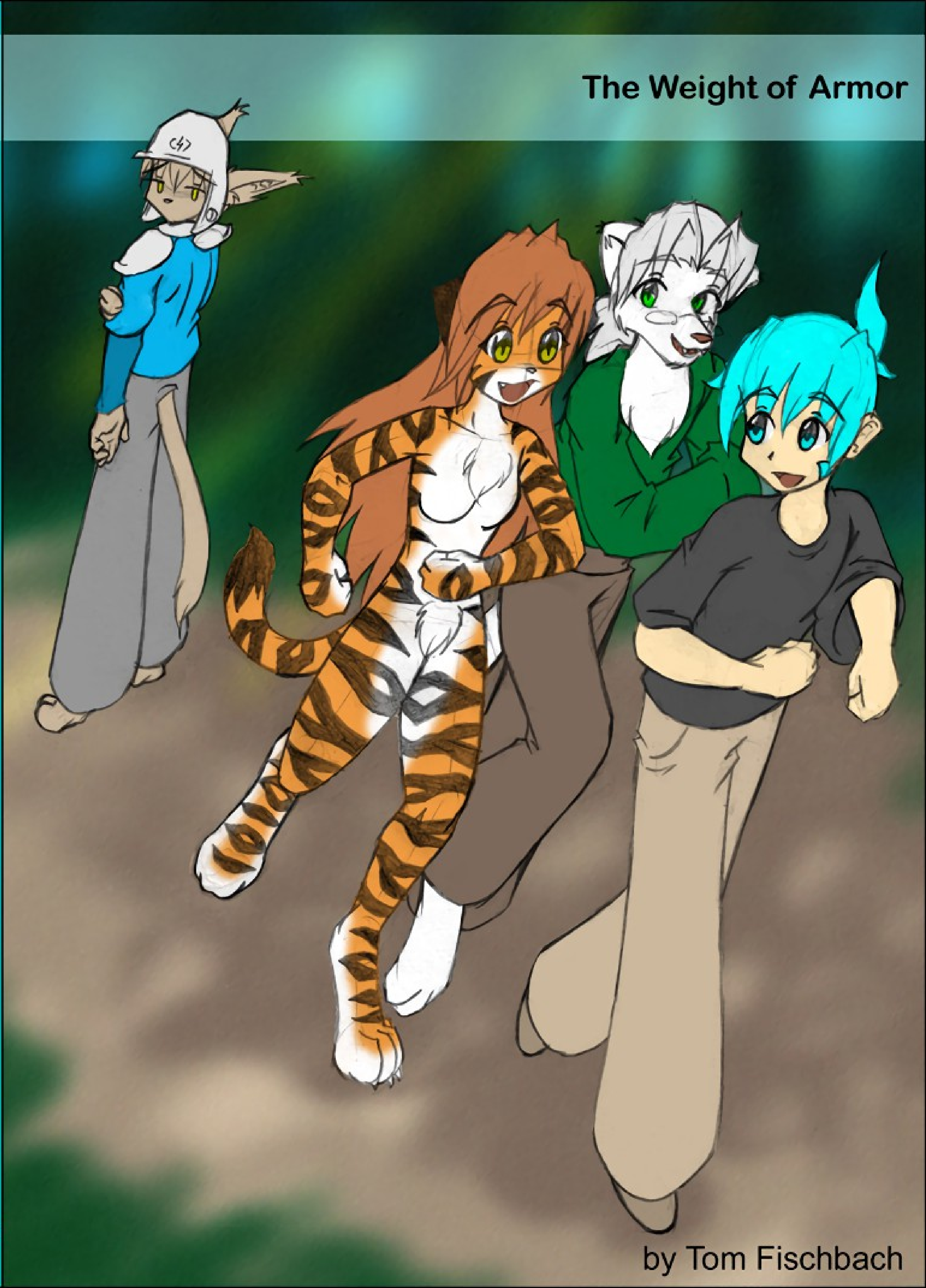

Eh.. Uhm..?
Wha- What? Where am I?
No... it can't be!
I'm... back home?
This.. isn't possible. This is my island!
It's just like I remember!
Keith!
Huh? Vehra?
Of course, kiddo! What are you doing out here?
Sleeping on the beach again?
Well, gotta go.
See ya around, Keith Keiser.
Wait! Vehra!
Don't leave! Y...you...
You're alive....
Keith!
Uh..?
Dad..?
What are you doing out here? You lazy, pathetic excuse for a Keiser!


No, please...
Not again.. don't make me see this again..
Keith Keiser. For your actions against the basitin people; for the murder of your own two parents;
For bringing shame not only on yourself but on your family name:
I didn't do it!
..unless honor is restored..
..I hearby banish you from these islands...
...Forever.
End.

5

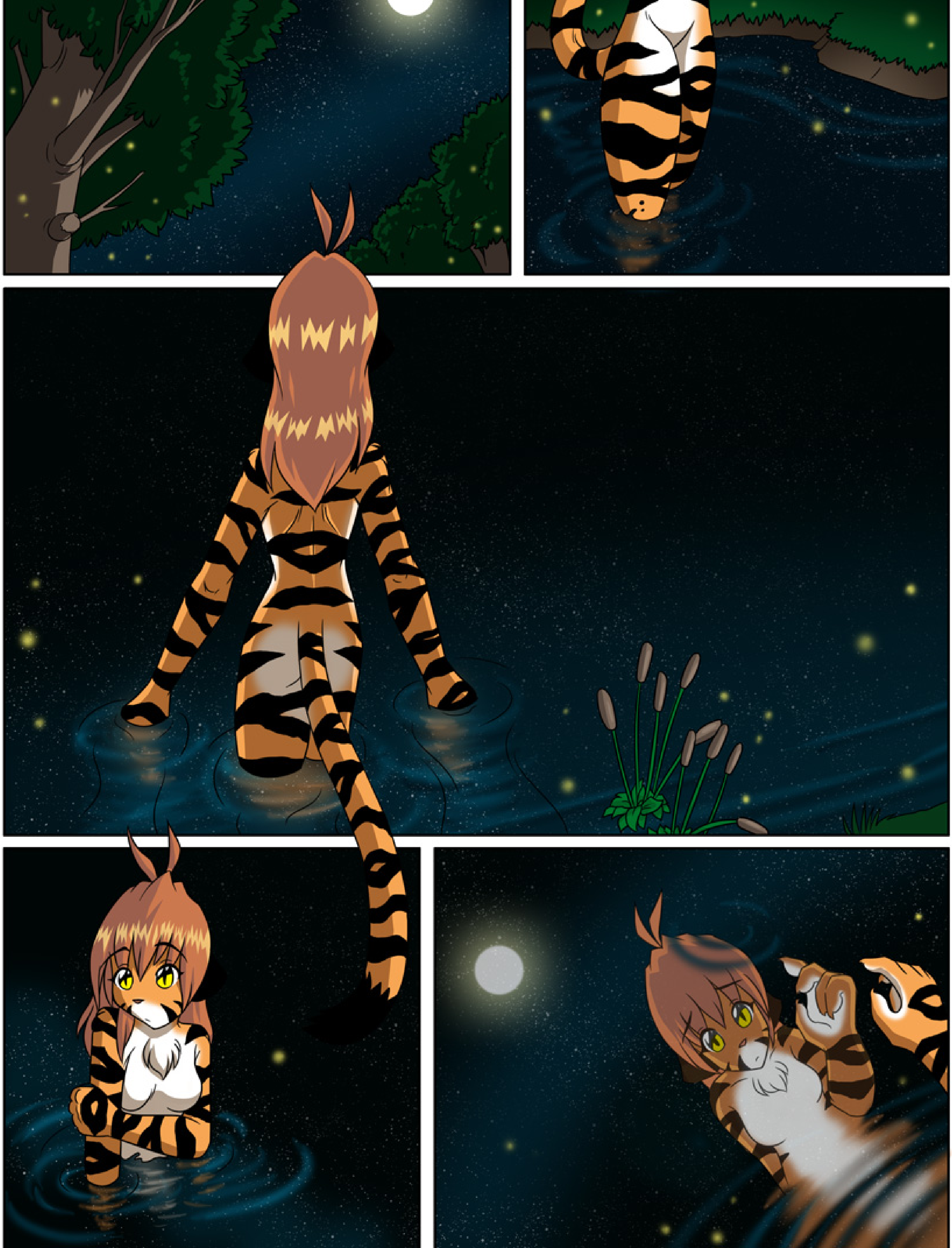
TWOKINDS

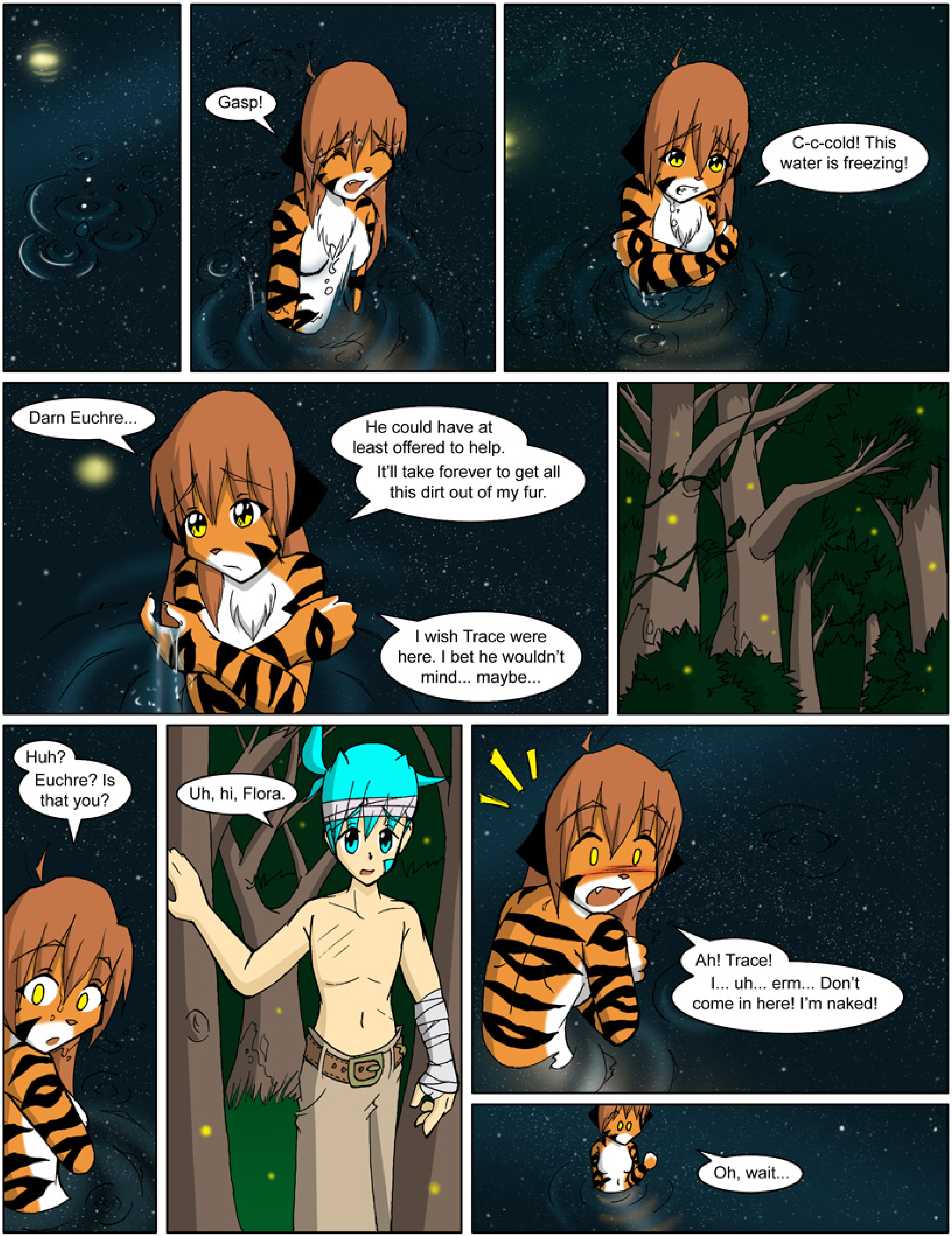
The Weight of Armor

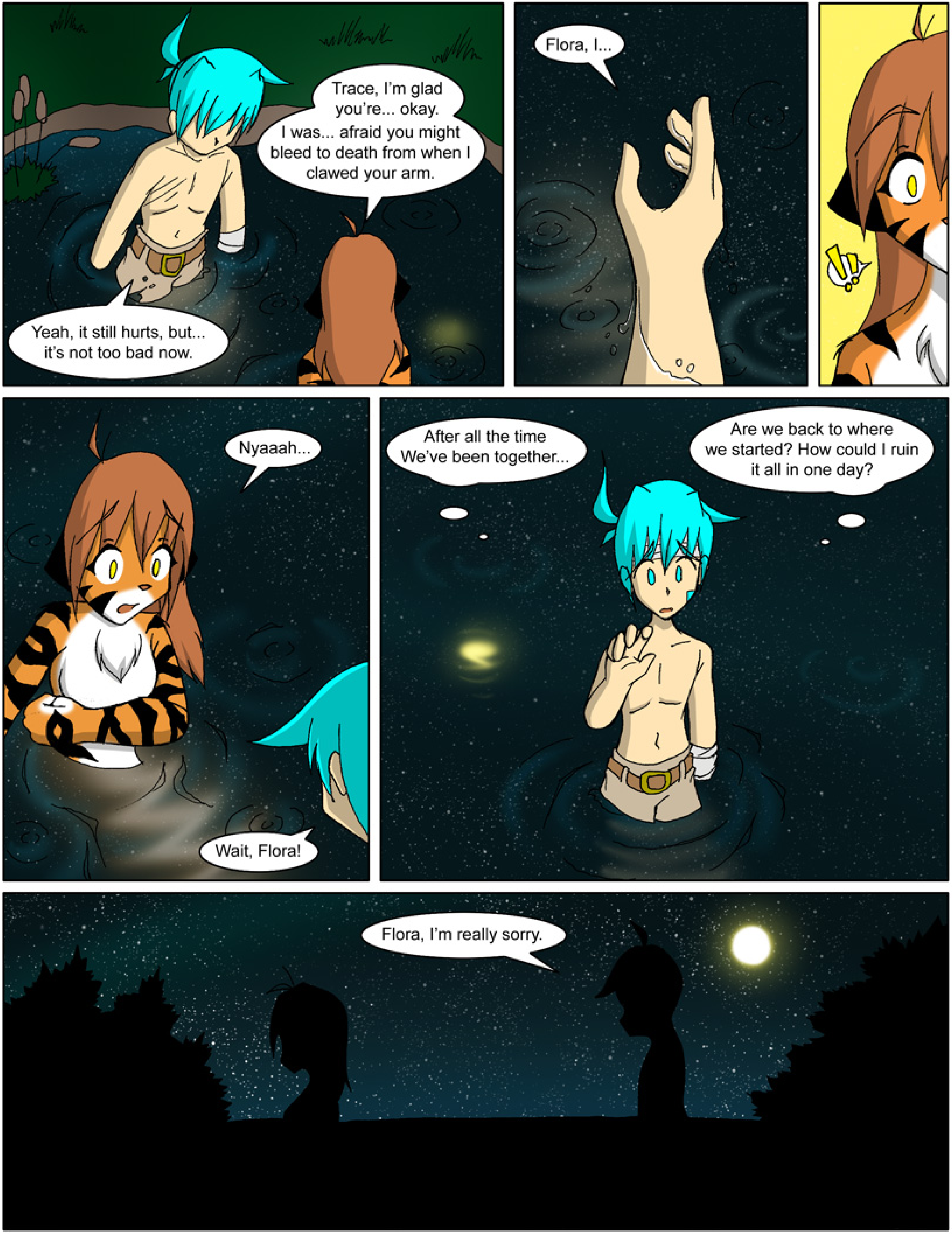


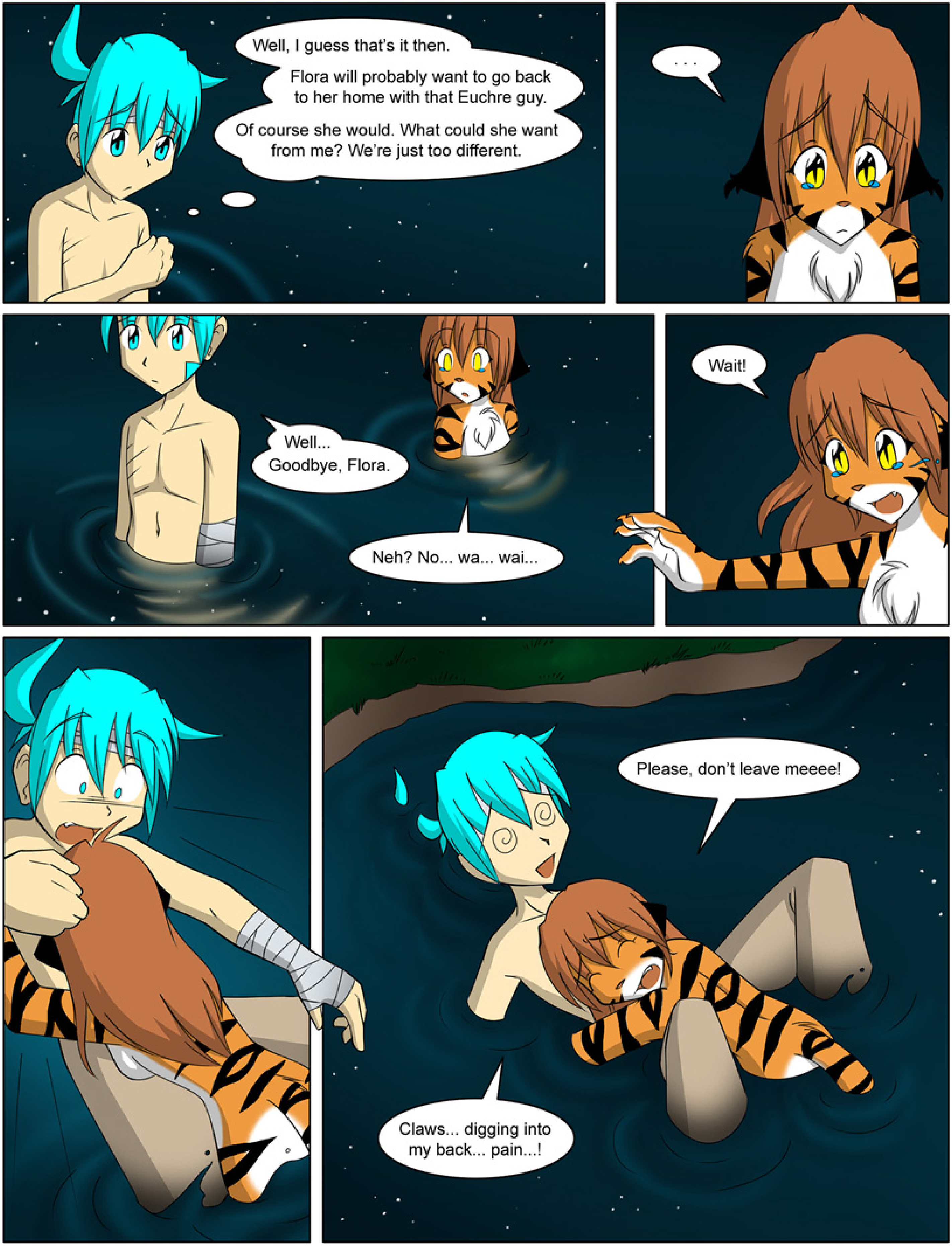
by Tom Fischbach

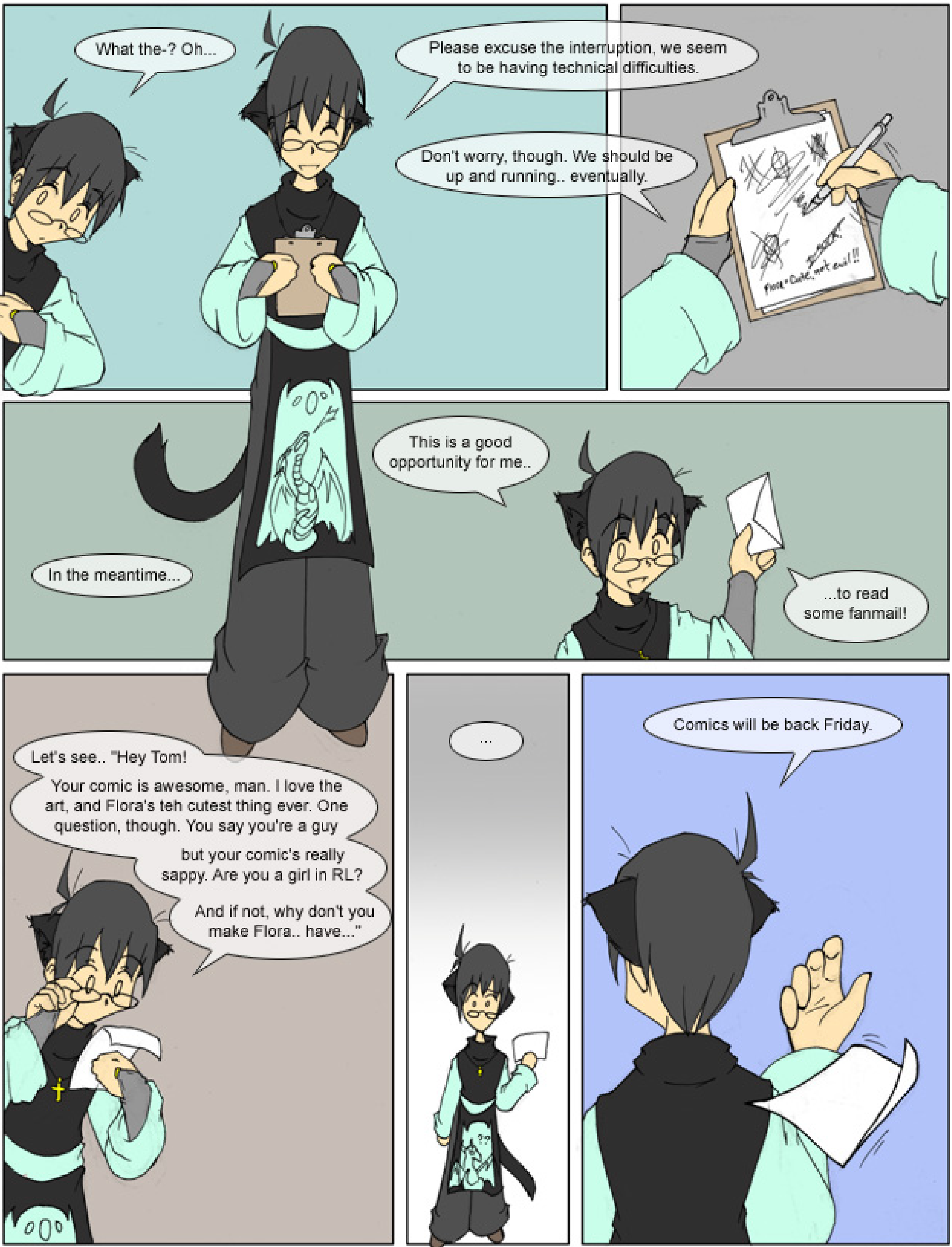
TomArt Studios

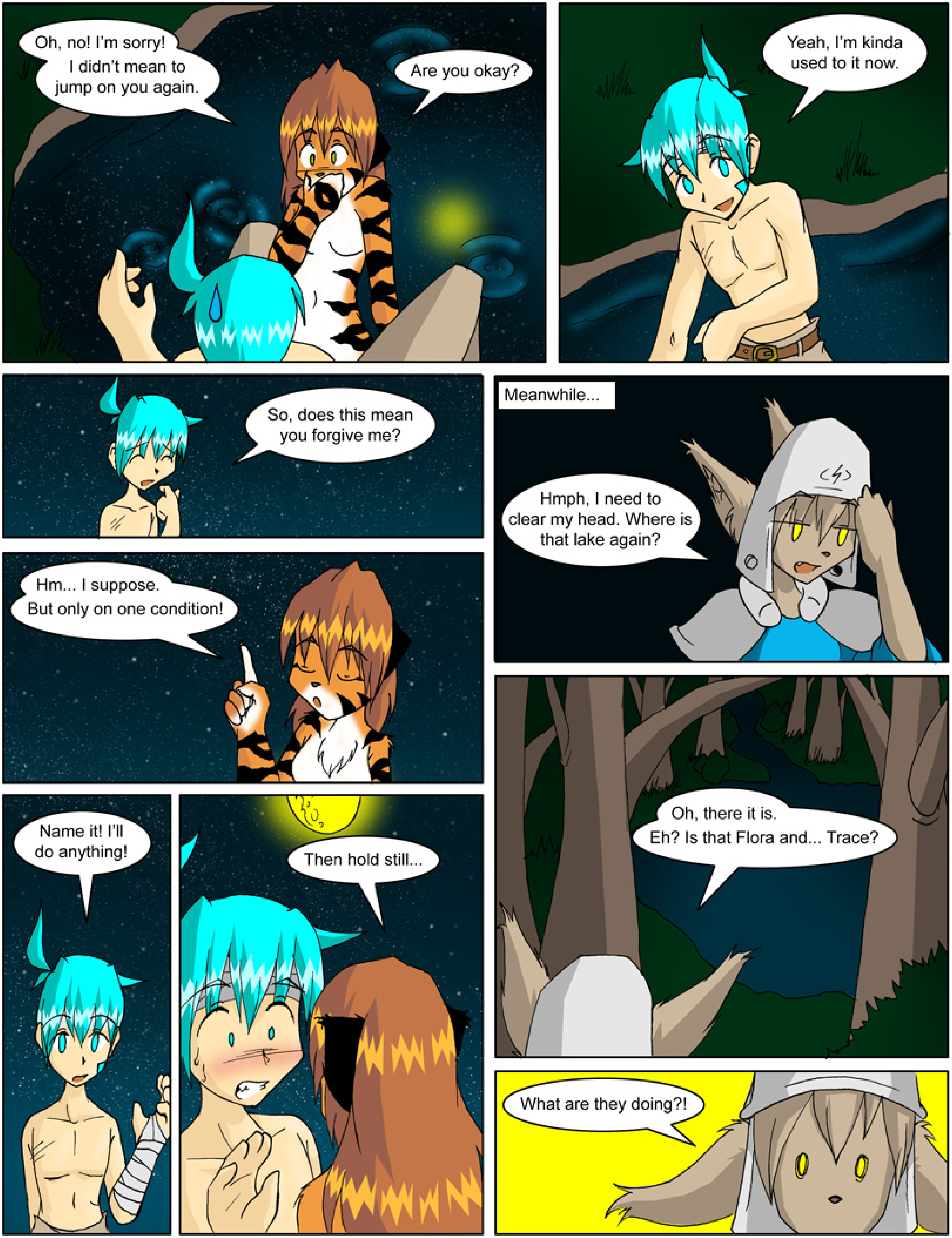


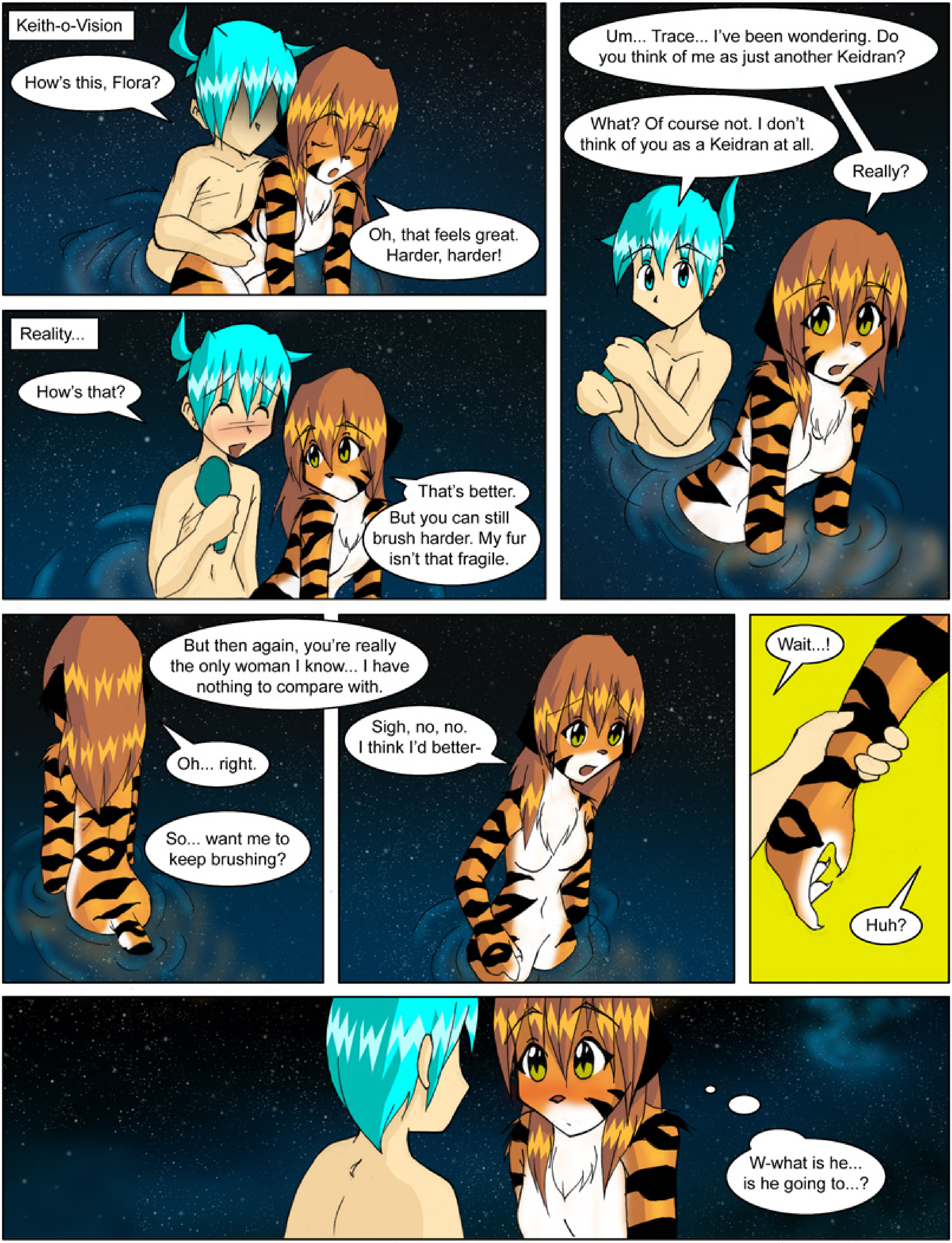

Gasp!
C-c-cold! This water is freezing!
Darn Euchre...
He could have at least offered to help.
It'll take forever to get all this dirt out of my fur.
I wish Trace were here. I bet he wouldn't mind... maybe...
Huh? Euchre? Is that you?
Uh, hi, Flora.
Ah! Trace! I... uh... erm... Don't come in here! I'm naked!
Oh, wait...

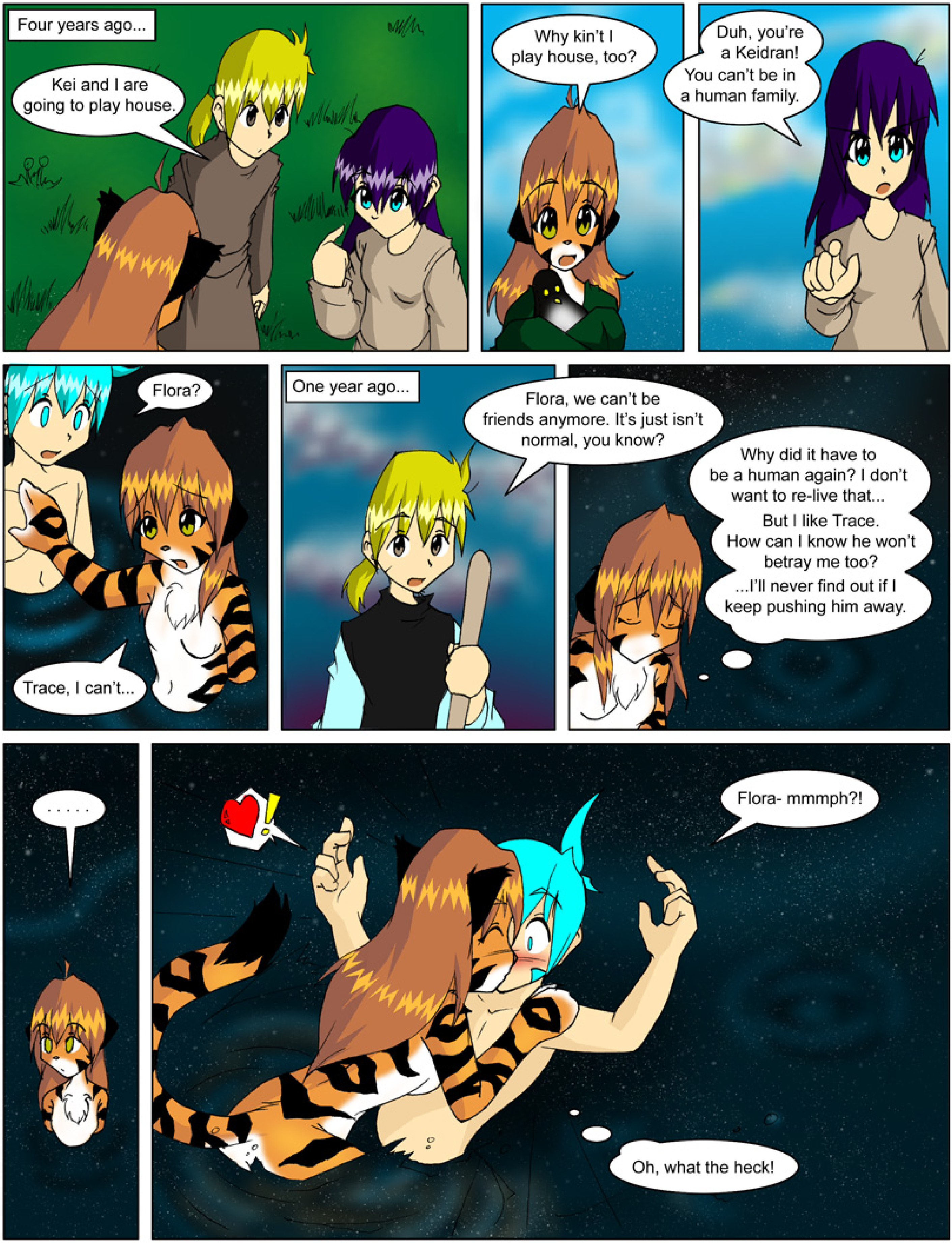

Trace, I'm glad you're... okay. I was... afraid you might bleed to death from when I clawed your arm.
Yeah, it still hurts, but... it's not too bad now.
Flora, I...
!!
Nyaaah...
Wait, Flora!
After all the time We've been together...
Are we back to where we started? How could I ruin it all in one day?
Flora, I'm really sorry.

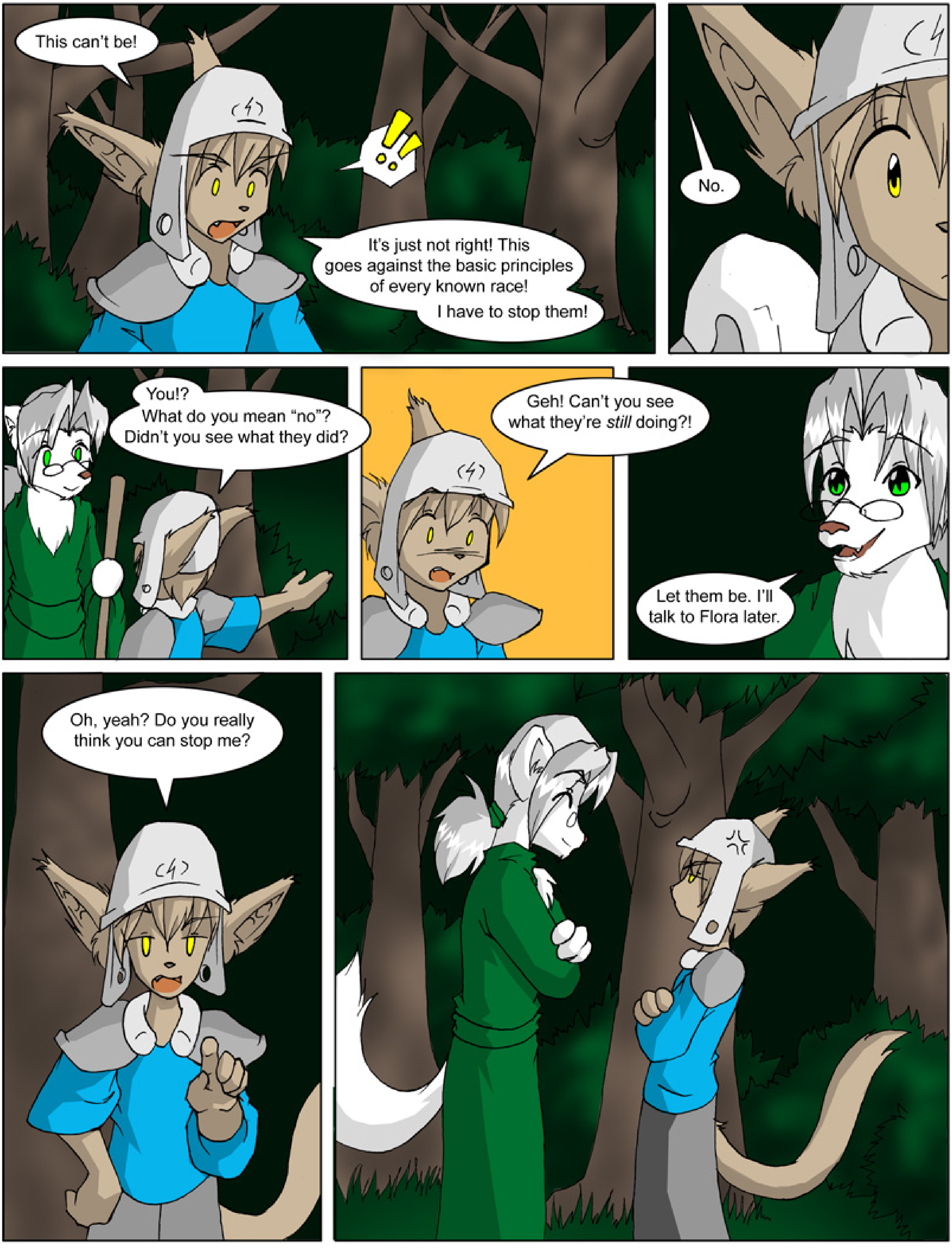

Well, I guess that's it then.
Flora will probably want to go back to her home with that Euchre guy.
Of course she would. What could she want from me? We're just too different.
. . .
Well... Goodbye, Flora.
Neh? No... wa... wai...
Wait!
Please, don't leave meeee!
Claws... digging into my back... pain...!

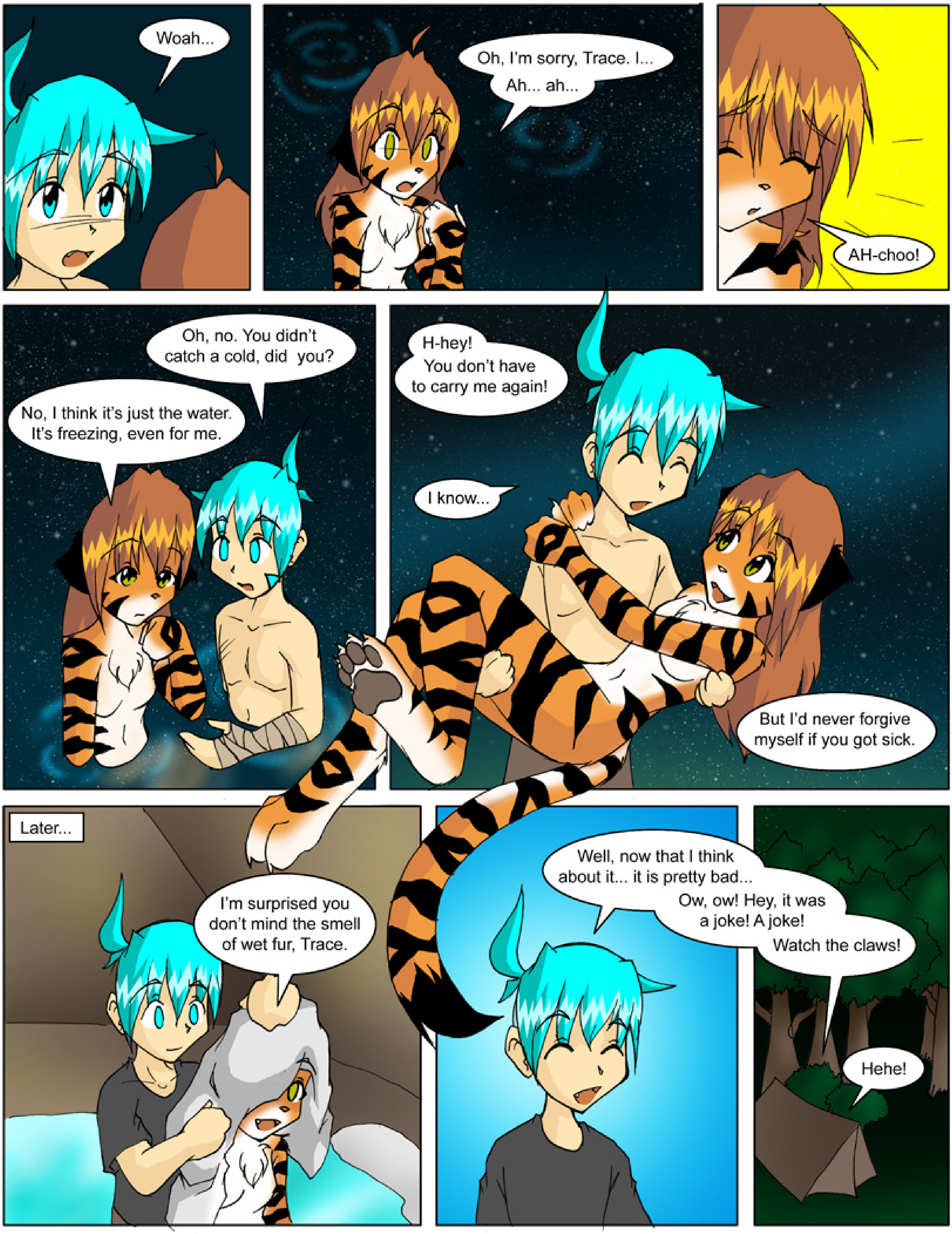

What the-? Oh...
Please excuse the interruption, we seem to be having technical difficulties.
Don't worry, though. We should be up and running.. eventually.
Flora = Cute, not evil!!
In the meantime...
This is a good opportunity for me..
...to read some fanmail!
Let's see.. "Hey Tom!
Your comic is awesome, man. I love the art, and Flora's teh cutest thing ever. One question, though. You say you're a guy
but your comic's really sappy. Are you a girl in RL?
And if not, why don't you make Flora.. have..."
...
Comics will be back Friday.

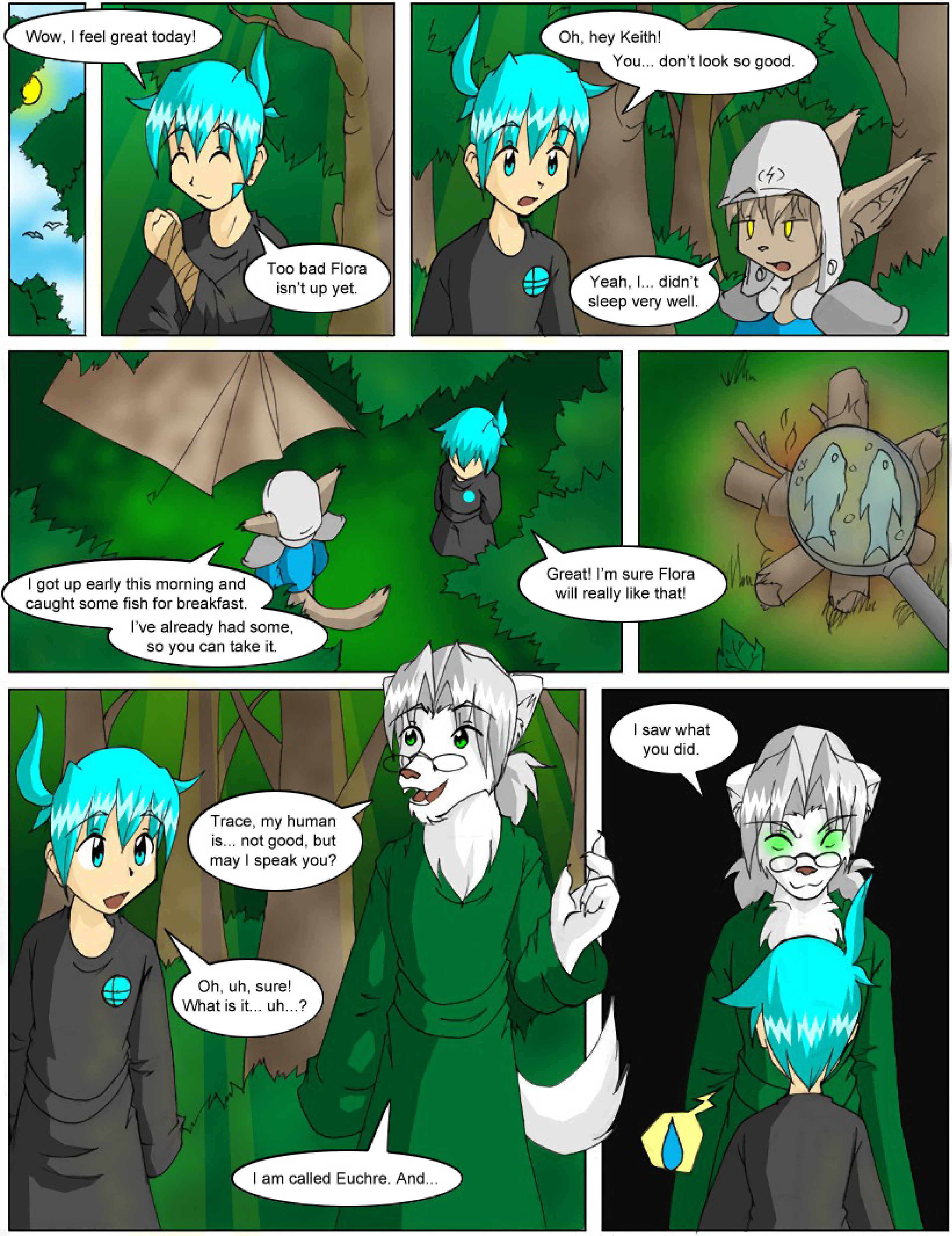

Oh, no! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to jump on you again.
Are you okay?
Yeah, I'm kinda used to it now.
So, does this mean you forgive me?
Hm... I suppose. But only on one condition!
Name it! I'll do anything!
Then hold still...
Meanwhile...
Hmph, I need to clear my head. Where is that lake again?
Oh, there it is. Eh? Is that Flora and... Trace?
What are they doing?!

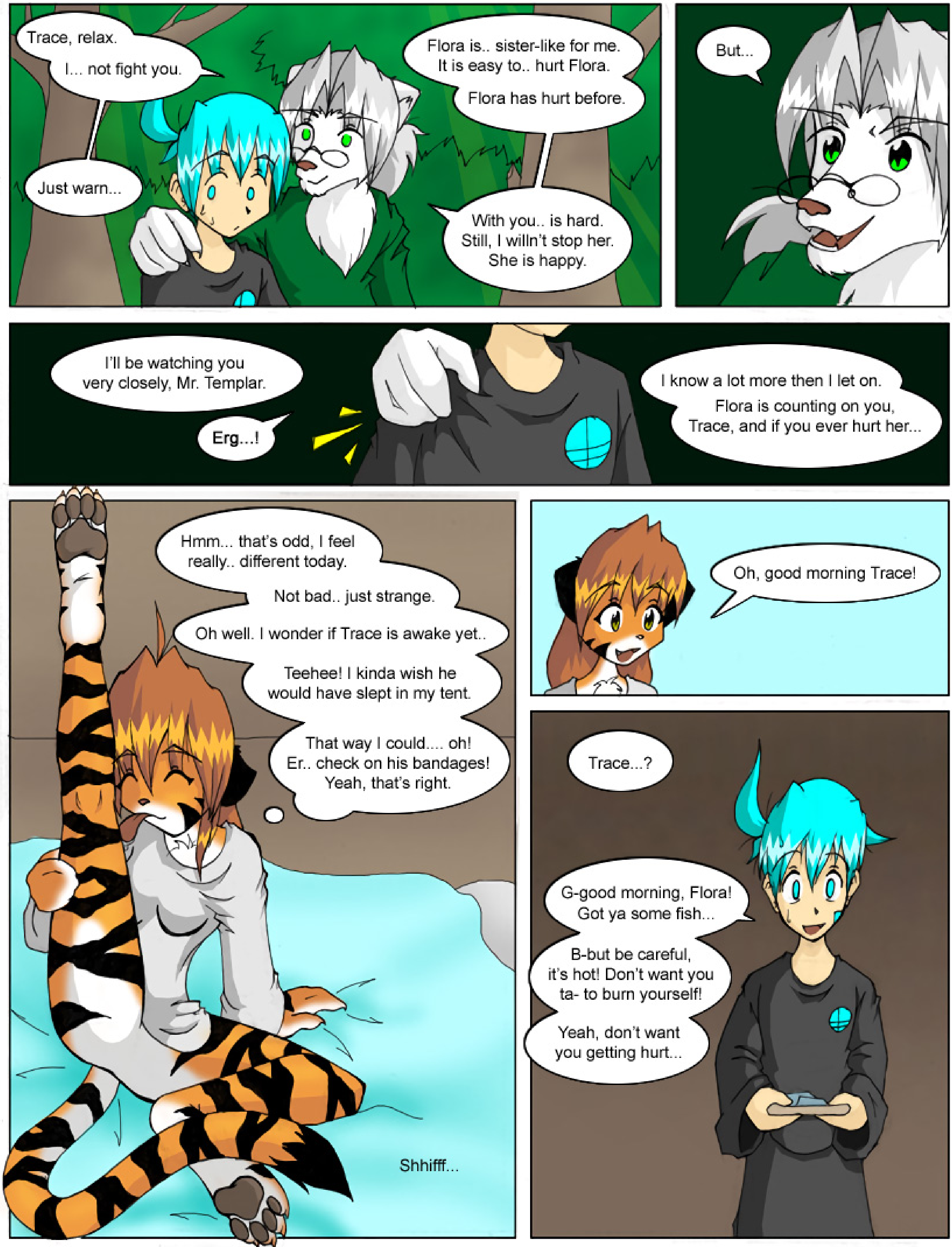

Keith-o-Vision
How's this, Flora?
Oh, that feels great. Harder, harder!
Reality...
How's that?
That's better.
But you can still brush harder. My fur isn't that fragile.
Um... Trace... I've been wondering. Do you think of me as just another Keidran?
What? Of course not. I don't think of you as a Keidran at all.
Really?
But then again, you're really the only woman I know... I have nothing to compare with.
Oh... right.
So... want me to keep brushing?
Sigh, no, no. I think I'd better-
Wait...!
Huh?
W-what is he... is he going to...?

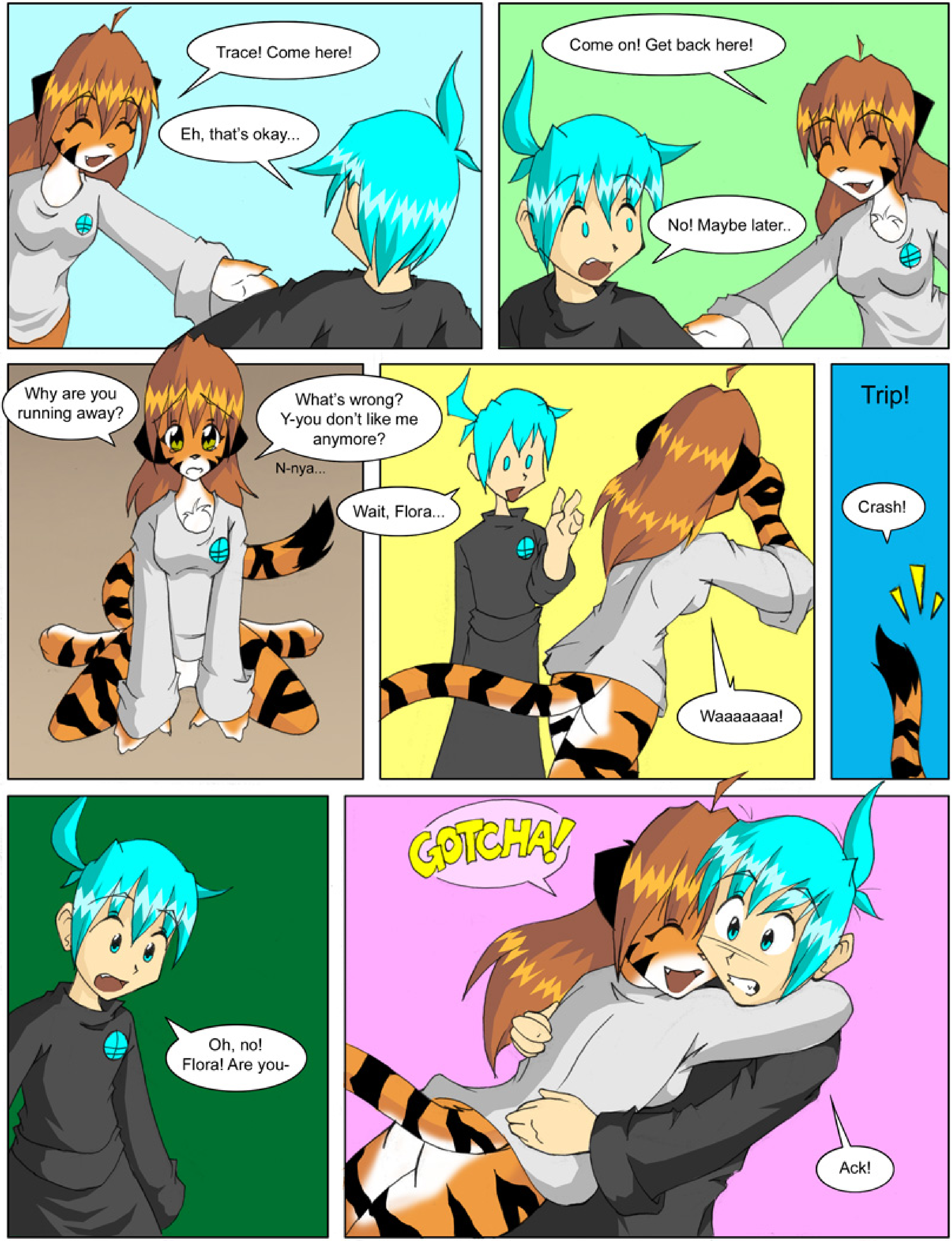

Four years ago...
Kei and I are going to play house.
Why kin't I play house, too?
Duh, you're a Keidran! You can't be in a human family.
Flora?
Trace, I can't...
One year ago...
Flora, we can't be friends anymore. It's just isn't normal, you know?
Why did it have to be a human again? I don't want to re-live that...
But I like Trace. How can I know he won't betray me too?
...I'll never find out if I keep pushing him away.
. . . . .
!
Flora- mmmph?!
Oh, what the heck!

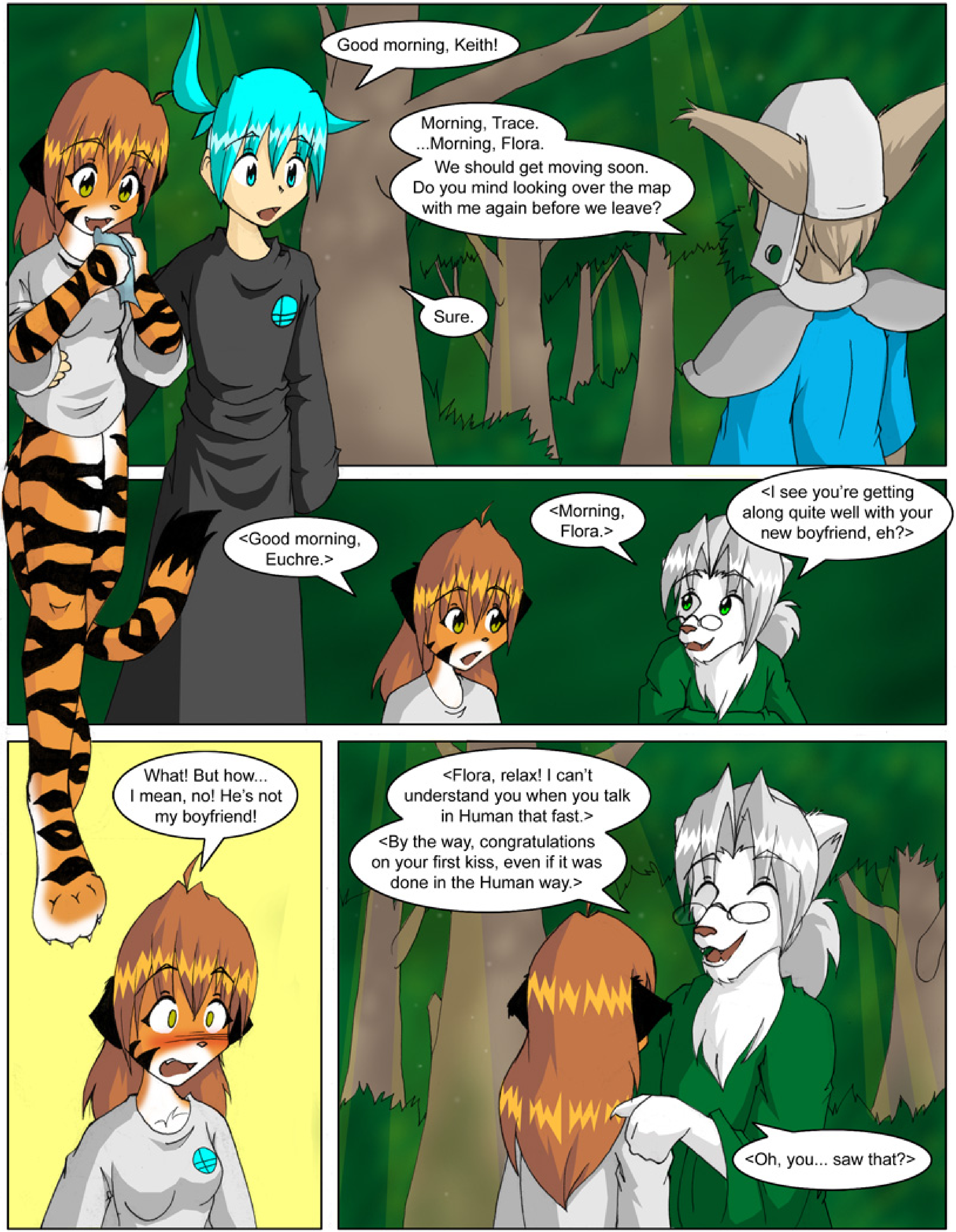

This can't be!
!!
It's just not right! This goes against the basic principles of every known race!
I have to stop them!
No.
You!? What do you mean "no"? Didn't you see what they did?
Geh! Can't you see what they're *still* doing?!
Let them be. I'll talk to Flora later.
Oh, yeah? Do you really think you can stop me?

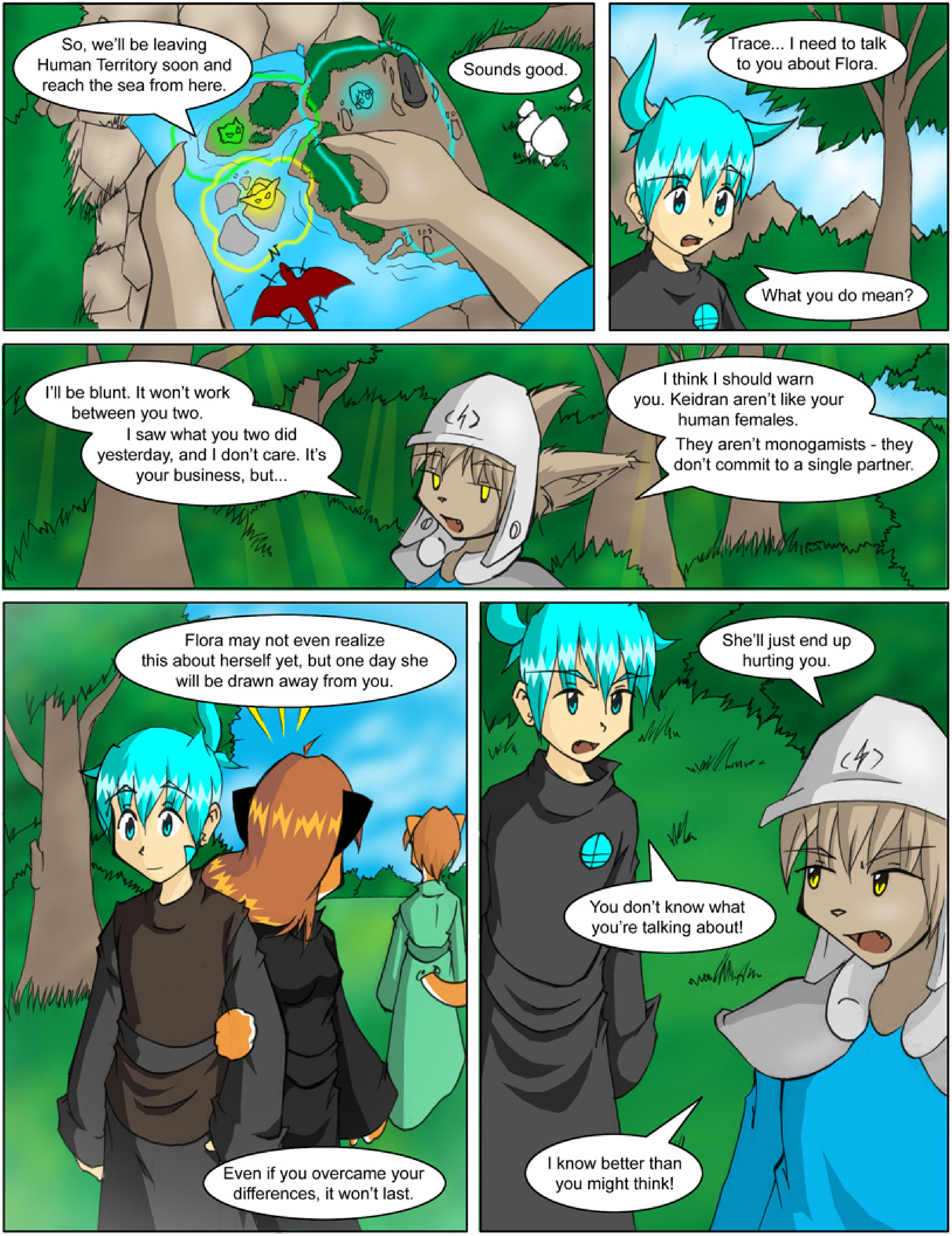

Woah...
Oh, I'm sorry, Trace. I...
Ah... ah...
AH-choo!
Oh, no. You didn't catch a cold, did you?
No, I think it's just the water. It's freezing, even for me.
H-hey! You don't have to carry me again!
I know...
But I'd never forgive myself if you got sick.
Later...
I'm surprised you don't mind the smell of wet fur, Trace.
Well, now that I think about it... it is pretty bad...
Ow, ow! Hey, it was a joke! A joke!
Watch the claws!
Hehe!

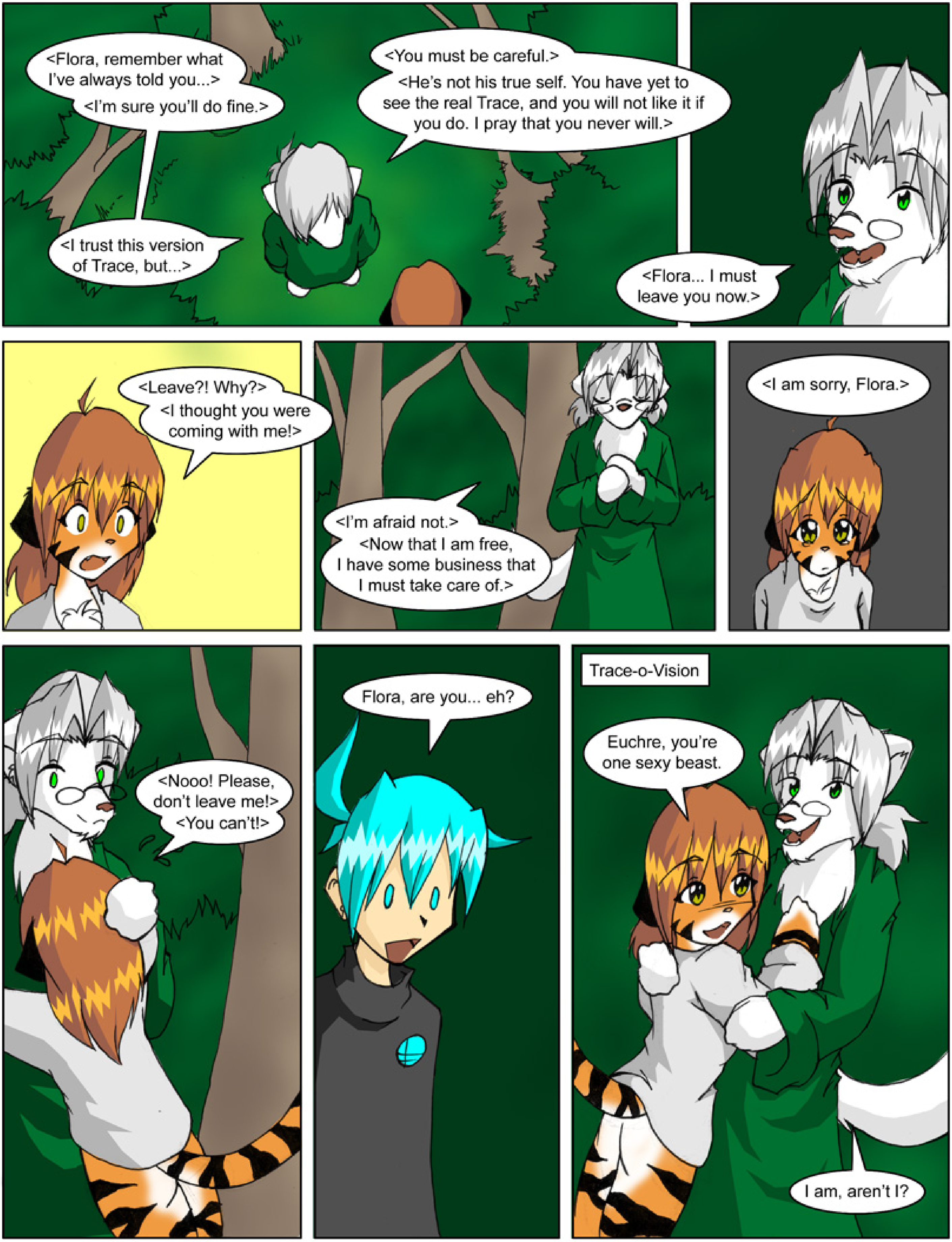

Wow, I feel great today!
Too bad Flora isn't up yet.
Oh, hey Keith!
You... don't look so good.
Yeah, I... didn't sleep very well.
I got up early this morning and caught some fish for breakfast.
I've already had some, so you can take it.
Great! I'm sure Flora will really like that!
Trace, my human is... not good, but may I speak you?
Oh, uh, sure! What is it... uh...?
I am called Euchre. And...
I saw what you did.

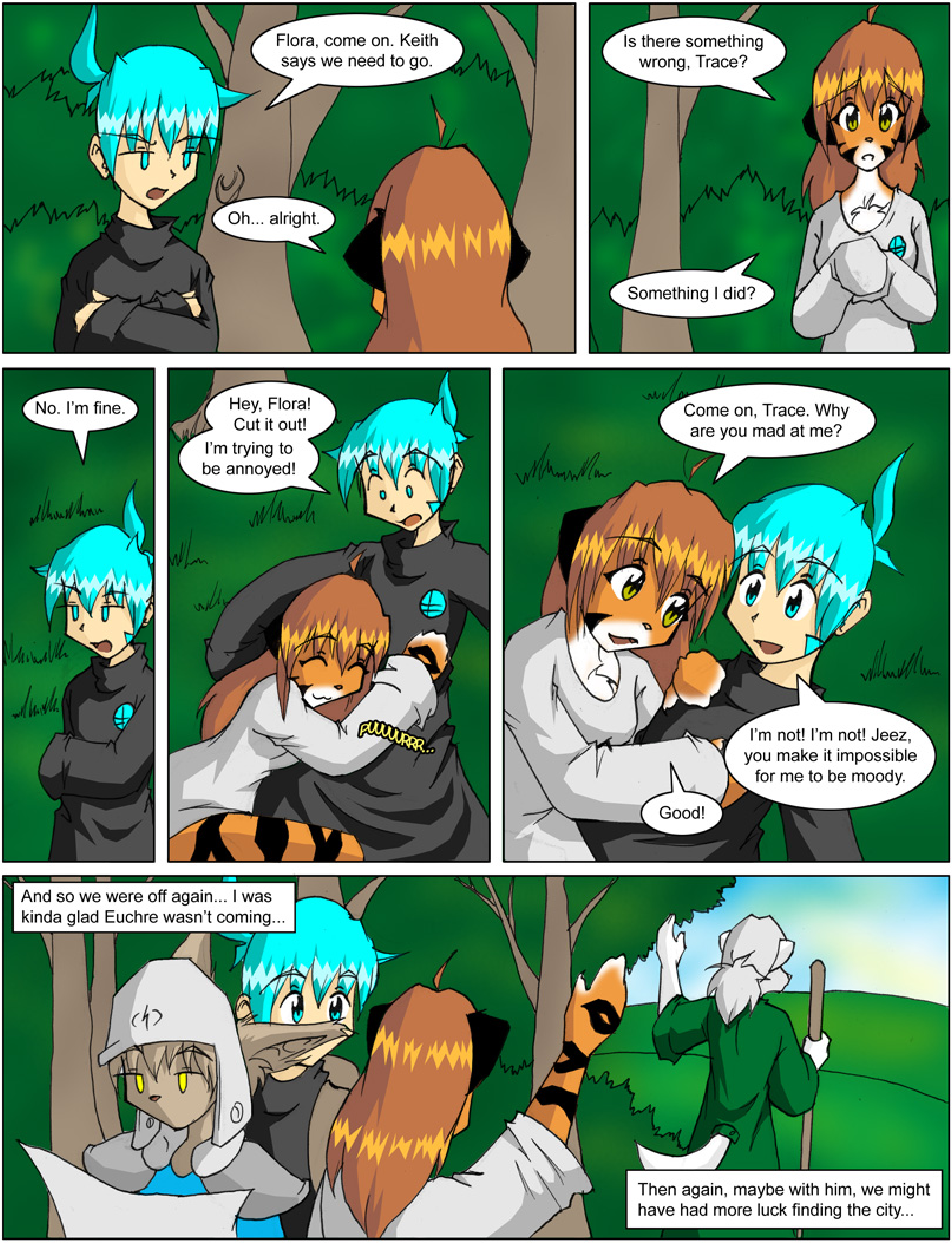

Trace, relax.
I... not fight you.
Just warn...
Flora is.. sister-like for me. It is easy to.. hurt Flora.
Flora has hurt before.
With you.. is hard. Still, I willn't stop her. She is happy.
But...
I know a lot more then I let on.
Flora is counting on you, Trace, and if you ever hurt her...
I'll be watching you very closely, Mr. Templar.
Erg...!
Hmm... that's odd, I feel really.. different today.
Not bad.. just strange.
Oh well. I wonder if Trace is awake yet..
Teehee! I kinda wish he would have slept in my tent.
That way I could.... oh! Er.. check on his bandages! Yeah, that's right.
Shhifff...
Oh, good morning Trace!
Trace...?
G-good morning, Flora! Got ya some fish...
B-but be careful, it's hot! Don't want you ta- to burn yourself!
Yeah, don't want you getting hurt...

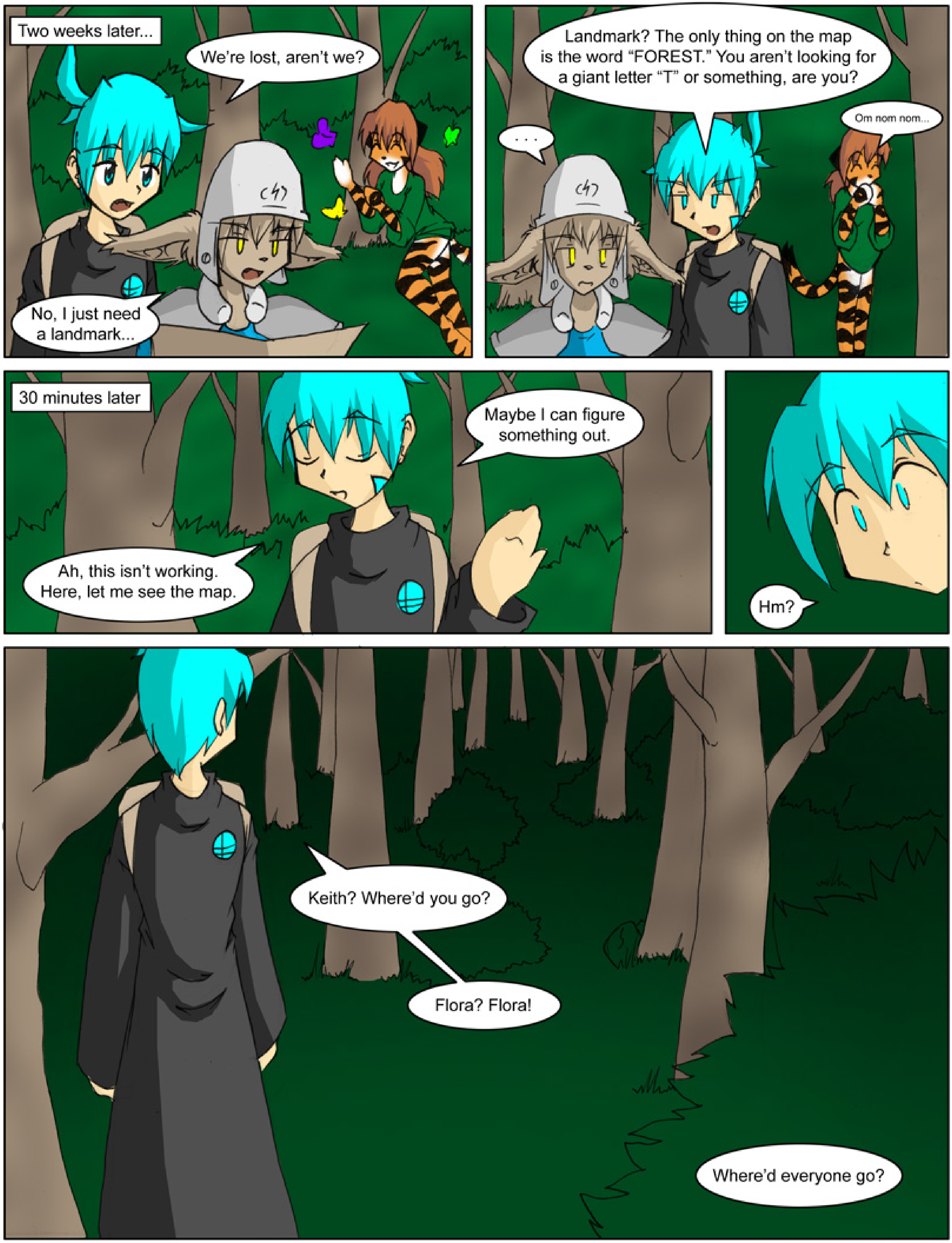

Trace! Come here!
Eh, that's okay...
Come on! Get back here!
No! Maybe later..
Why are you running away?
What's wrong? Y-you don't like me anymore?
N-nya...
Wait, Flora...
Waaaaaaa!
Trip!
Crash!
Oh, no! Flora! Are you-
GOTCHA!
Ack!

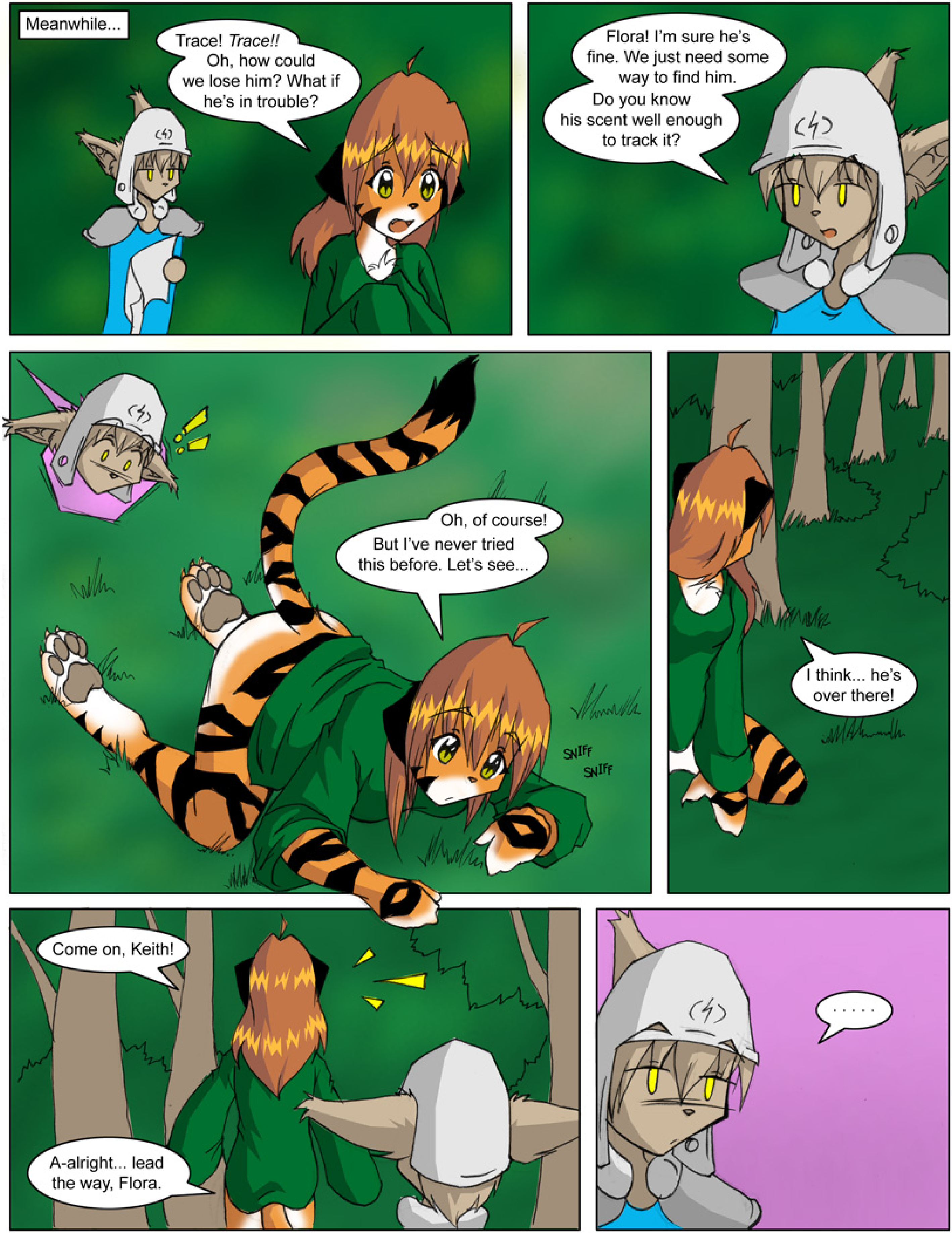

Good morning, Keith!
Morning, Trace.
...Morning, Flora.
We should get moving soon. Do you mind looking over the map with me again before we leave?
Sure.
<Good morning, Euchre.>
<Morning, Flora.>
<I see you're getting along quite well with your new boyfriend, eh?>
What! But how... I mean, no! He's not my boyfriend!
<Flora, relax! I can't understand you when you talk in Human that fast.>
<By the way, congratulations on your first kiss, even if it was done in the Human way.>
<Oh, you... saw that?>

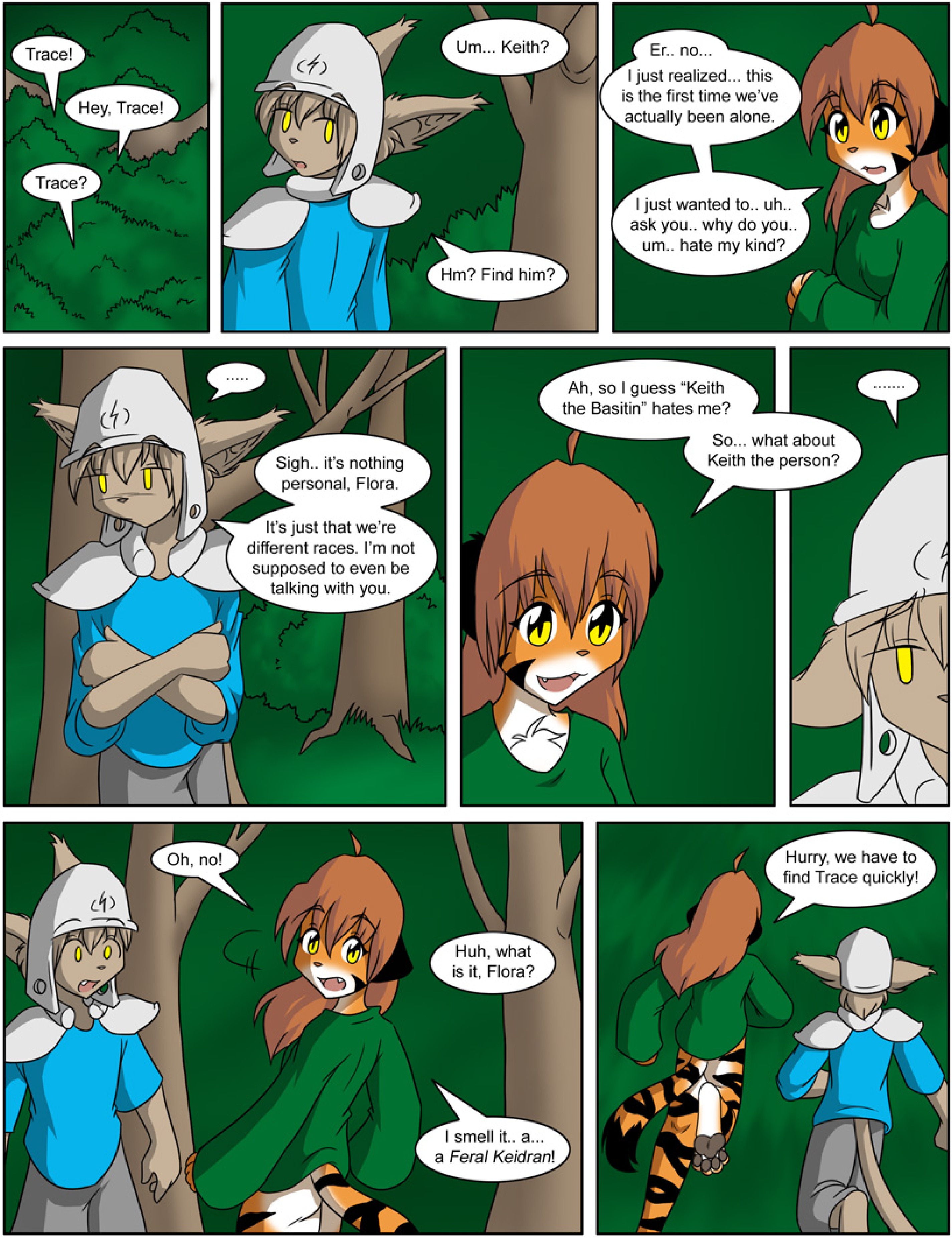

So, we'll be leaving Human Territory soon and reach the sea from here.
Sounds good.
Trace... I need to talk to you about Flora.
What you do mean?
I'll be blunt. It won't work between you two.
I saw what you two did yesterday, and I don't care. It's your business, but...
I think I should warn you. Keidran aren't like your human females.
They aren't monogamists - they don't commit to a single partner.
Flora may not even realize this about herself yet, but one day she will be drawn away from you.
Even if you overcame your differences, it won't last.
She'll just end up hurting you.
You don't know what you're talking about!
I know better than you might think!

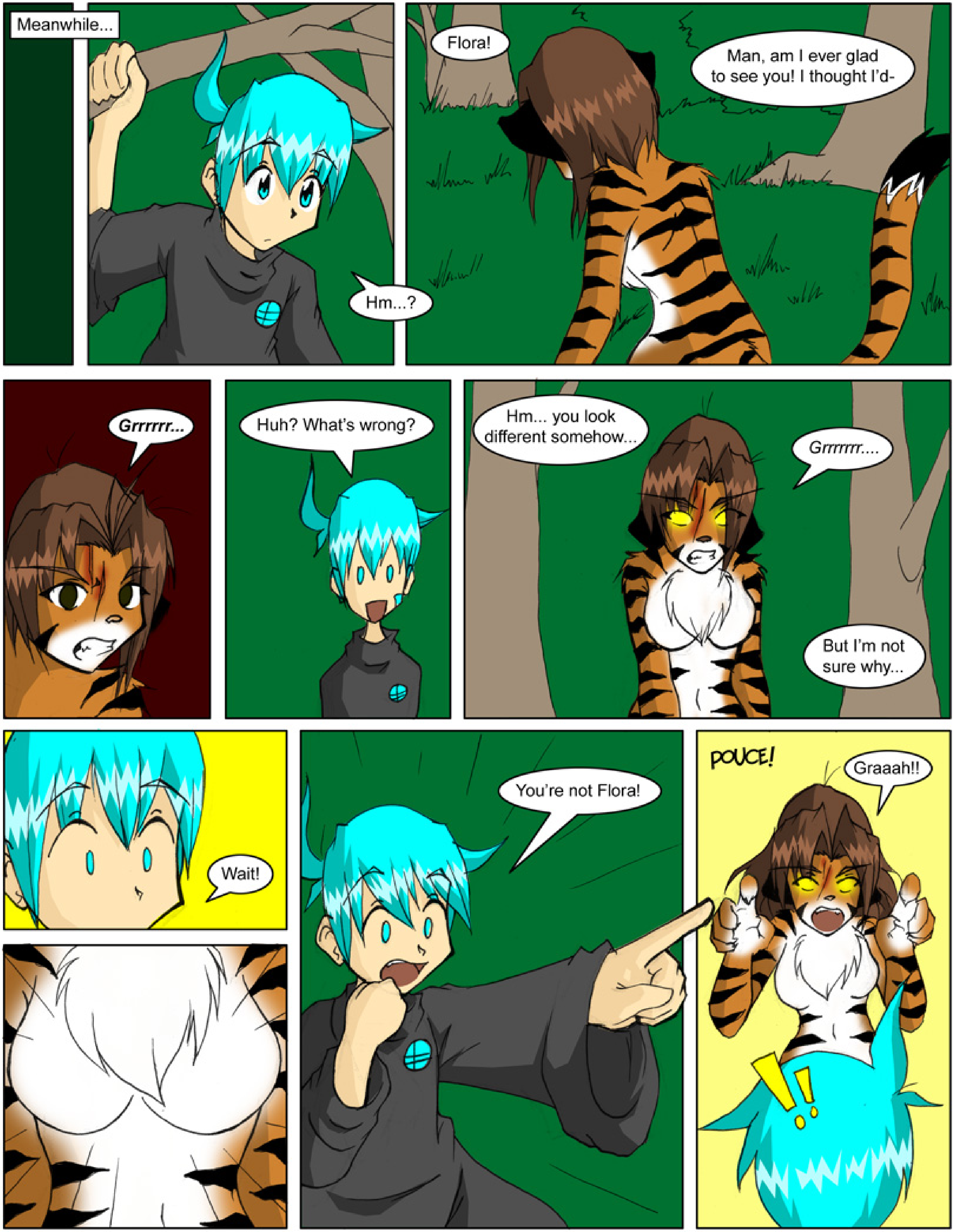

<Flora, remember what I've always told you...>
<I'm sure you'll do fine.>
<I trust this version of Trace, but...>
<You must be careful.>
<He's not his true self. You have yet to see the real Trace, and you will not like it if you do. I pray that you never will.>
<Flora... I must leave you now.>
<Leave?! Why?>
<I thought you were coming with me!>
<I'm afraid not.>
<Now that I am free, I have some business that I must take care of.>
<I am sorry, Flora.>
<Nooo! Please, don't leave me!>
<You can't!>
Flora, are you... eh?
Trace-o-Vision
Euchre, you're one sexy beast.
I am, aren't I?

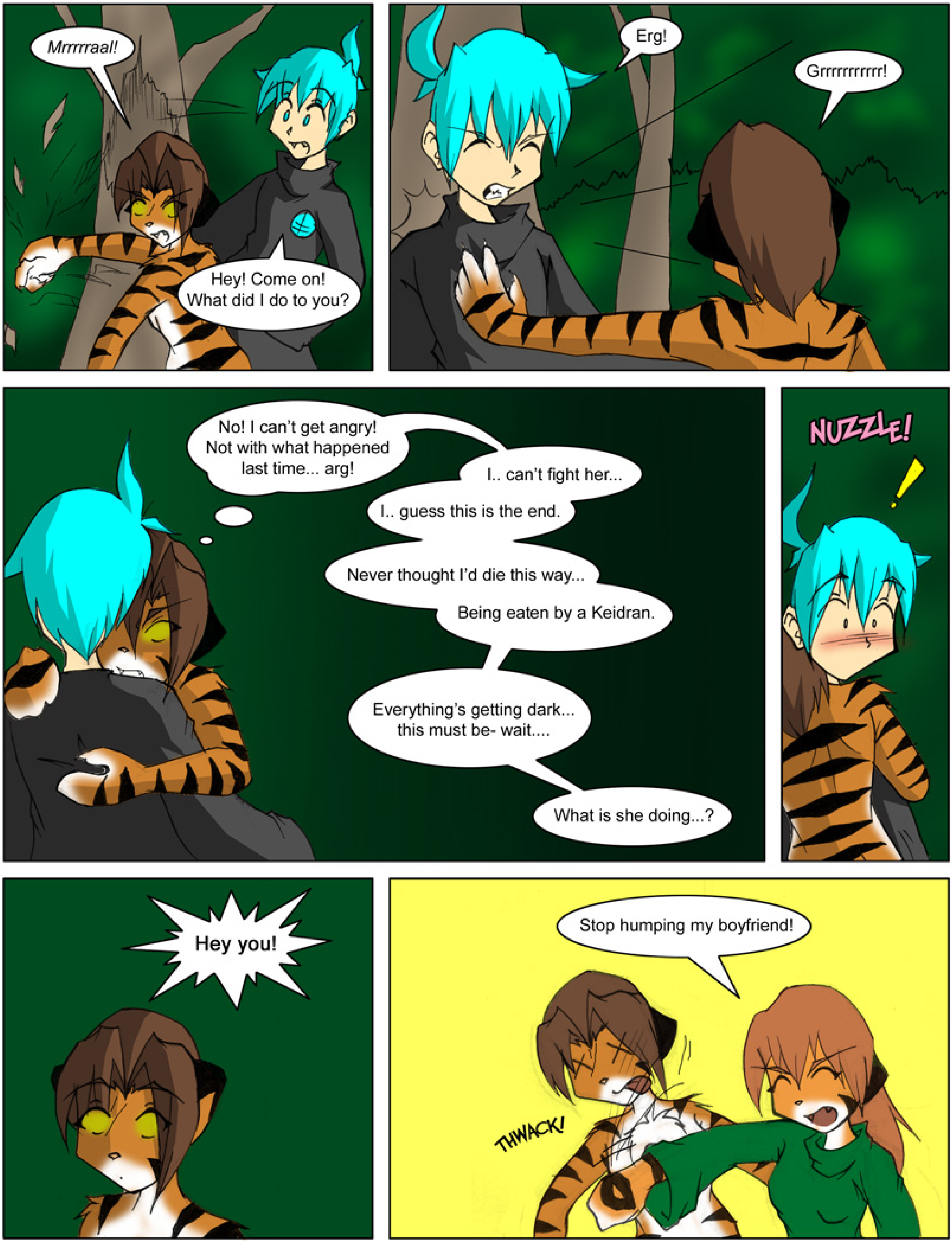

Flora, come on. Keith says we need to go.
Oh... alright.
Is there something wrong, Trace?
Something I did?
No. I'm fine.
Hey, Flora! Cut it out!
I'm trying to be annoyed!
PUUUURRR...
Come on, Trace. Why are you mad at me?
I'm not! I'm not! Jeez, you make it impossible for me to be moody.
Good!
And so we were off again... I was kinda glad Euchre wasn't coming...
Then again, maybe with him, we might have had more luck finding the city...


Two weeks later...
We're lost, aren't we?
No, I just need a landmark...
Landmark? The only thing on the map is the word "FOREST." You aren't looking for a giant letter "T" or something, are you?
. . .
Om nom nom...
30 minutes later
Maybe I can figure something out.
Ah, this isn't working. Here, let me see the map.
Hm?
Keith? Where'd you go?
Flora? Flora!
Where'd everyone go?

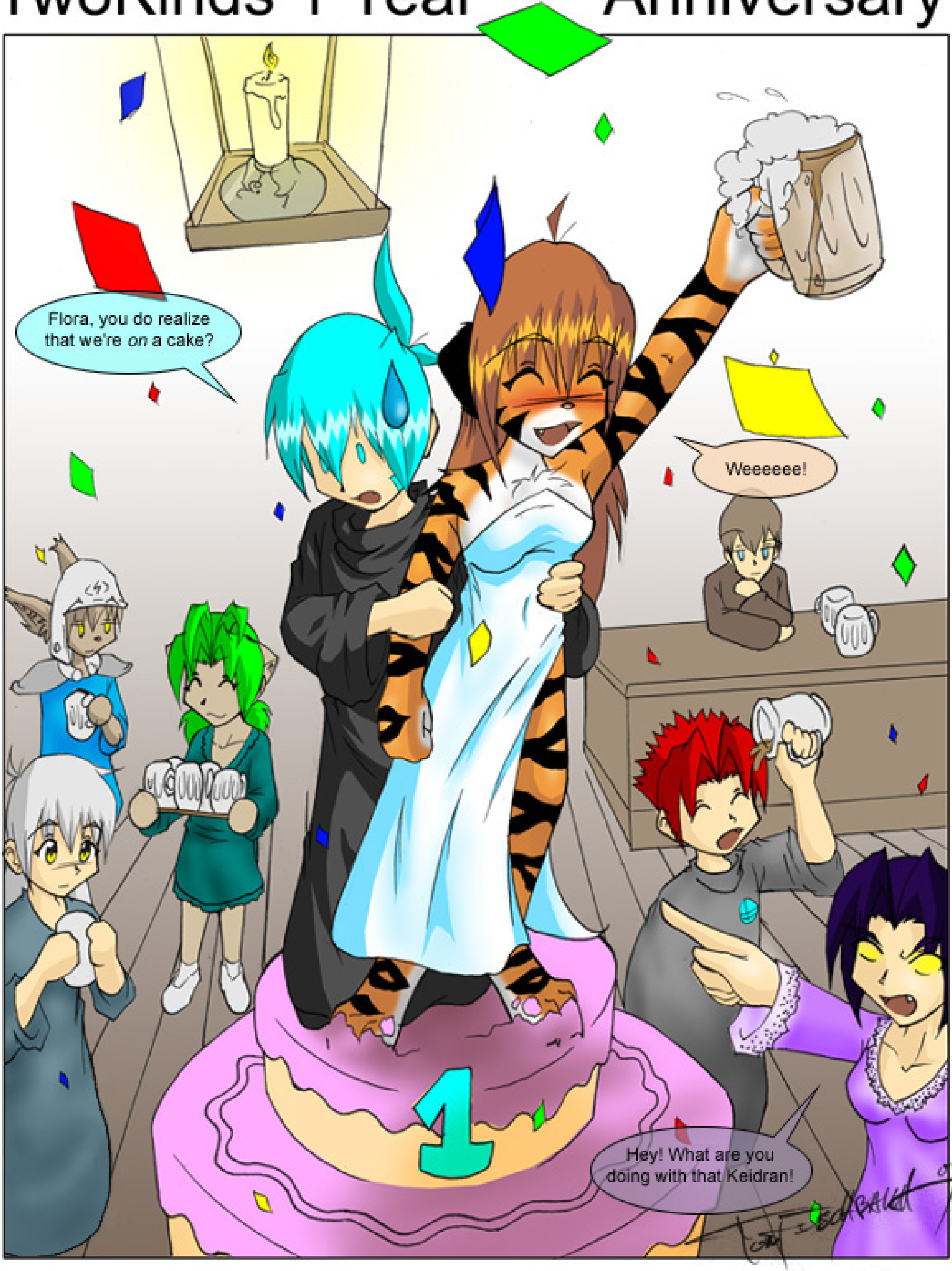

Meanwhile...
Trace! *Trace!!* Oh, how could we lose him? What if he's in trouble?
Flora! I'm sure he's fine. We just need some way to find him.
Do you know his scent well enough to track it?
Oh, of course! But I've never tried this before. Let's see...
SNIFF SNIFF
I think... he's over there!
Come on, Keith!
A-alright... lead the way, Flora.
. . . . .

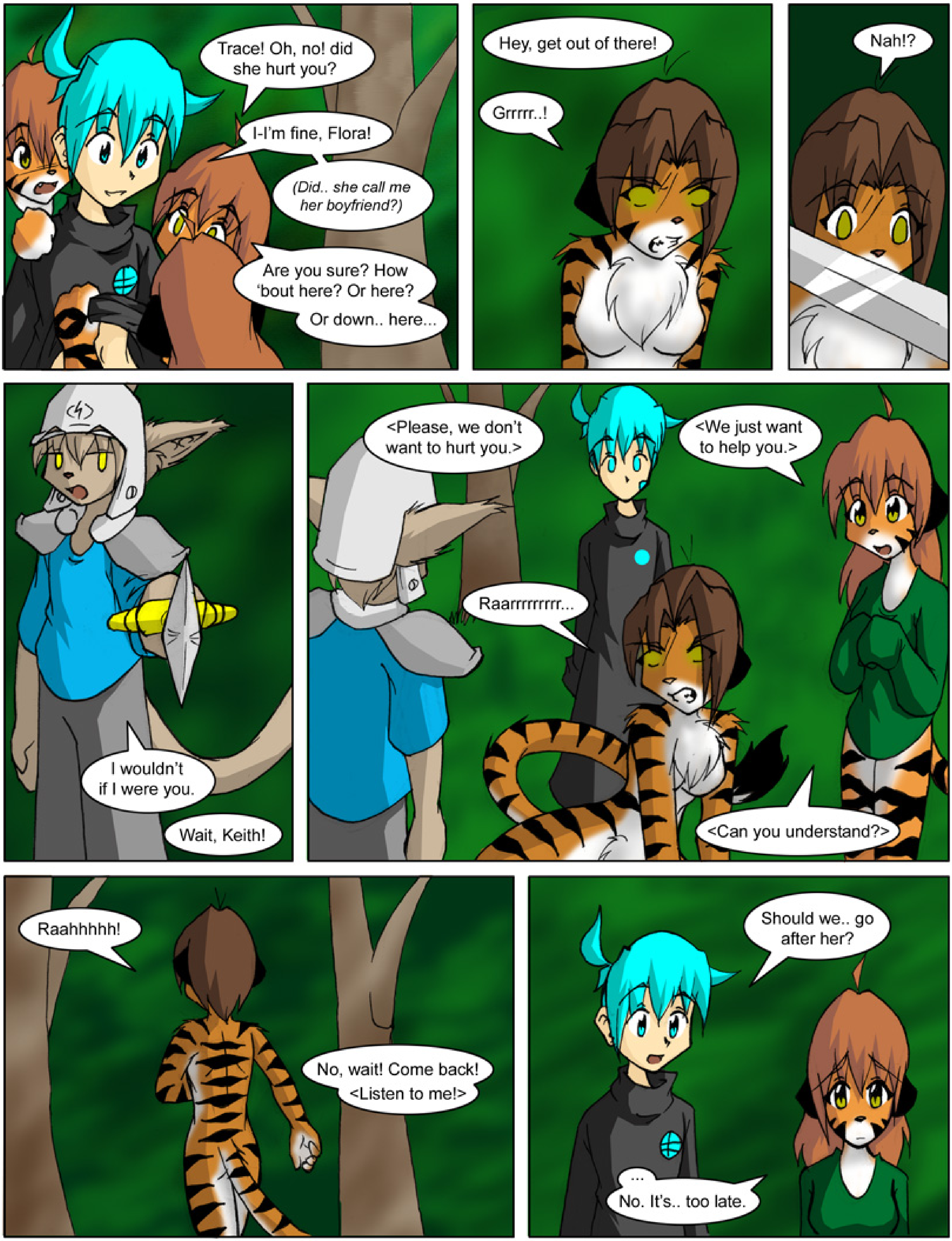

Trace!
Hey, Trace!
Trace?
Um... Keith?
Hm? Find him?
Er.. no...
I just realized... this is the first time we've actually been alone.
I just wanted to.. uh.. ask you.. why do you.. um.. hate my kind?
.....
Sigh.. it's nothing personal, Flora.
It's just that we're different races. I'm not supposed to even be talking with you.
Ah, so I guess "Keith the Basitin" hates me?
So... what about Keith the person?
....
Oh, no!
Huh, what is it, Flora?
I smell it.. a... a *Feral Keidran*!
Hurry, we have to find Trace quickly!

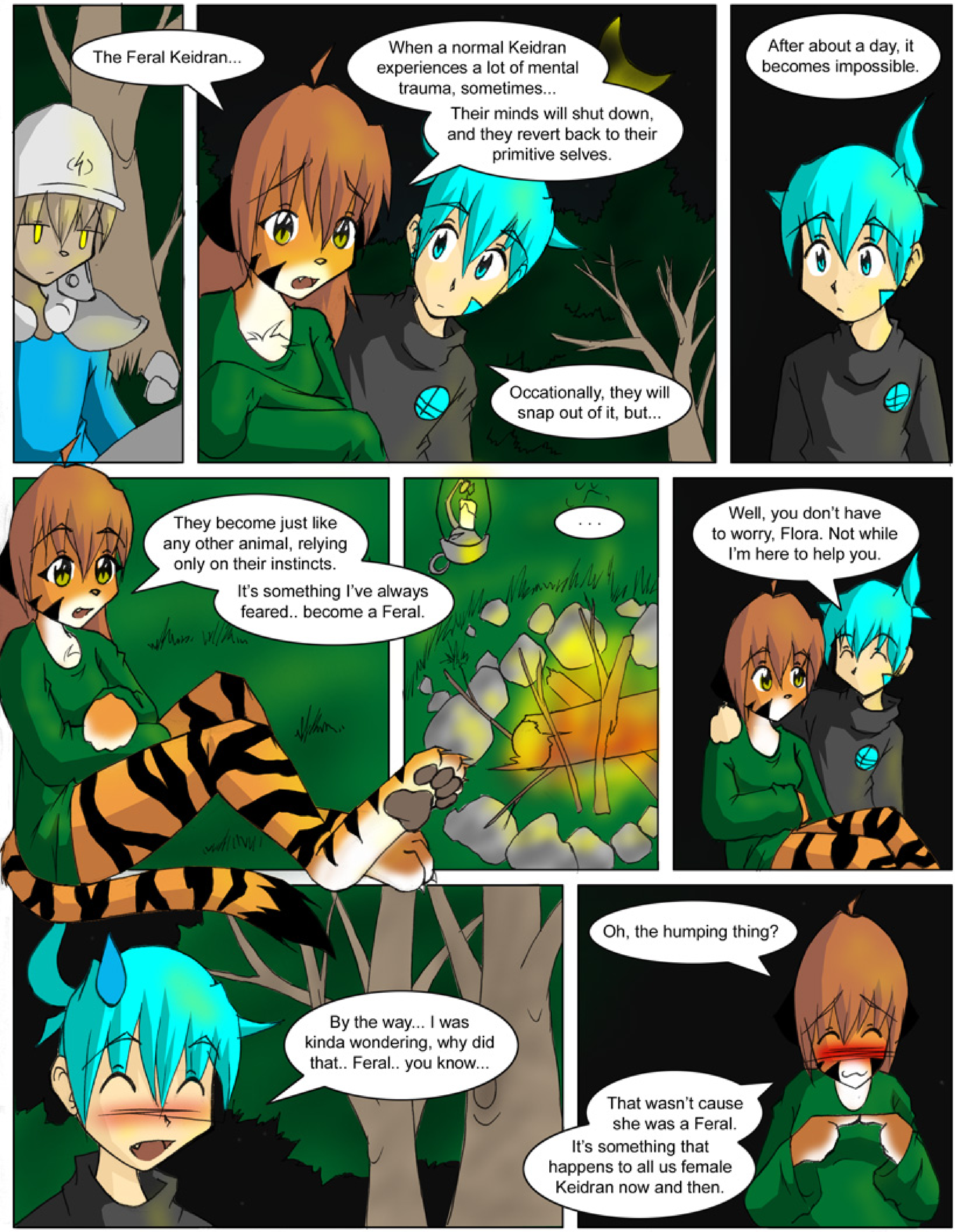

Meanwhile...
Hm...?
Flora!
Man, am I ever glad to see you! I thought I'd-
Grrrrrr...
Huh? What's wrong?
Hm... you look different somehow...
Grrrrrrr....
But I'm not sure why...
Wait!
You're not Flora!
POUCE!
Graaah!!
!!

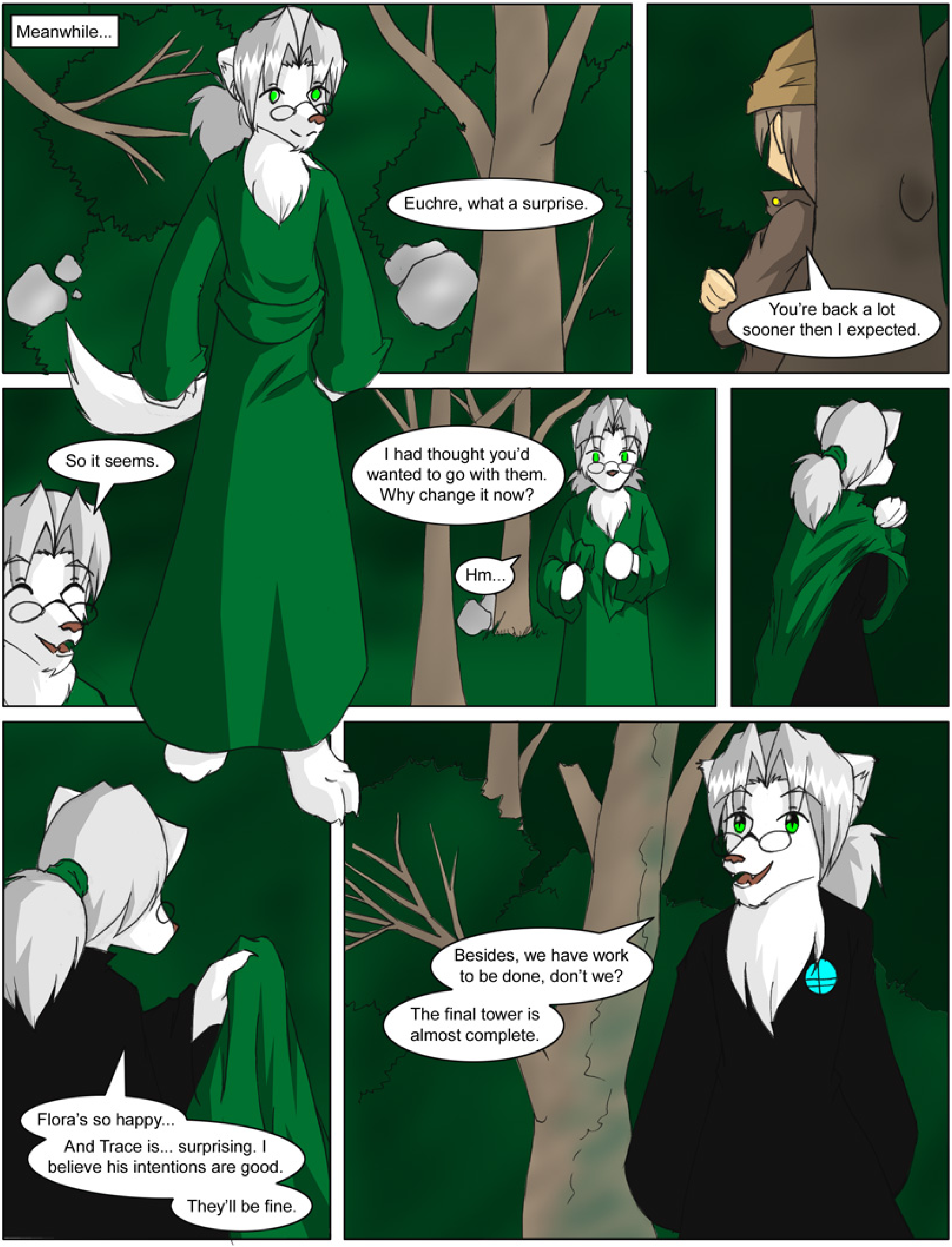

Mrrrrraal!
Hey! Come on! What did I do to you?
Erg!
Grrrrrrrrrr!
No! I can't get angry! Not with what happened last time... arg!
I.. can't fight her...
I.. guess this is the end.
Never thought I'd die this way...
Being eaten by a Keidran.
Everything's getting dark... this must be- wait....
What is she doing...?
NUZZLE!
!
Hey you!
Stop humping my boyfriend!
THWACK!

TwoKinds 1 Year Anniversary


Flora, you do realize that we're *on* a cake?
Weeeeee!
1
Hey! What are you doing with that Keidran!
'04

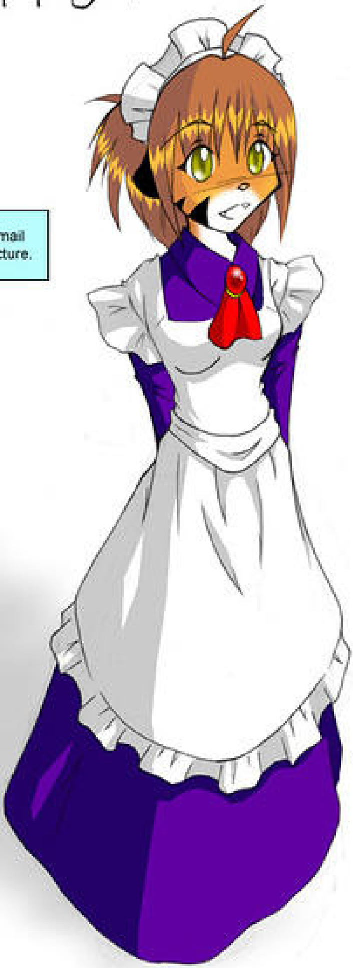

Trace! Oh, no! did she hurt you?
I-I'm fine, Flora!
(Did.. she call me her boyfriend?)
Are you sure? How 'bout here? Or here?
Or down.. here...
Hey, get out of there!
Grrrrr..!
Nah!?
I wouldn't if I were you.
Wait, Keith!
<Please, we don't want to hurt you.>
<We just want to help you.>
Raarrrrrrrrr...
<Can you understand?>
Raahhhhh!
No, wait! Come back!
<Listen to me!>
Should we.. go after her?
...
No. It's.. too late.

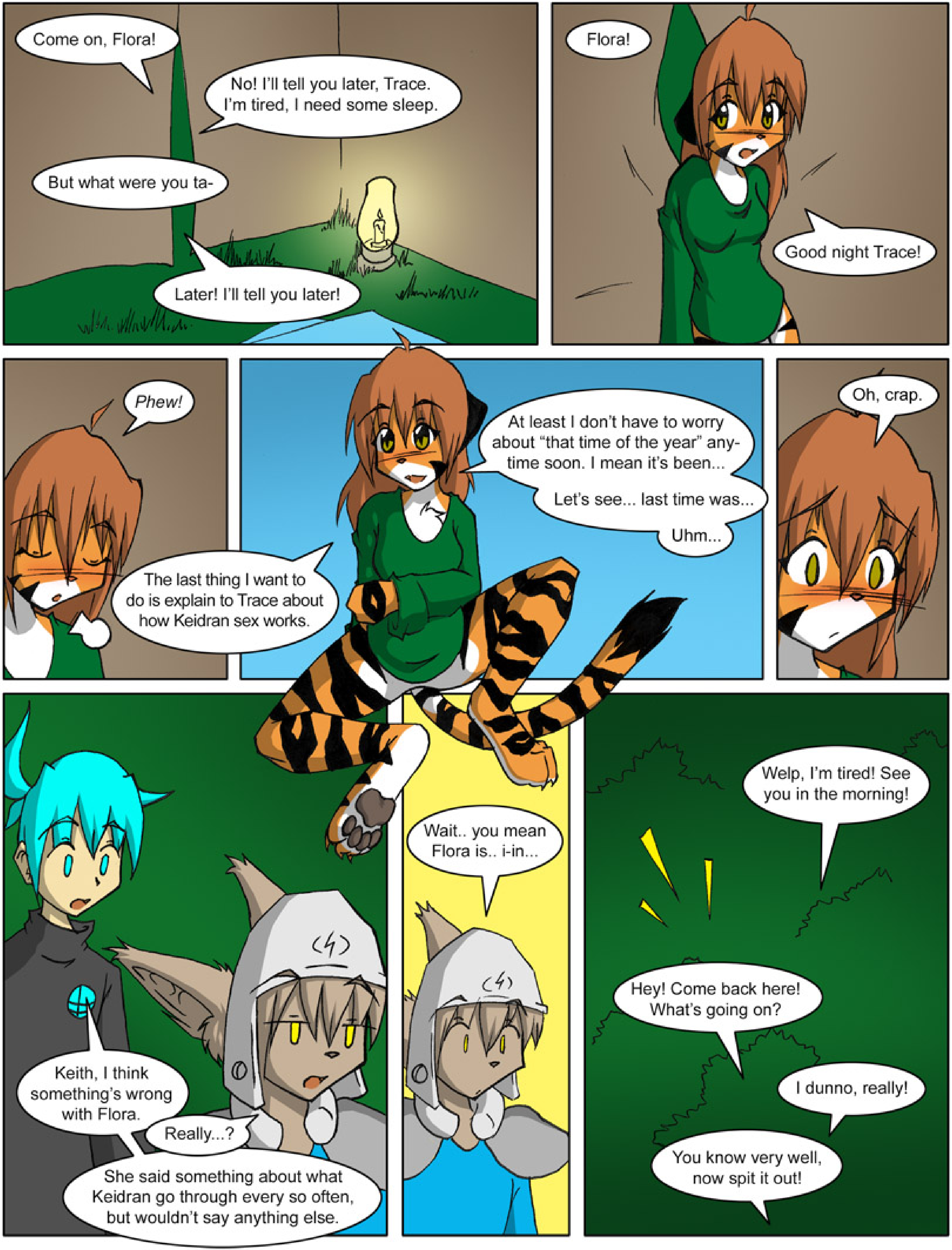

The Feral Keidran...
When a normal Keidran experiences a lot of mental trauma, sometimes...
Their minds will shut down, and they revert back to their primitive selves.
Occationally, they will snap out of it, but...
After about a day, it becomes impossible.
They become just like any other animal, relying only on their instincts.
It's something I've always feared.. become a Feral.
. . .
Well, you don't have to worry, Flora. Not while I'm here to help you.
By the way... I was kinda wondering, why did that.. Feral.. you know...
Oh, the humping thing?
That wasn't cause she was a Feral.
It's something that happens to all us female Keidran now and then.

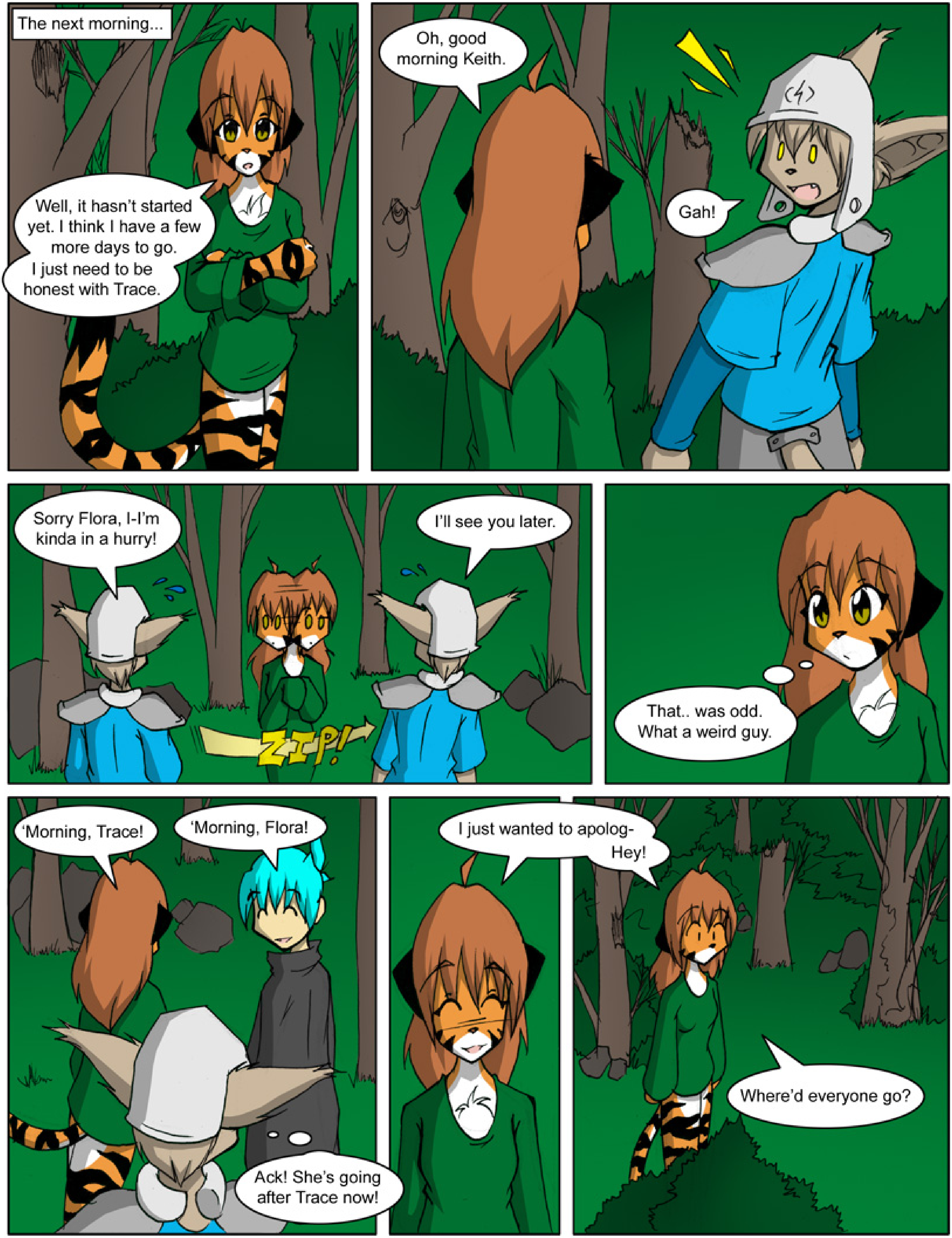

Meanwhile...
Euchre, what a surprise.
You're back a lot sooner then I expected.
So it seems.
I had thought you'd wanted to go with them. Why change it now?
Hm...
Flora's so happy...
And Trace is... surprising. I believe his intentions are good.
They'll be fine.
Besides, we have work to be done, don't we?
The final tower is almost complete.

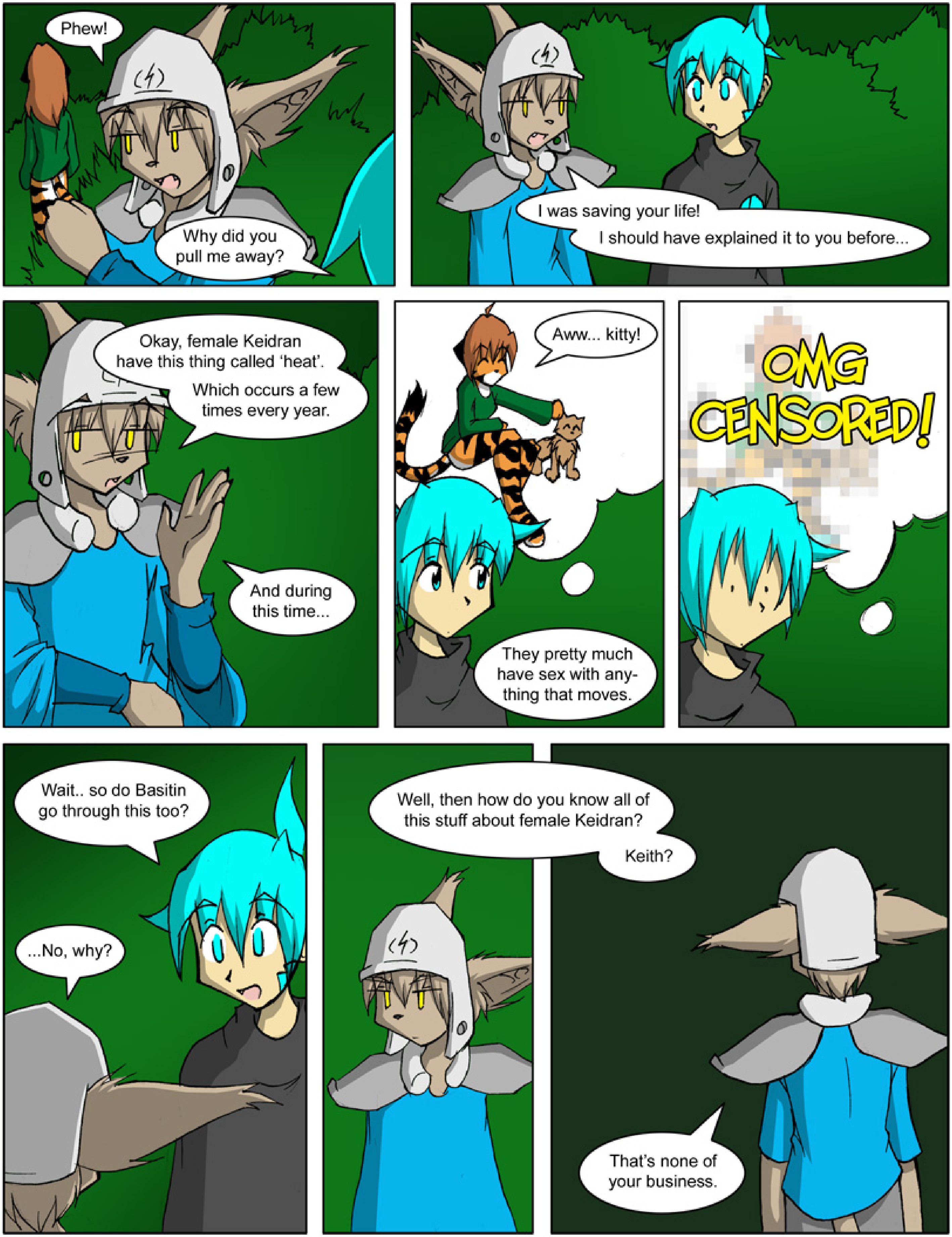
Happy Halloween!

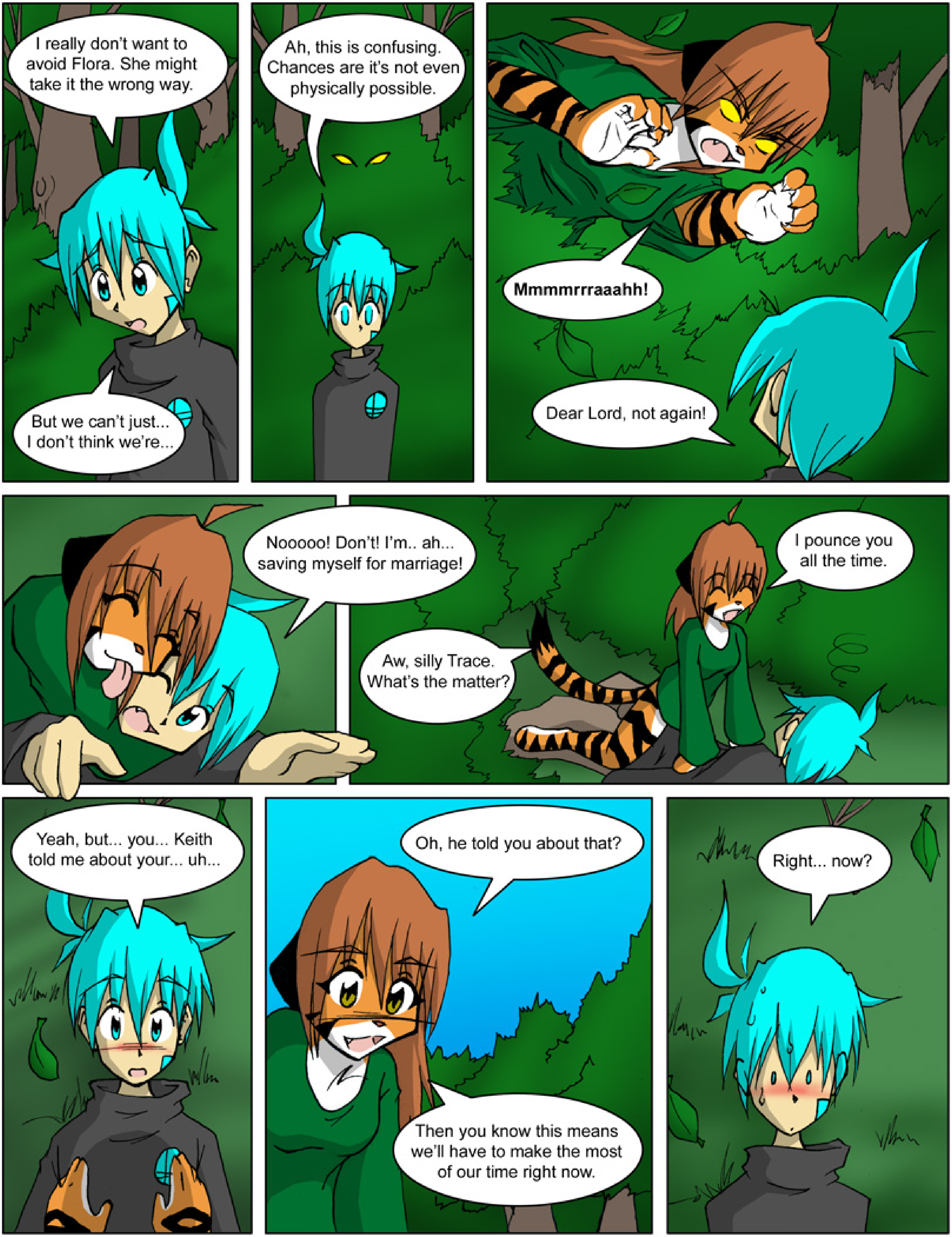
Who is Flora dressed as? Email me the answer and win a picture.

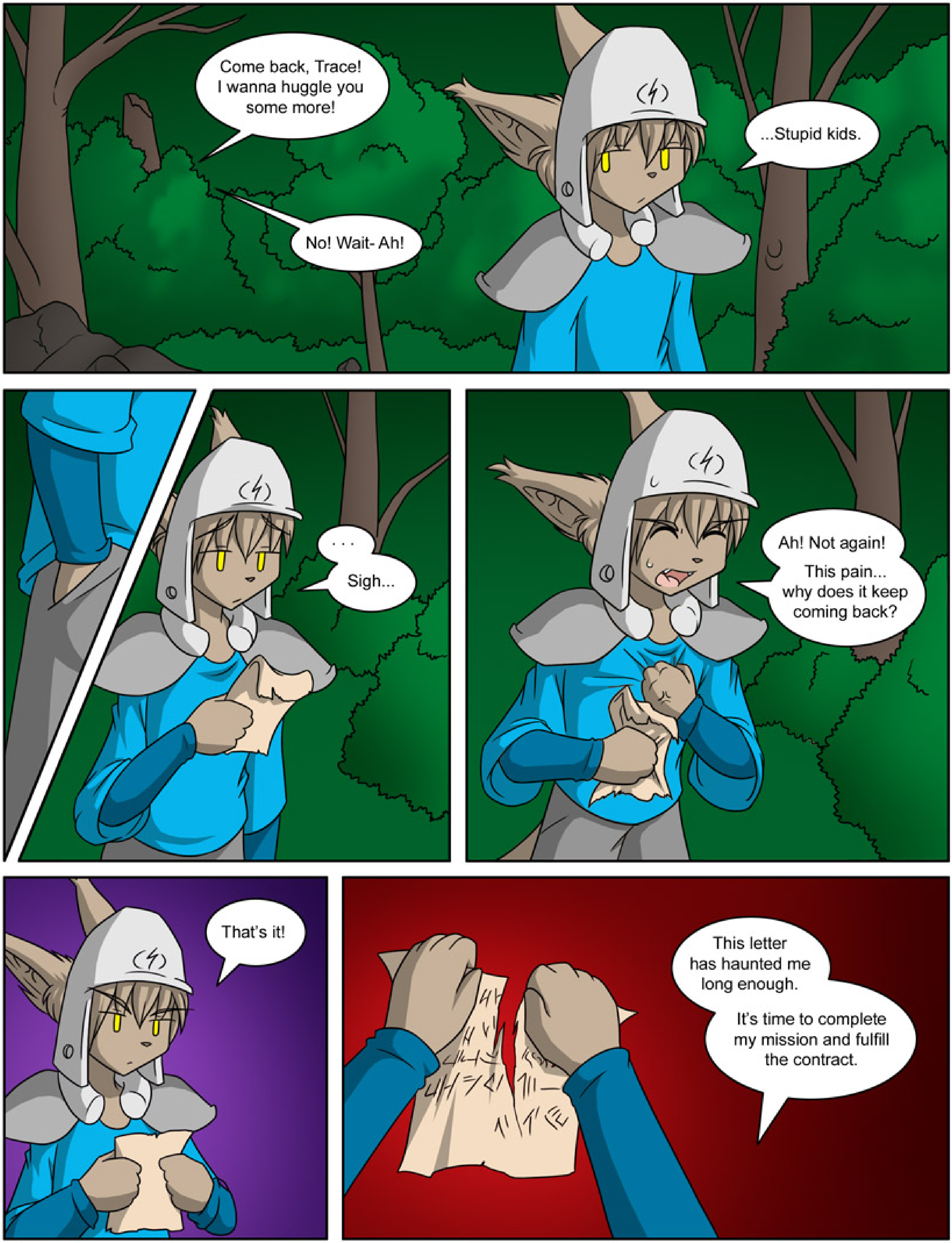


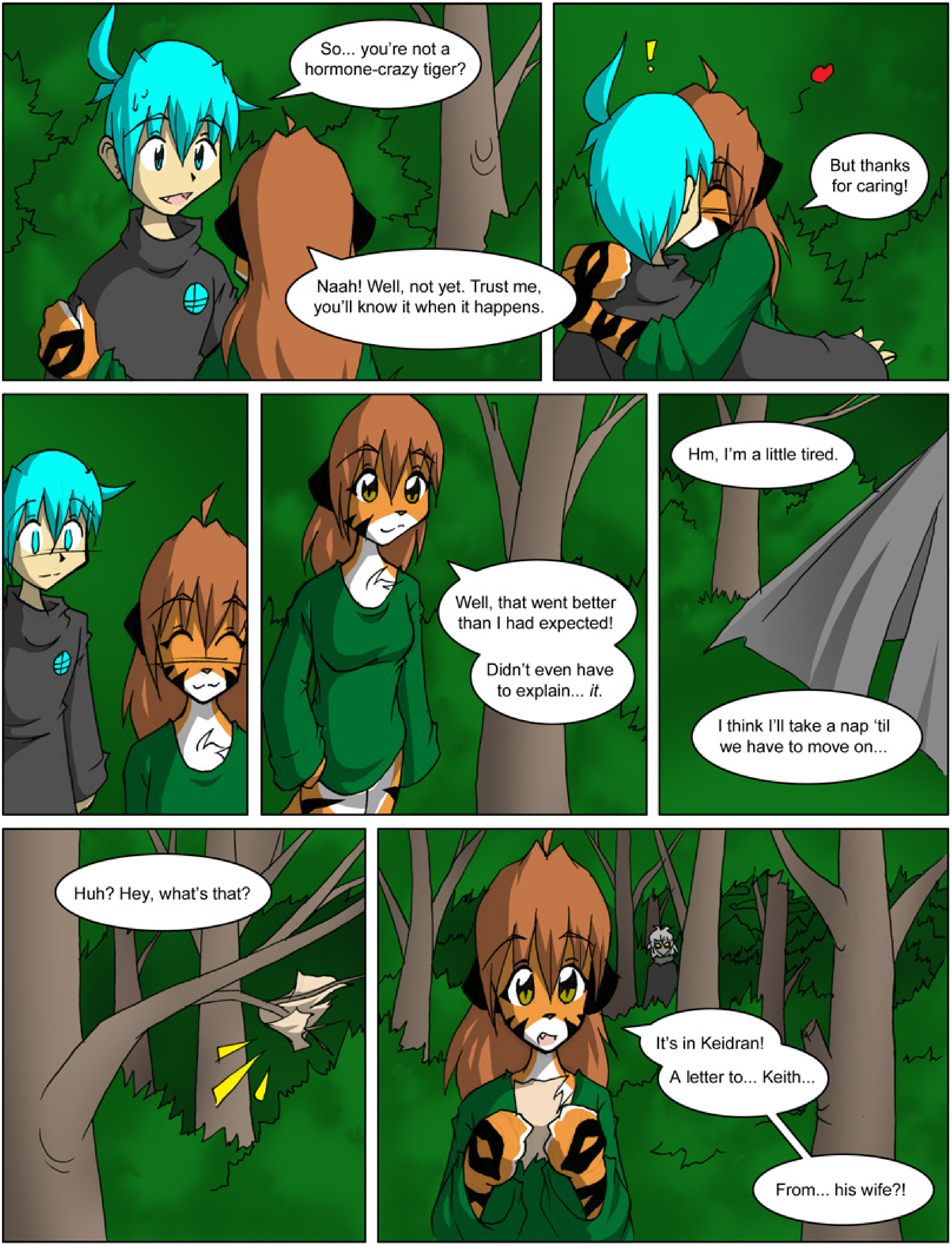

Come on, Flora!
No! I'll tell you later, Trace. I'm tired, I need some sleep.
But what were you ta-
Later! I'll tell you later!
Flora!
Good night Trace!
Phew!
The last thing I want to do is explain to Trace about how Keidran sex works.
At least I don't have to worry about "that time of the year" any-time soon. I mean it's been...
Let's see... last time was...
Uhm...
Oh, crap.
Keith, I think something's wrong with Flora.
Really...?
She said something about what Keidran go through every so often, but wouldn't say anything else.
Wait.. you mean Flora is.. i-in...
Welp, I'm tired! See you in the morning!
Hey! Come back here! What's going on?
I dunno, really!
You know very well, now spit it out!

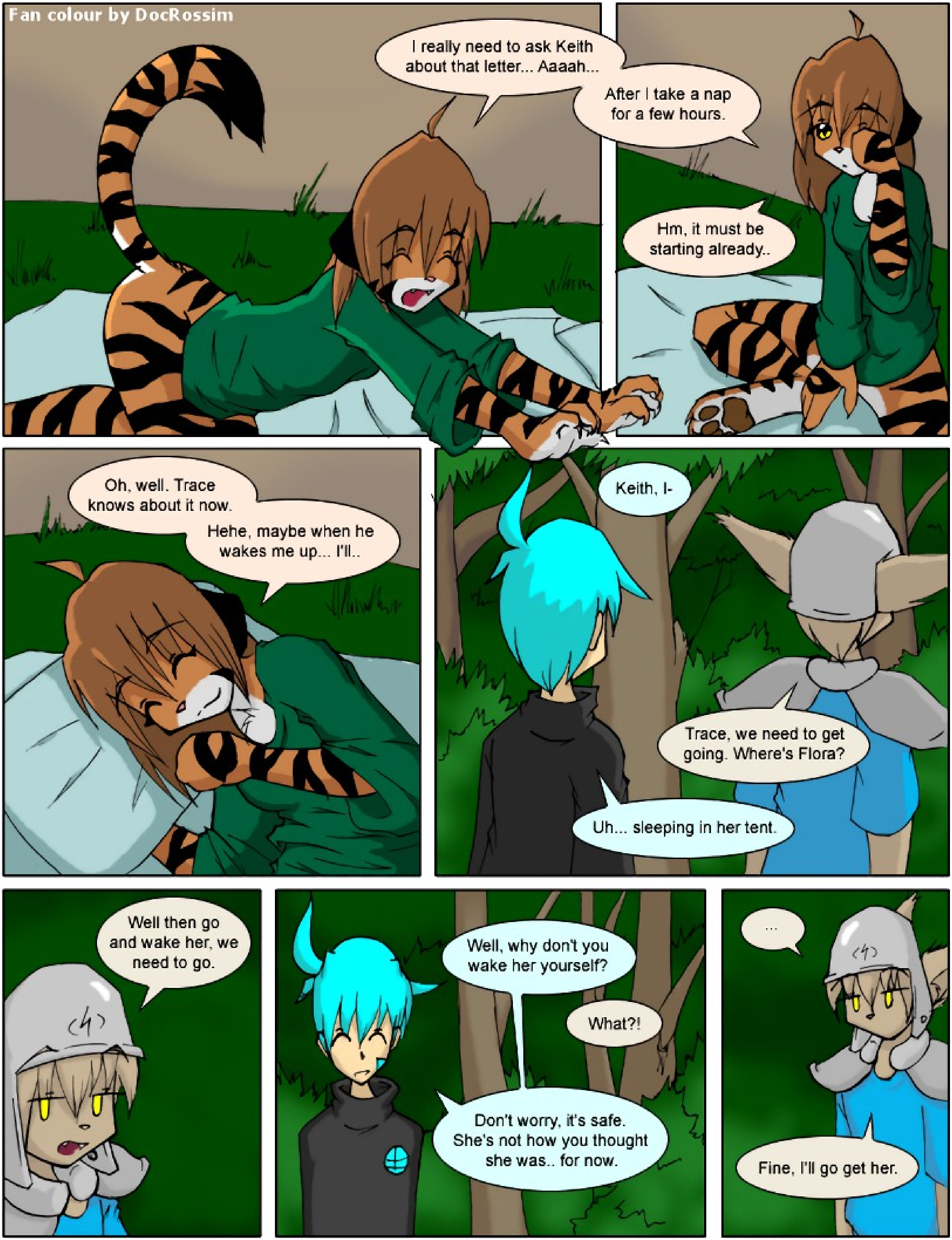

The next morning...
Well, it hasn't started yet. I think I have a few more days to go.
I just need to be honest with Trace.
Oh, good morning Keith.
Gah!
Sorry Flora, I-I'm kinda in a hurry!
I'll see you later.
ZIP!
That.. was odd. What a weird guy.
'Morning, Trace!
'Morning, Flora!
Ack! She's going after Trace now!
I just wanted to apolog-
Hey!
Where'd everyone go?

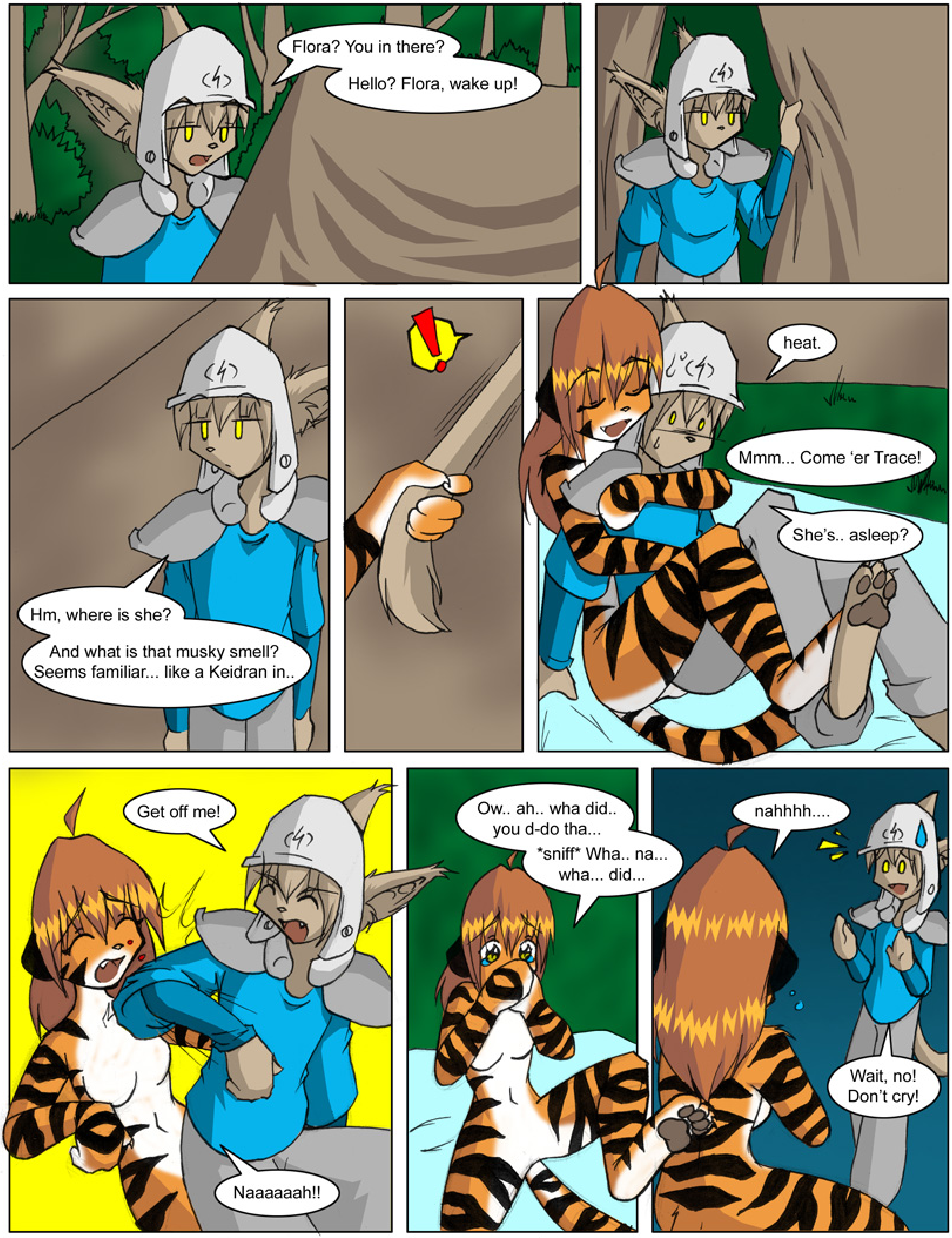

Phew!
Why did you pull me away?
I was saving your life!
I should have explained it to you before...
Okay, female Keidran have this thing called 'heat'.
Which occurs a few times every year.
And during this time...
Aww... kitty!
They pretty much have sex with anything that moves.
OMG CENSORED!
Wait.. so do Basitin go through this too?
...No, why?
Well, then how do you know all of this stuff about female Keidran?
Keith?
That's none of your business.

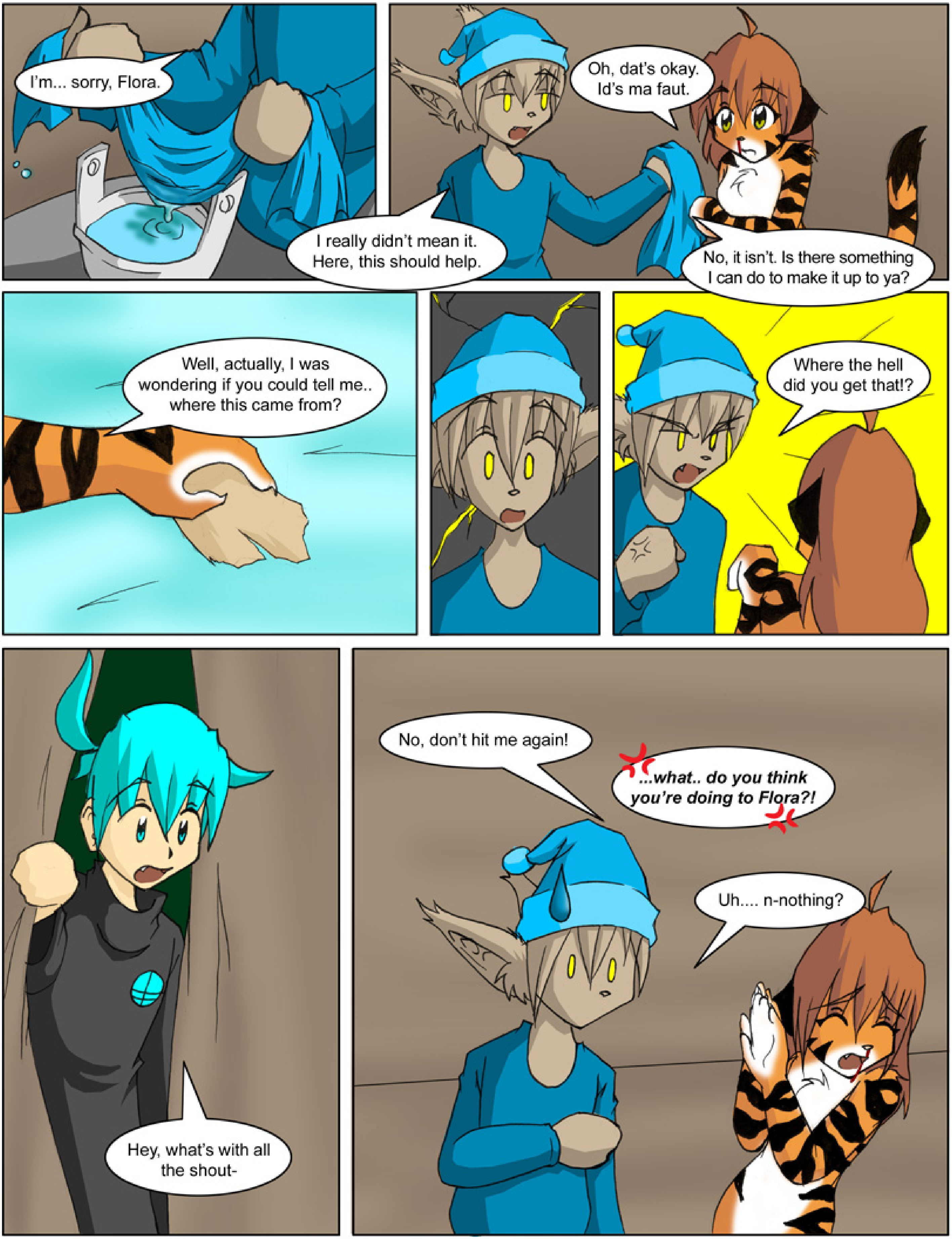

I really don't want to avoid Flora. She might take it the wrong way.
But we can't just... I don't think we're...
Ah, this is confusing. Chances are it's not even physically possible.
Mmmmrrraaahh!
Dear Lord, not again!
Nooooo! Don't! I'm.. ah... saving myself for marriage!
I pounce you all the time.
Aw, silly Trace. What's the matter?
Yeah, but... you... Keith told me about your... uh...
Oh, he told you about that?
Then you know this means we'll have to make the most of our time right now.
Right... now?

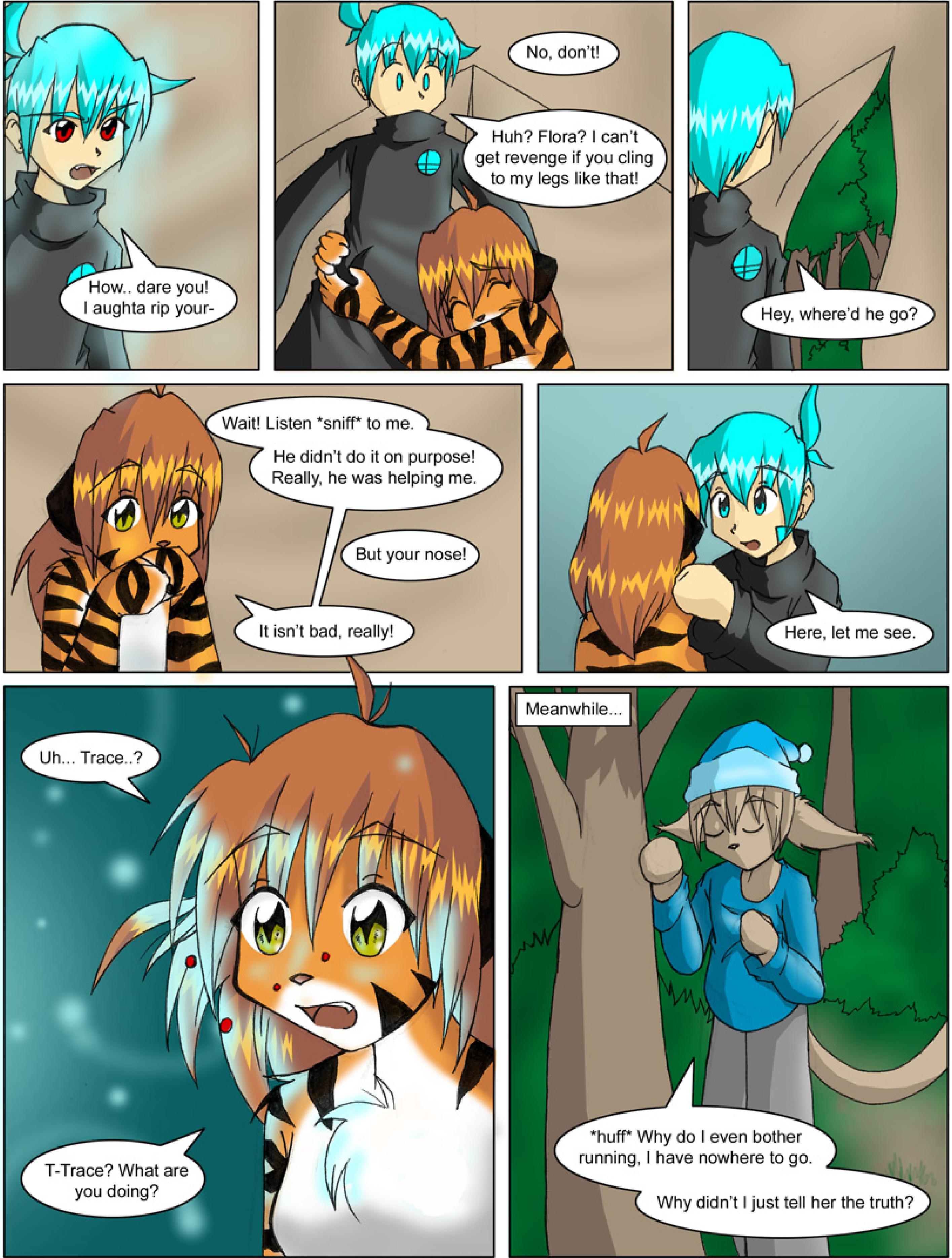

Come back, Trace! I wanna huggle you some more!
No! Wait- Ah!
...Stupid kids.
. . .
Sigh...
Ah! Not again!
This pain... why does it keep coming back?
That's it!
This letter has haunted me long enough.
It's time to complete my mission and fulfill the contract.

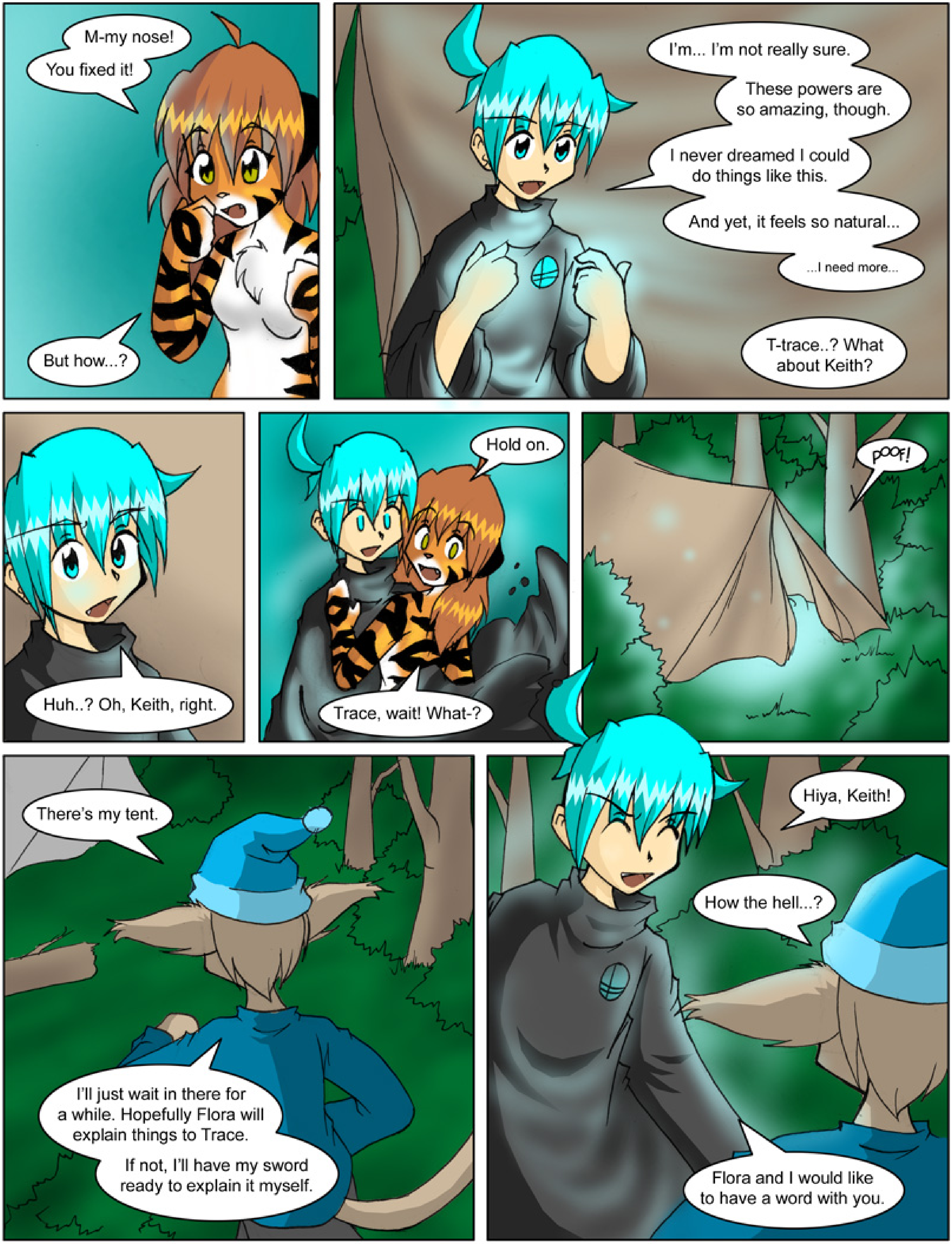

So... you're not a hormone-crazy tiger?
Naah! Well, not yet. Trust me, you'll know it when it happens.
But thanks for caring!
Well, that went better than I had expected!
Didn't even have to explain... *it*.
Hm, I'm a little tired.
I think I'll take a nap 'til we have to move on...
Huh? Hey, what's that?
It's in Keidran!
A letter to... Keith...
From... his wife?!

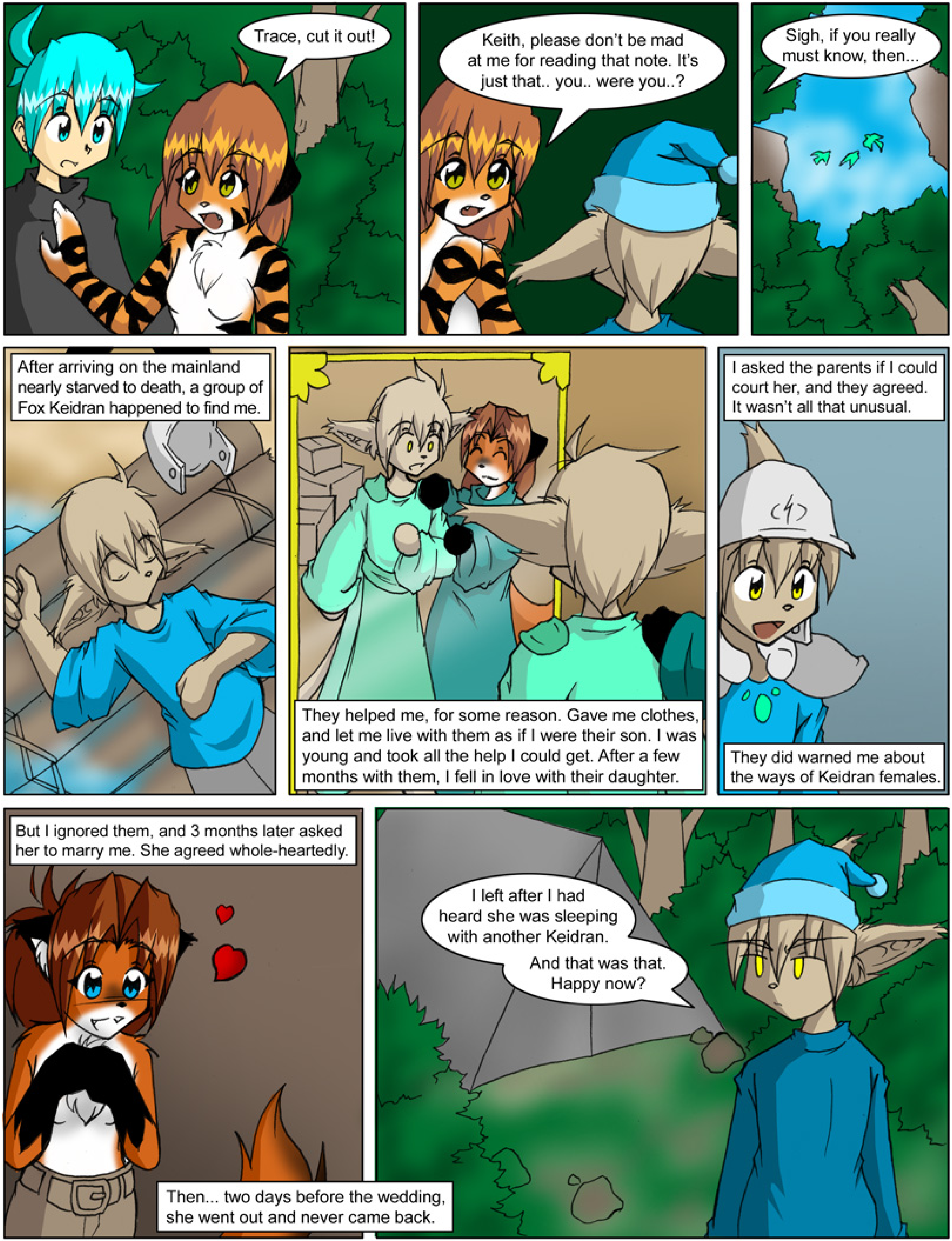

Fan colour by DocRossim
I really need to ask Keith about that letter... Aaaah...
After I take a nap for a few hours.
Hm, it must be starting already..
Oh, well. Trace knows about it now.
Hehe, maybe when he wakes me up... I'll..
Keith, I-
Trace, we need to get going. Where's Flora?
Uh... sleeping in her tent.
Well then go and wake her, we need to go.
Well, why don't you wake her yourself?
What?!
Don't worry, it's safe. She's not how you thought she was.. for now.
...
Fine, I'll go get her.

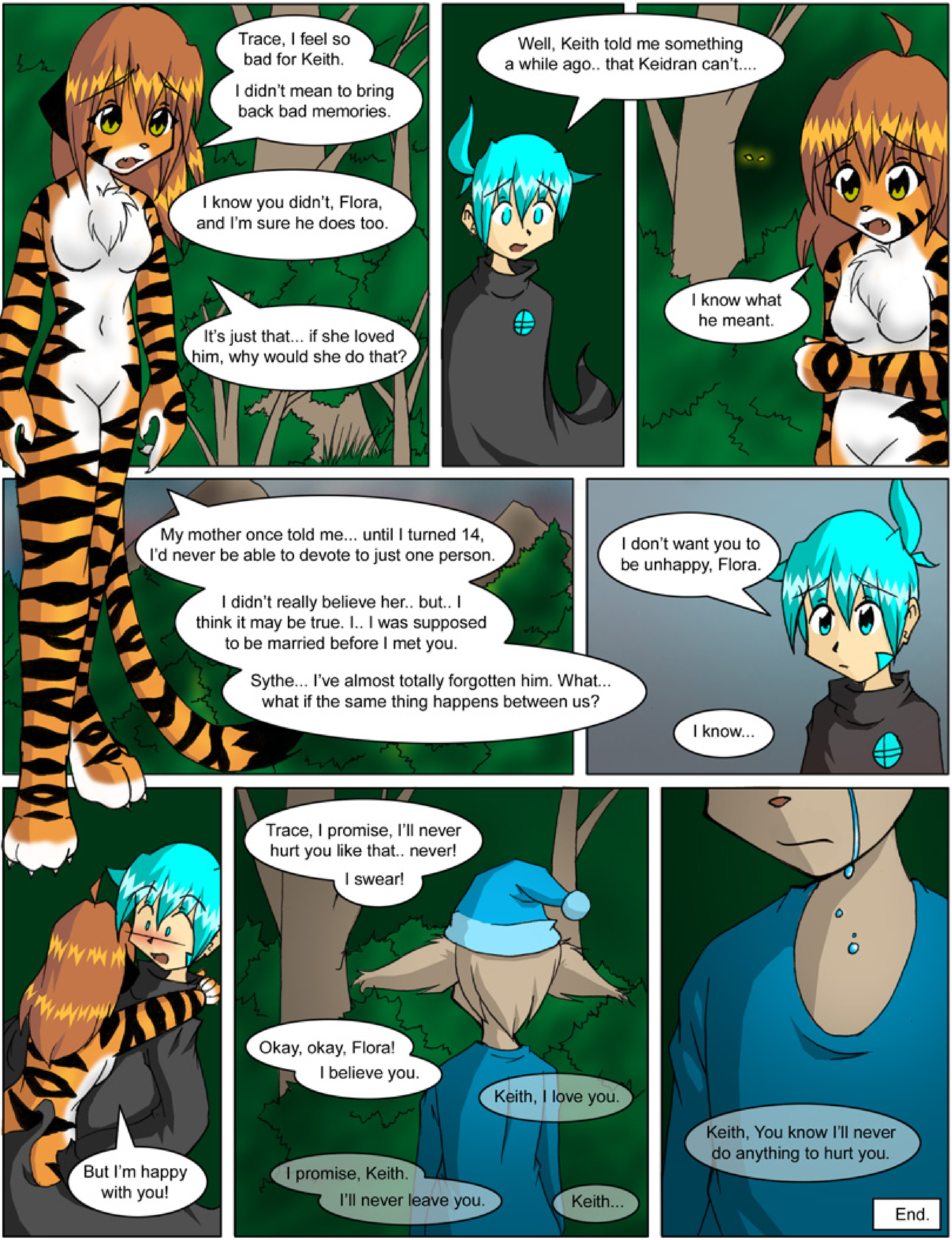

Flora? You in there?
Hello? Flora, wake up!
Hm, where is she?
And what is that musky smell? Seems familiar... like a Keidran in..
!
heat.
Mmm... Come 'er Trace!
She's.. asleep?
Get off me!
Naaaaaah!!
Ow.. ah.. wha did.. you d-do tha...
sniff Wha.. na... wha... did...
nahhhh....
Wait, no! Don't cry!


I'm... sorry, Flora.
Oh, dat's okay. Id's ma faut.
I really didn't mean it. Here, this should help.
No, it isn't. Is there something I can do to make it up to ya?
Well, actually, I was wondering if you could tell me.. where this came from?
Where the hell did you get that!?
Hey, what's with all the shout-
No, don't hit me again!
...what.. do you think you're doing to Flora?!
Uh.... n-nothing?


How.. dare you!
I aughta rip your-
No, don't!
Huh? Flora? I can't get revenge if you cling to my legs like that!
Hey, where'd he go?
Wait! Listen *sniff* to me.
He didn't do it on purpose! Really, he was helping me.
But your nose!
It isn't bad, really!
Here, let me see.
Uh... Trace..?
T-Trace? What are you doing?
Meanwhile...
huff Why do I even bother running, I have nowhere to go.
Why didn't I just tell her the truth?

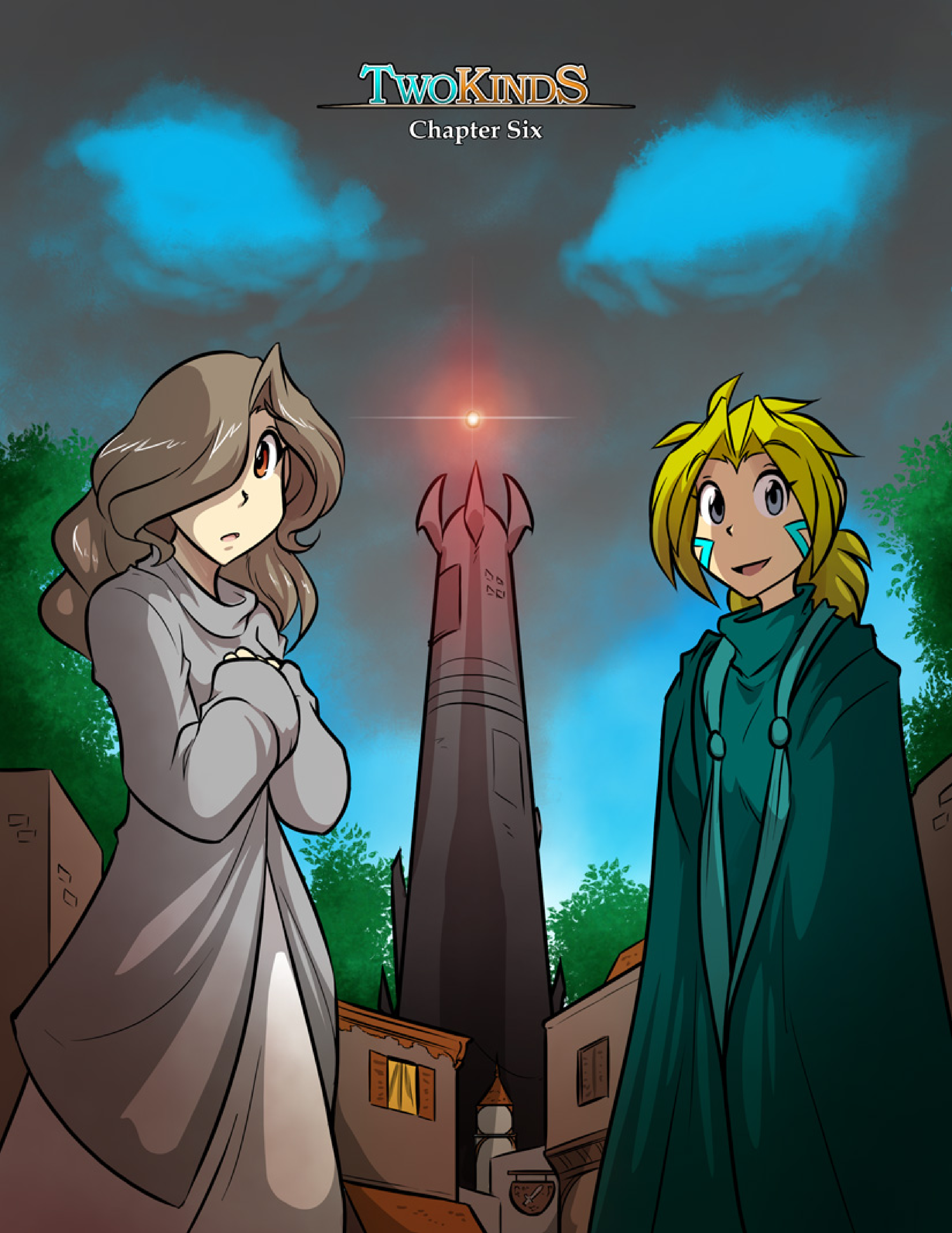

M-my nose!
You fixed it!
But how...?
I'm... I'm not really sure.
These powers are so amazing, though.
I never dreamed I could do things like this.
And yet, it feels so natural...
...I need more...
T-trace..? What about Keith?
Huh..? Oh, Keith, right.
Hold on.
Trace, wait! What-?
POOF!
There's my tent.
I'll just wait in there for a while. Hopefully Flora will explain things to Trace.
If not, I'll have my sword ready to explain it myself.
Hiya, Keith!
How the hell...?
Flora and I would like to have a word with you.

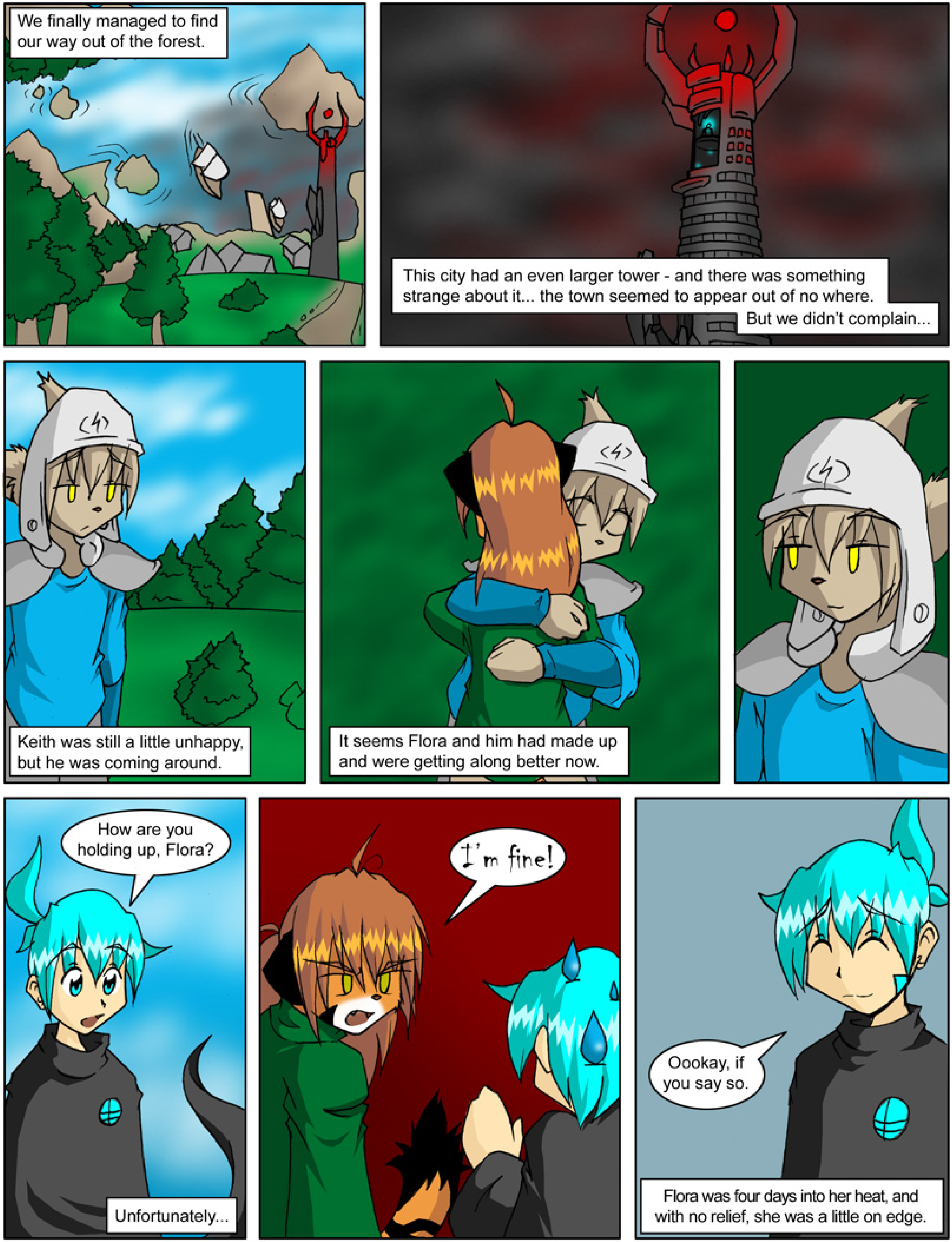

Trace, cut it out!
Keith, please don't be mad at me for reading that note. It's just that.. you.. were you..?
Sigh, if you really must know, then...
After arriving on the mainland nearly starved to death, a group of Fox Keidran happened to find me.
They helped me, for some reason. Gave me clothes, and let me live with them as if I were their son. I was young and took all the help I could get. After a few months with them, I fell in love with their daughter.
I asked the parents if I could court her, and they agreed. It wasn't all that unusual.
They did warned me about the ways of Keidran females.
But I ignored them, and 3 months later asked her to marry me. She agreed whole-heartedly.
Then... two days before the wedding, she went out and never came back.
I left after I had heard she was sleeping with another Keidran.
And that was that. Happy now?

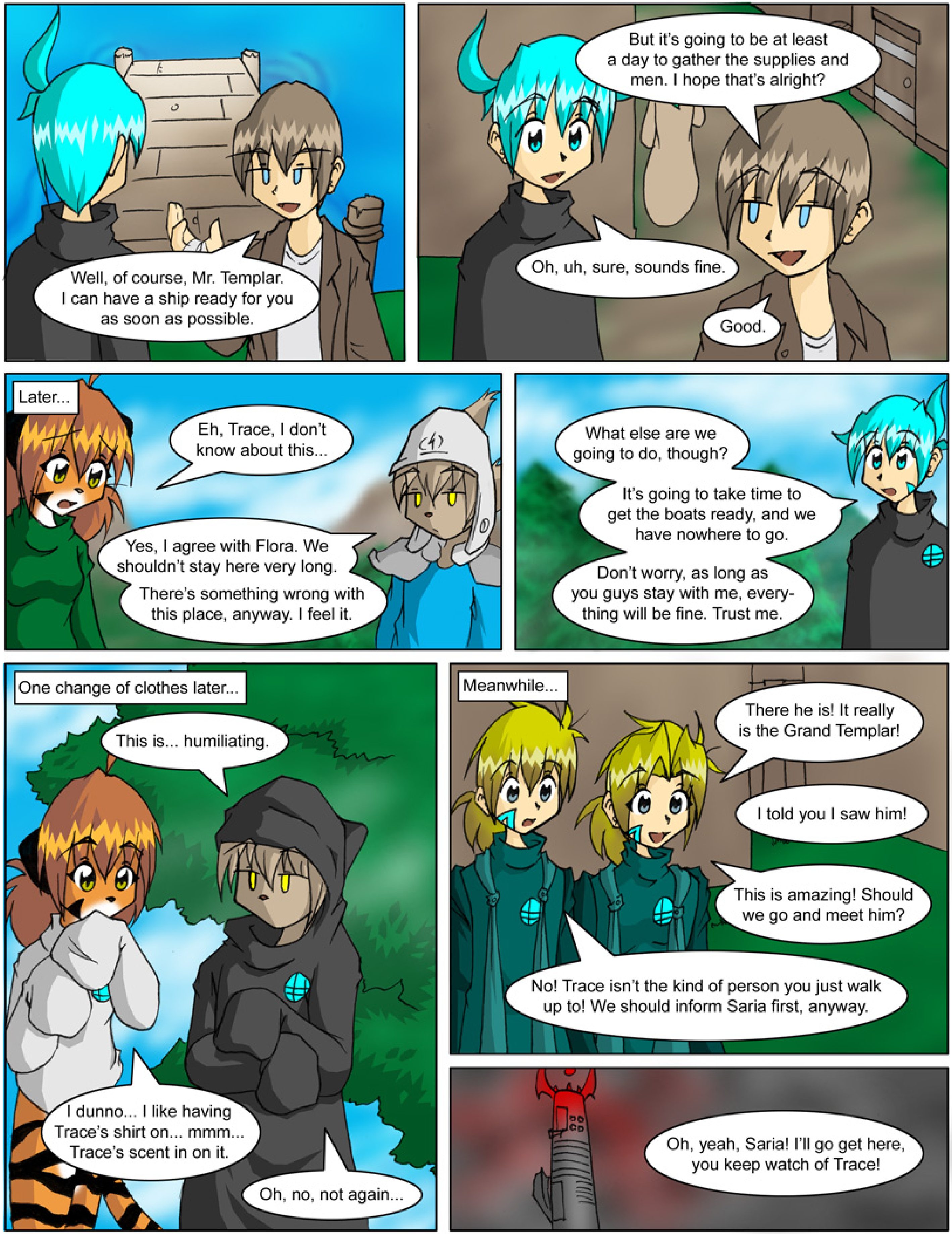

Trace, I feel so bad for Keith.
I didn't mean to bring back bad memories.
I know you didn't, Flora, and I'm sure he does too.
It's just that... if she loved him, why would she do that?
Well, Keith told me something a while ago.. that Keidran can't....
I know what he meant.
My mother once told me... until I turned 14, I'd never be able to devote to just one person.
I didn't really believe her.. but.. I think it may be true. I.. I was supposed to be married before I met you.
Sythe... I've almost totally forgotten him. What... what if the same thing happens between us?
I don't want you to be unhappy, Flora.
I know...
But I'm happy with you!
Trace, I promise, I'll never hurt you like that.. never!
I swear!
Okay, okay, Flora! I believe you.
Keith, I love you.
I promise, Keith.
I'll never leave you.
Keith...
Keith, You know I'll never do anything to hurt you.
End.

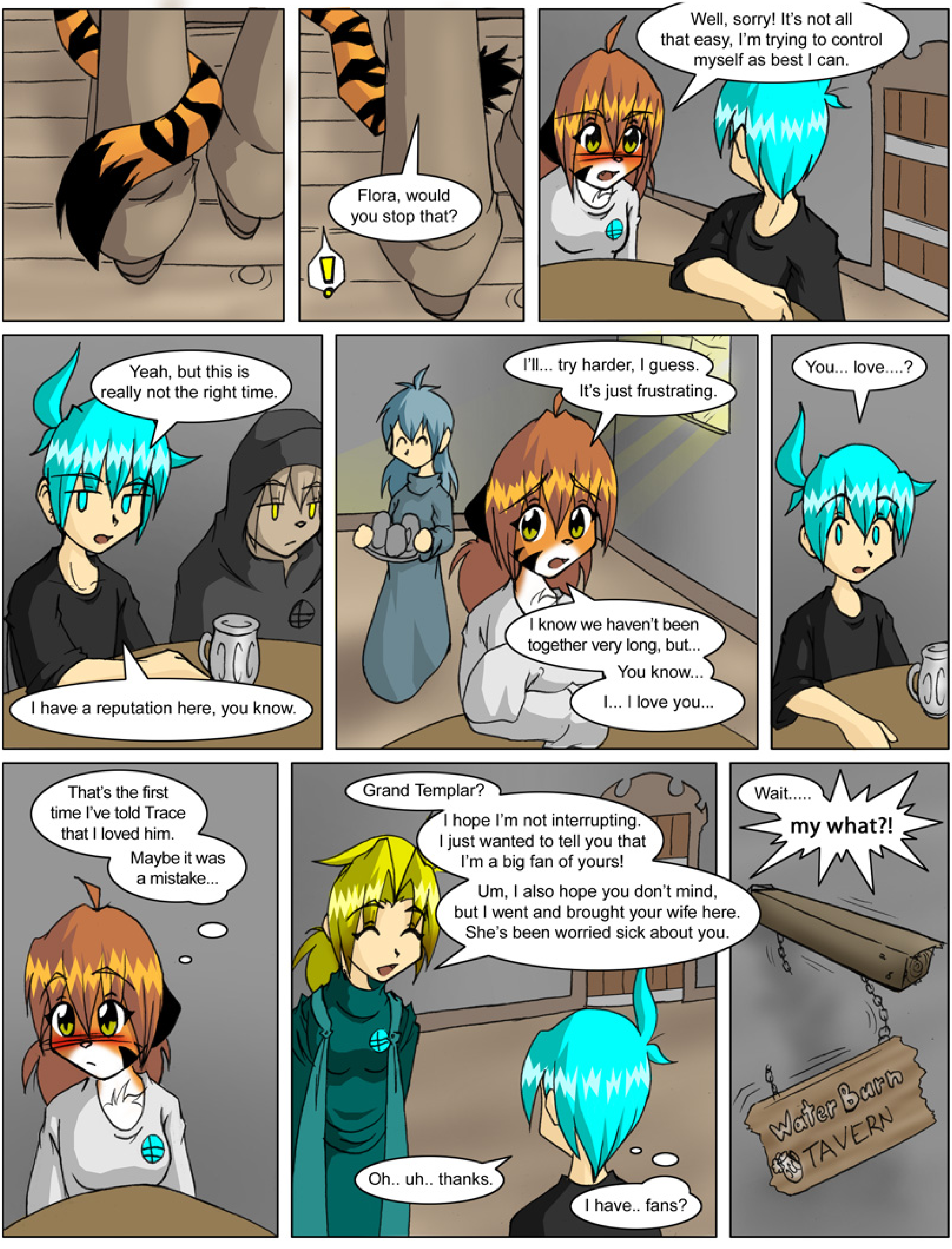
TwoKinds

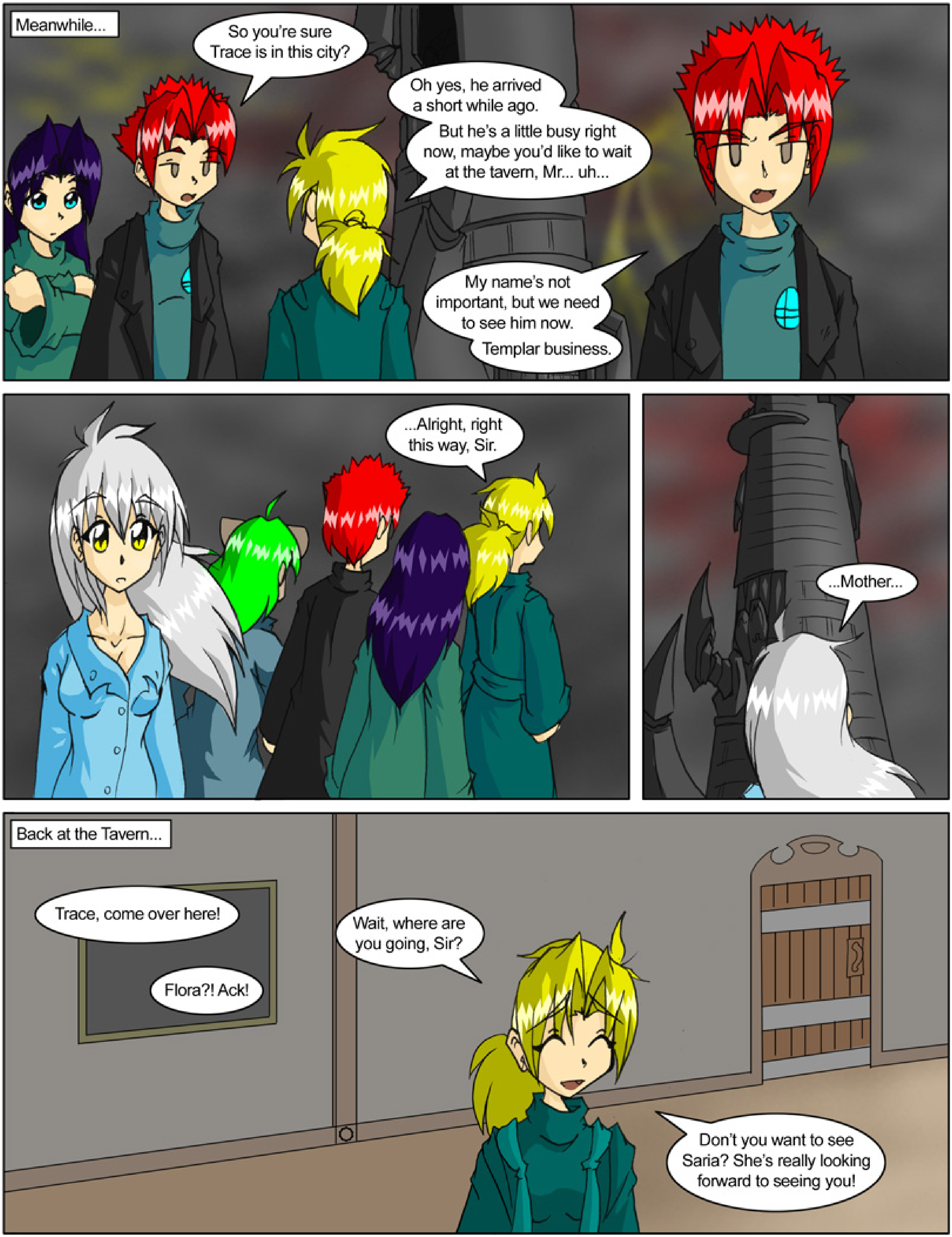
Chapter Six

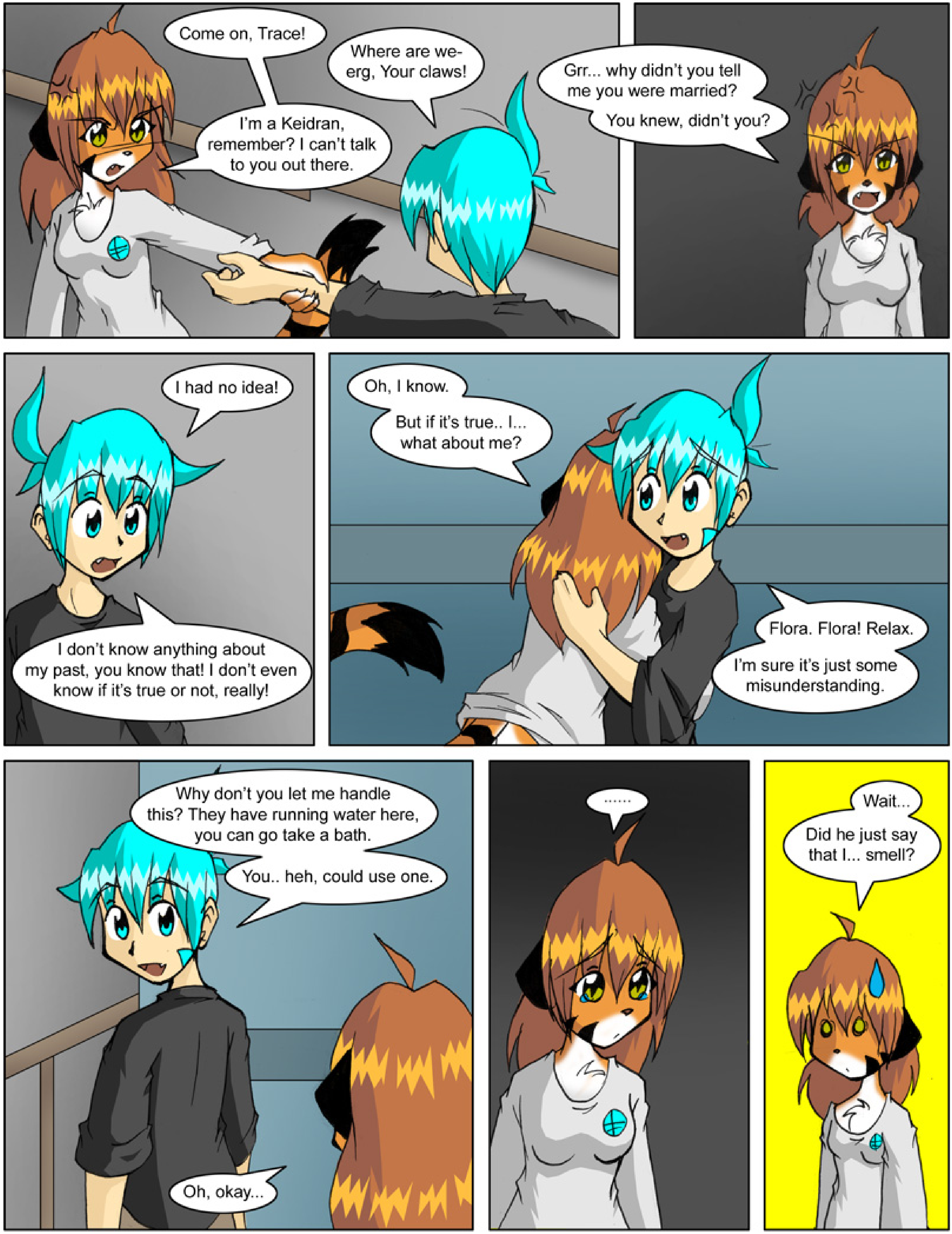


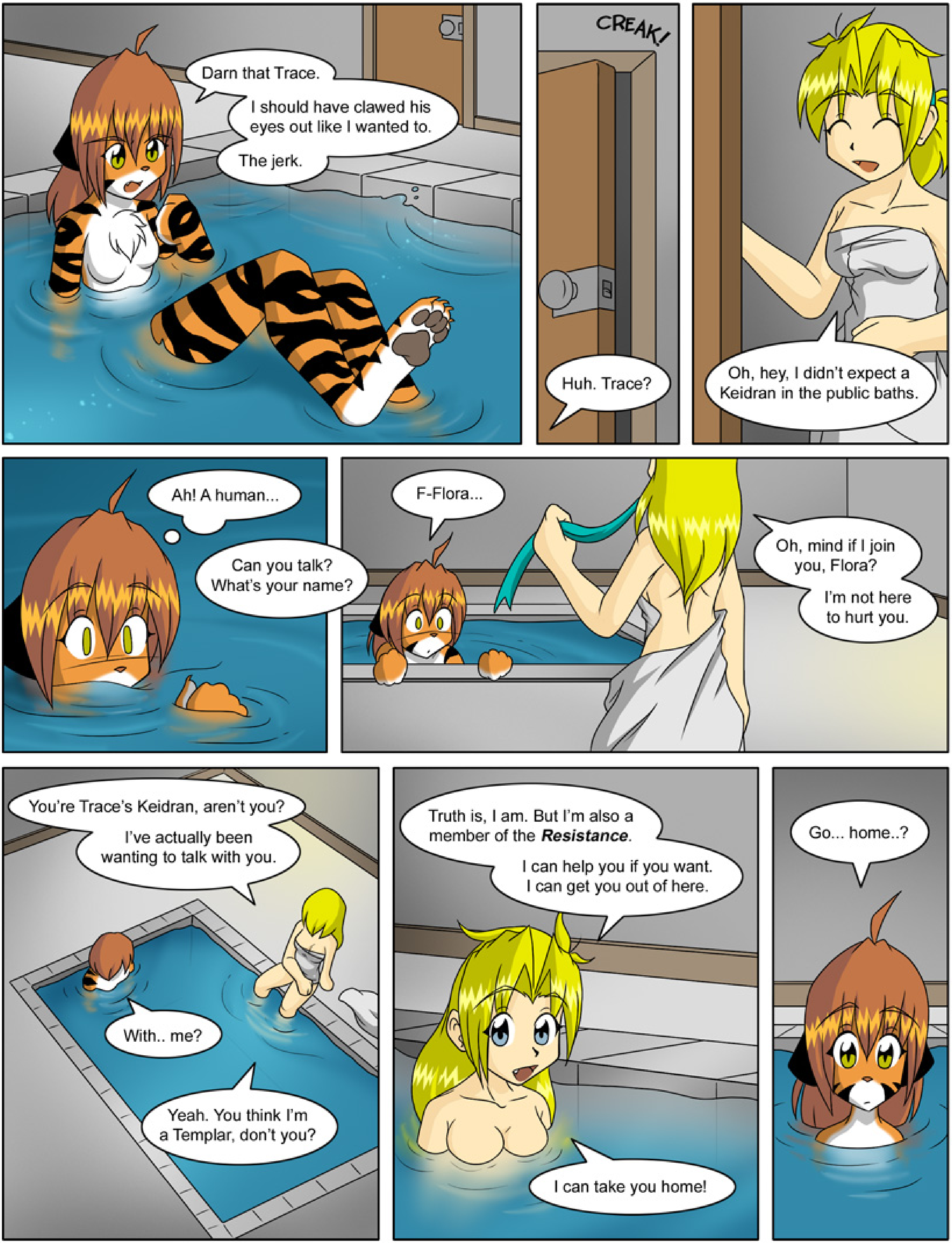

We finally managed to find our way out of the forest.
This city had an even larger tower - and there was something strange about it... the town seemed to appear out of no where.
But we didn't complain...
Keith was still a little unhappy, but he was coming around.
It seems Flora and him had made up and were getting along better now.
How are you holding up, Flora?
Unfortunately...
I'm fine!
Oookay, if you say so.
Flora was four days into her heat, and with no relief, she was a little on edge.


Well, of course, Mr. Templar. I can have a ship ready for you as soon as possible.
But it's going to be at least a day to gather the supplies and men. I hope that's alright?
Oh, uh, sure, sounds fine.
Good.
Later...
Eh, Trace, I don't know about this...
Yes, I agree with Flora. We shouldn't stay here very long.
There's something wrong with this place, anyway. I feel it.
What else are we going to do, though?
It's going to take time to get the boats ready, and we have nowhere to go.
Don't worry, as long as you guys stay with me, everything will be fine. Trust me.
One change of clothes later...
This is... humiliating.
I dunno... I like having Trace's shirt on... mmm... Trace's scent in on it.
Oh, no, not again...
Meanwhile...
There he is! It really is the Grand Templar!
I told you I saw him!
This is amazing! Should we go and meet him?
No! Trace isn't the kind of person you just walk up to! We should inform Saria first, anyway.
Oh, yeah, Saria! I'll go get here, you keep watch of Trace!

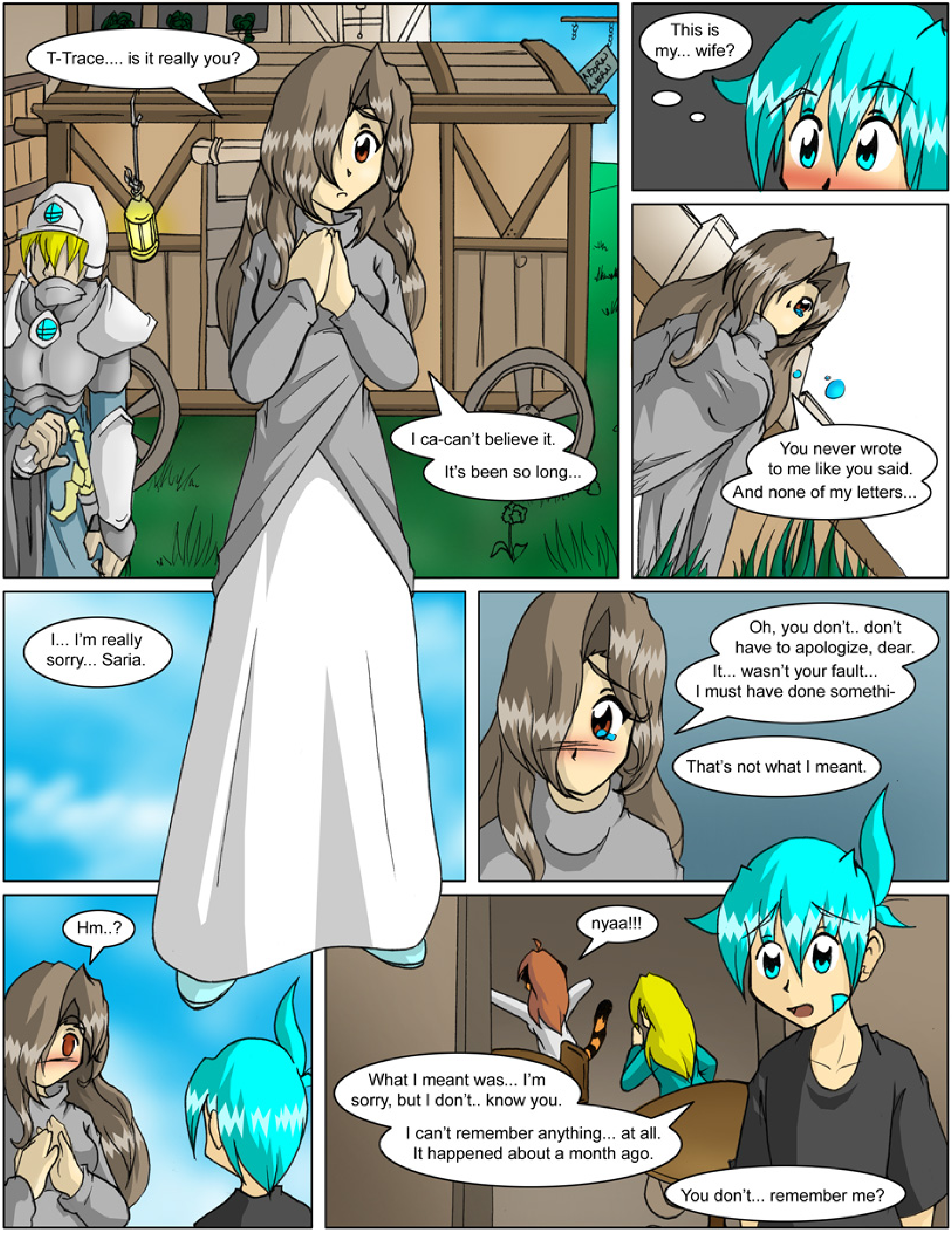

Flora, would you stop that?
!
Well, sorry! It's not all that easy, I'm trying to control myself as best I can.
Yeah, but this is really not the right time.
I have a reputation here, you know.
I'll... try harder, I guess.
It's just frustrating.
I know we haven't been together very long, but...
You know...
I... I love you...
You... love....?
That's the first time I've told Trace that I loved him.
Maybe it was a mistake...
Grand Templar?
I hope I'm not interrupting. I just wanted to tell you that I'm a big fan of yours!
Um, I also hope you don't mind, but I went and brought your wife here. She's been worried sick about you.
Oh.. uh.. thanks.
I have.. fans?
Wait.....
my what?!
Water Burn TAVERN

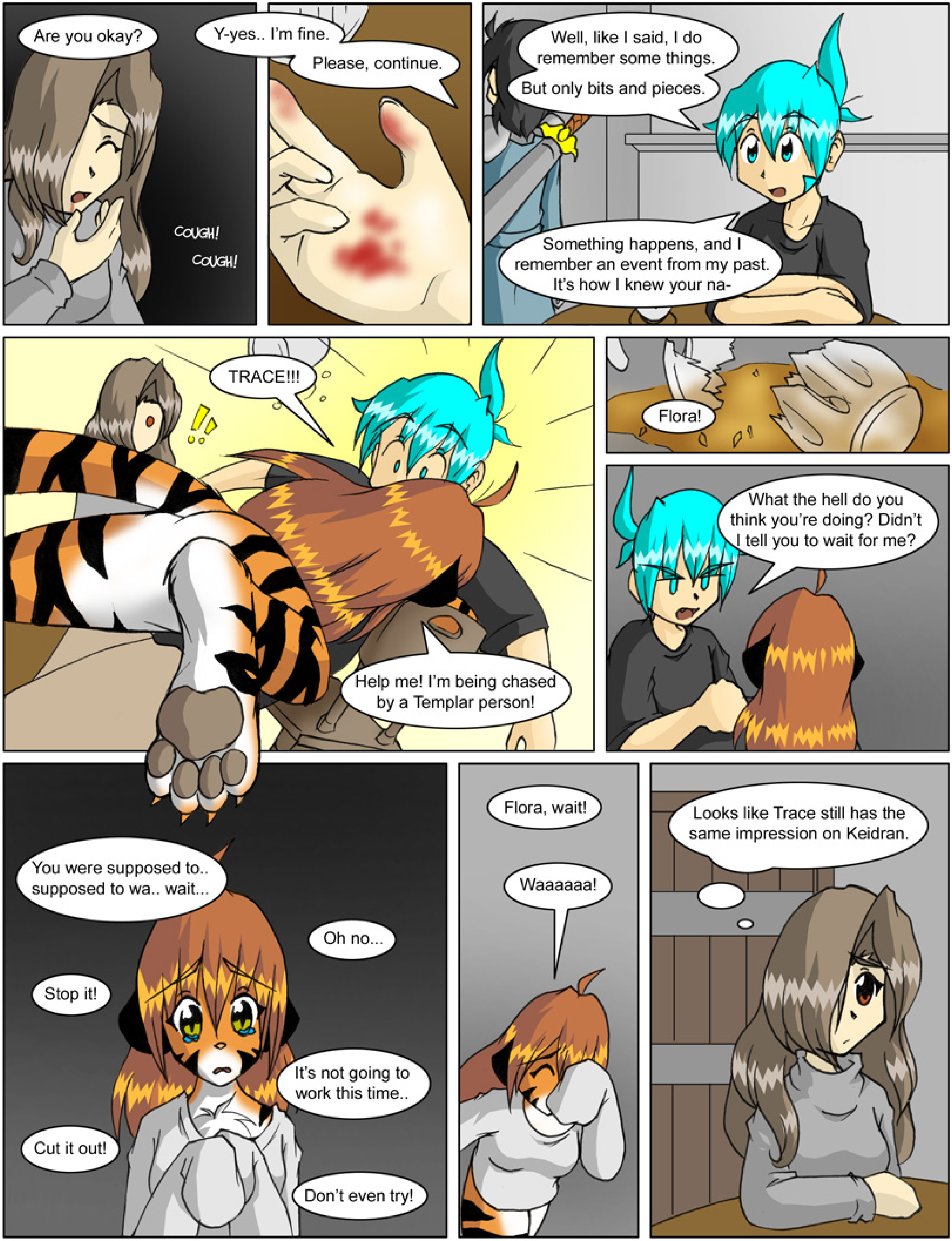

Meanwhile...
So you're sure Trace is in this city?
Oh yes, he arrived a short while ago.
But he's a little busy right now, maybe you'd like to wait at the tavern, Mr... uh...
My name's not important, but we need to see him now.
Templar business.
...Alright, right this way, Sir.
...Mother...
Back at the Tavern...
Trace, come over here!
Flora?! Ack!
Wait, where are you going, Sir?
Don't you want to see Saria? She's really looking forward to seeing you!

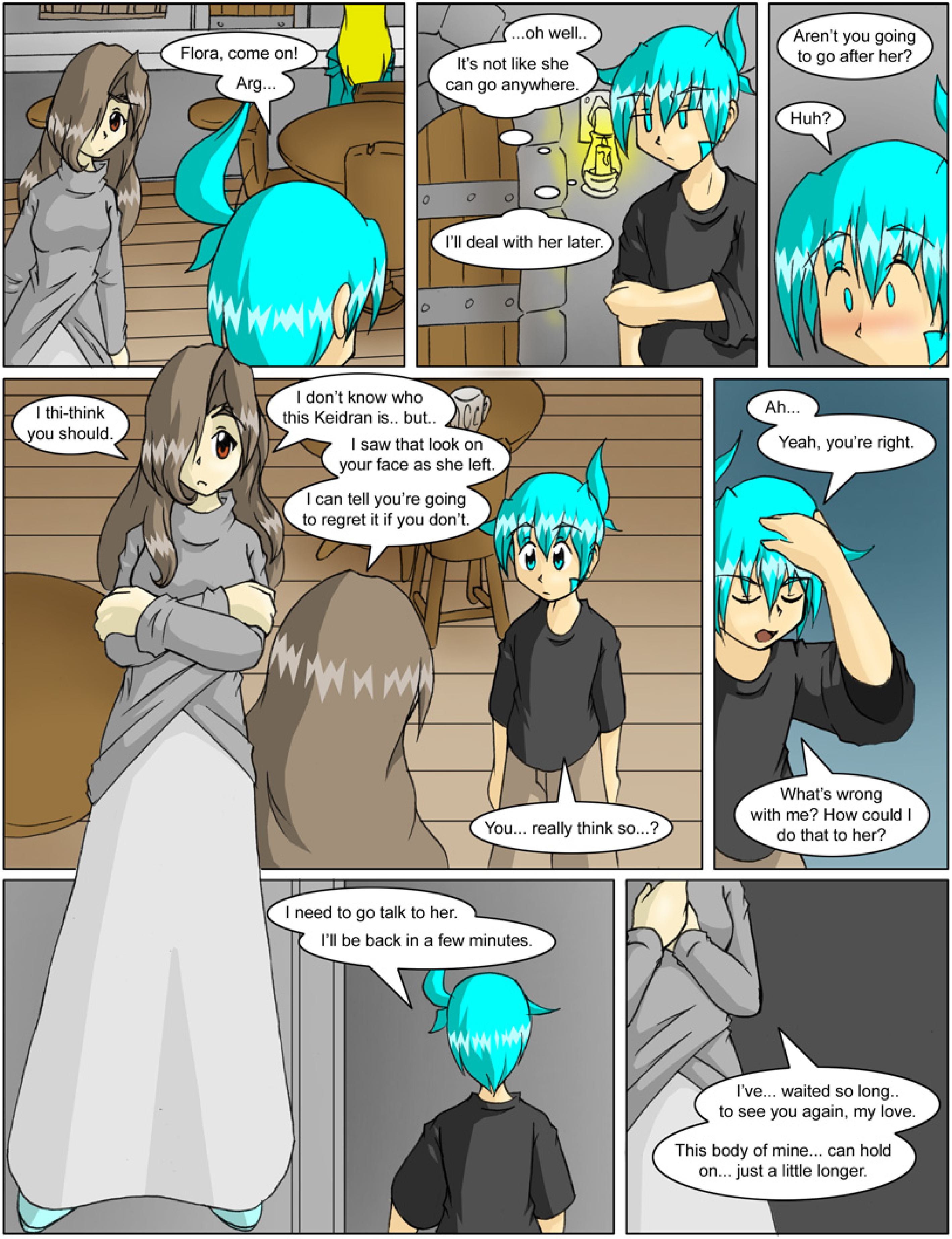

Come on, Trace!
I'm a Keidran, remember? I can't talk to you out there.
Where are we- erg, Your claws!
Grr... why didn't you tell me you were married?
You knew, didn't you?
I had no idea!
I don't know anything about my past, you know that! I don't even know if it's true or not, really!
Oh, I know.
But if it's true.. I... what about me?
Flora. Flora! Relax.
I'm sure it's just some misunderstanding.
Why don't you let me handle this? They have running water here, you can go take a bath.
You.. heh, could use one.
Oh, okay...
......
Wait...
Did he just say that I... smell?

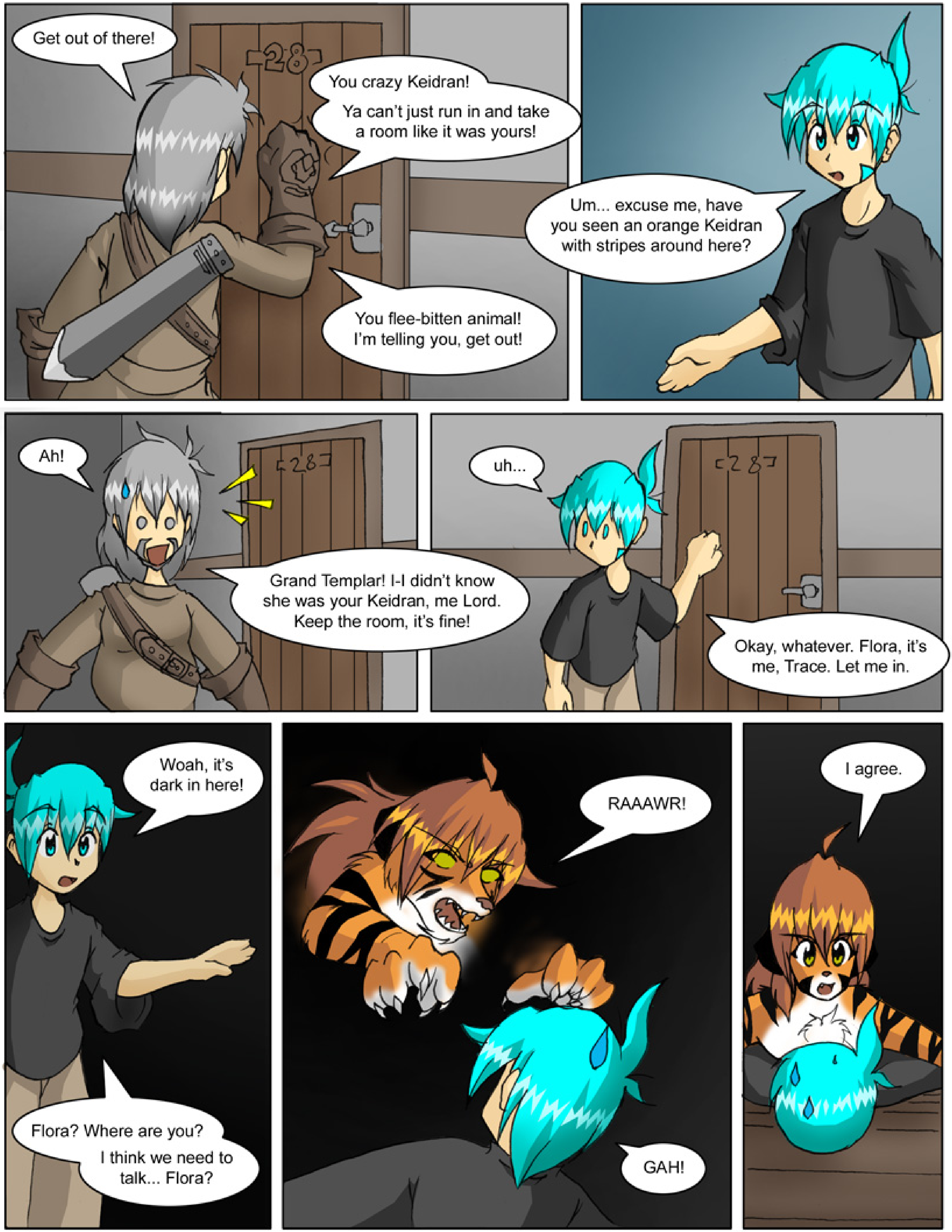

Darn that Trace.
I should have clawed his eyes out like I wanted to.
The jerk.
CREAK!
Huh. Trace?
Oh, hey, I didn't expect a Keidran in the public baths.
Ah! A human...
Can you talk? What's your name?
F-Flora...
Oh, mind if I join you, Flora?
I'm not here to hurt you.
You're Trace's Keidran, aren't you?
I've actually been wanting to talk with you.
With.. me?
Yeah. You think I'm a Templar, don't you?
Truth is, I am. But I'm also a member of the ***Resistance***.
I can help you if you want. I can get you out of here.
I can take you home!
Go... home..?

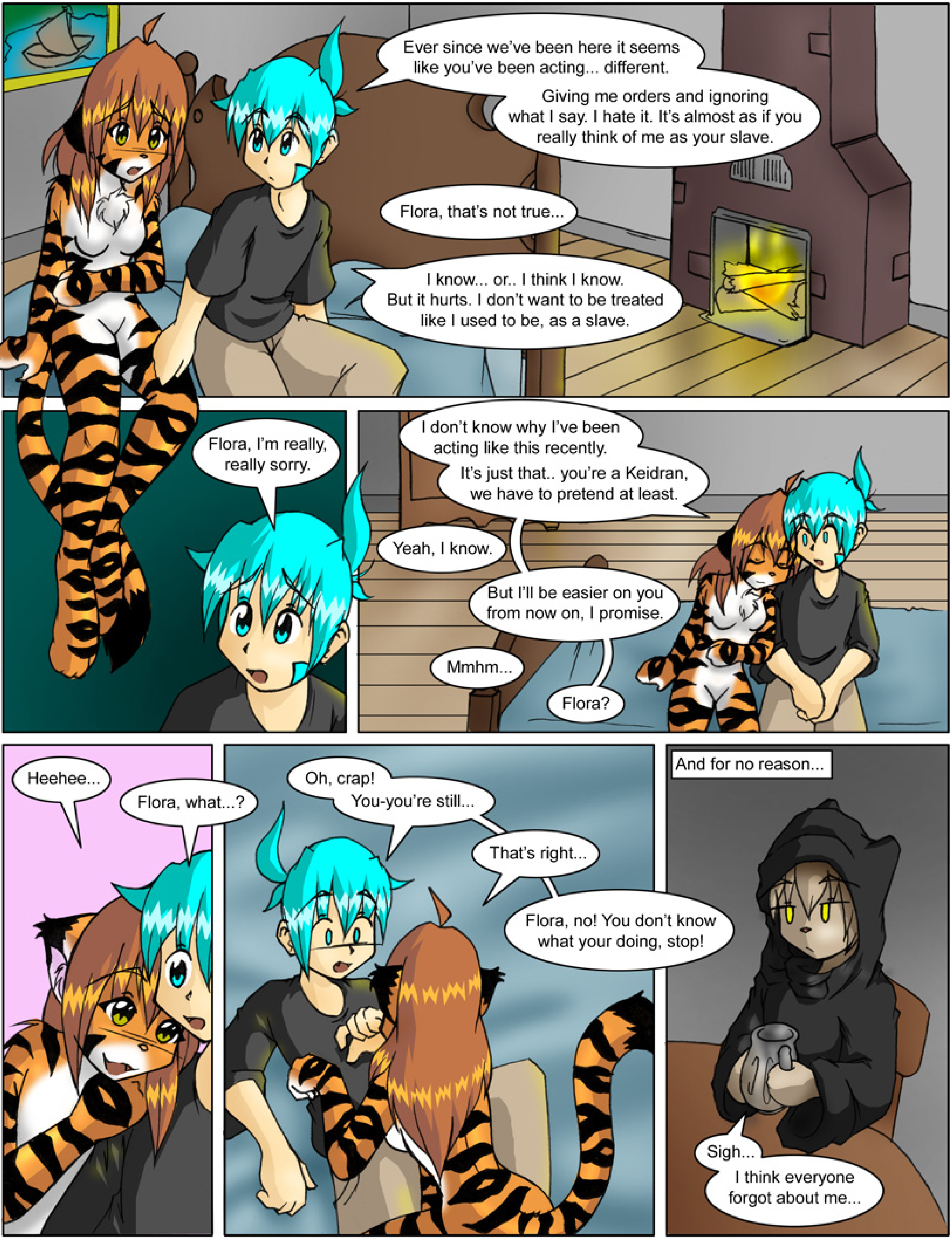
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

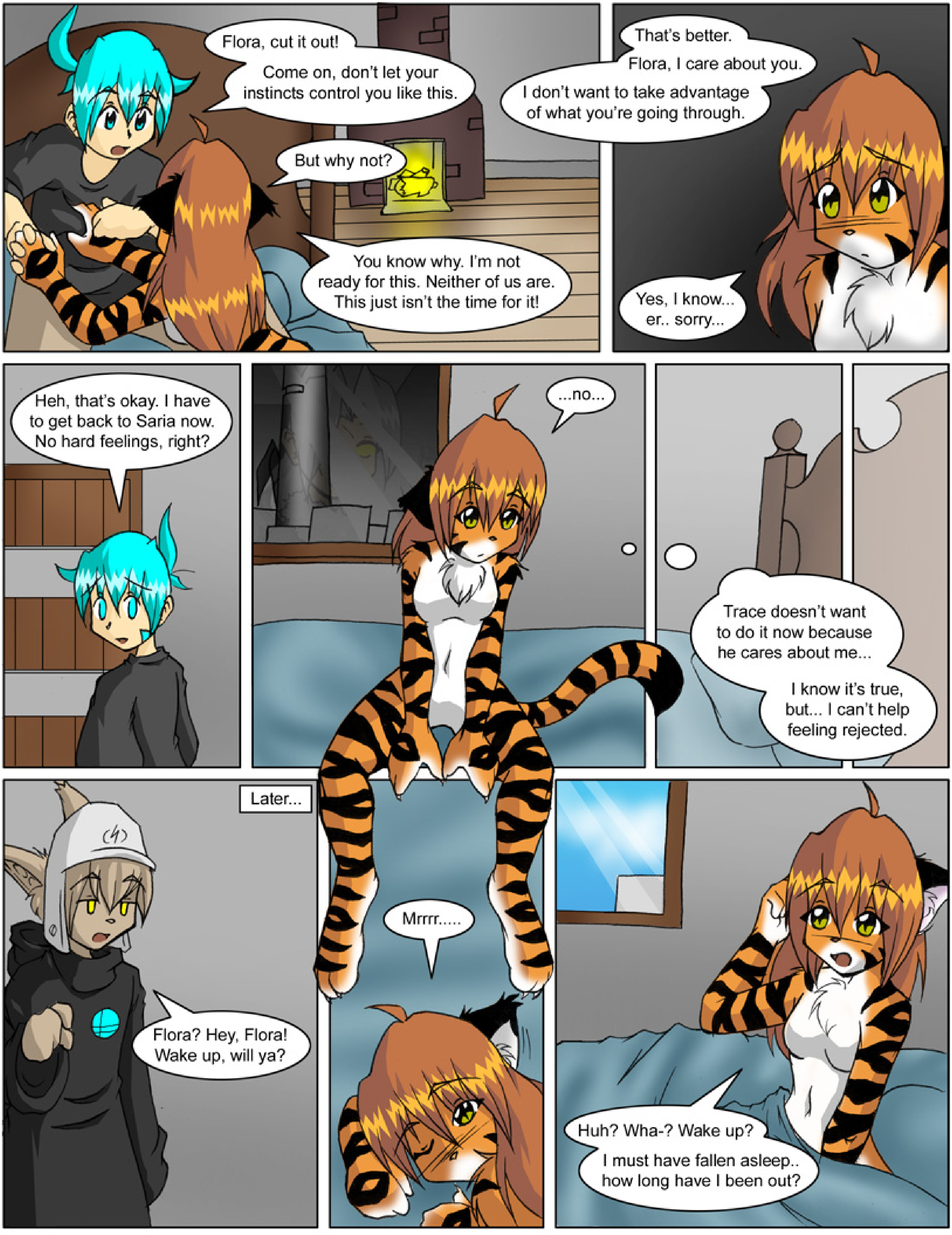

T-Trace.... is it really you?
This is my... wife?
I ca-can't believe it.
It's been so long...
You never wrote to me like you said. And none of my letters...
I... I'm really sorry... Saria.
Oh, you don't.. don't have to apologize, dear. It... wasn't your fault... I must have done somethi-
That's not what I meant.
Hm..?
nyaa!!!
What I meant was... I'm sorry, but I don't.. know you.
I can't remember anything... at all. It happened about a month ago.
You don't... remember me?

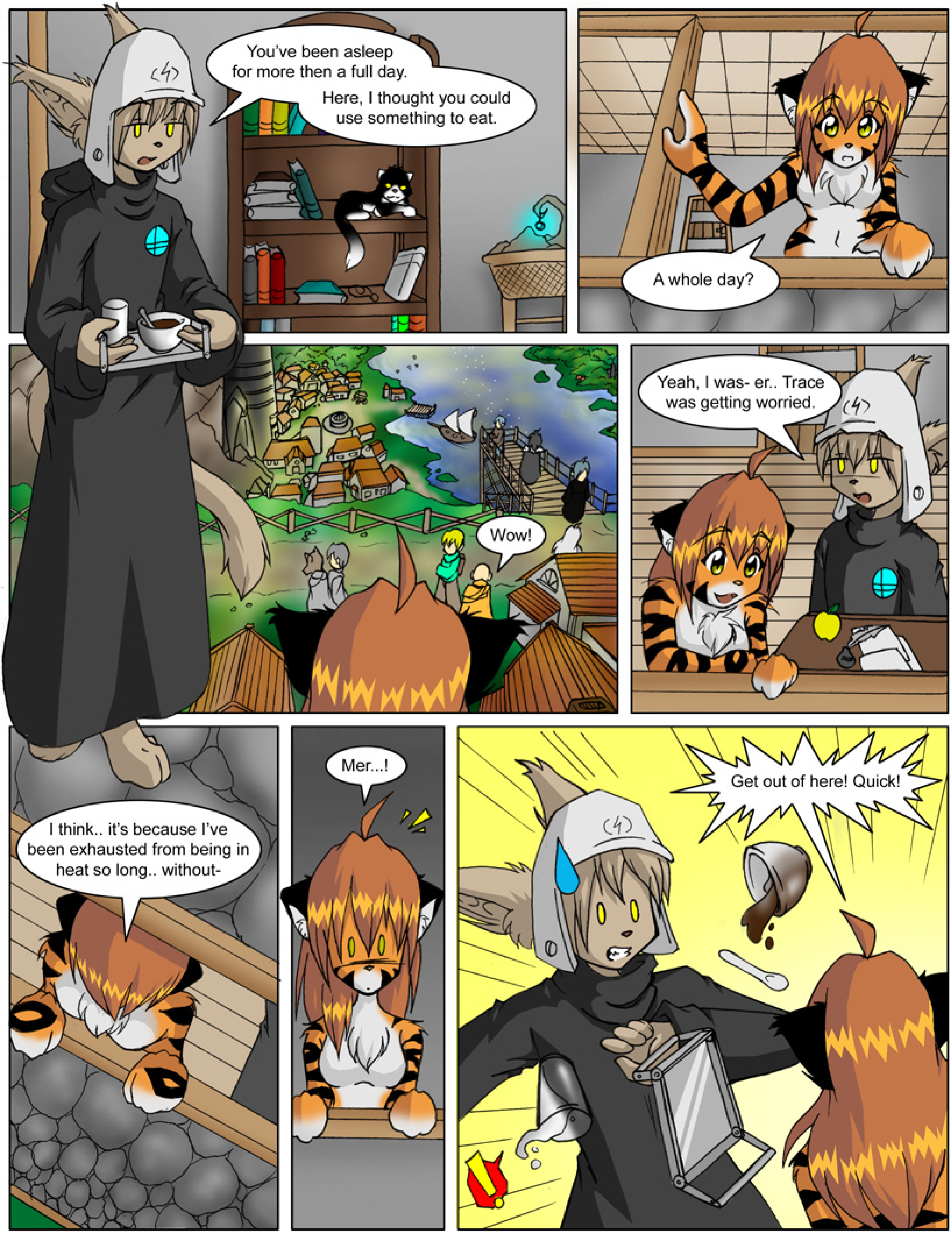

Are you okay?
COUGH!
COUGH!
Y-yes.. I'm fine.
Please, continue.
Well, like I said, I do remember some things.
But only bits and pieces.
Something happens, and I remember an event from my past. It's how I knew your na-
TRACE!!!
!!
Help me! I'm being chased by a Templar person!
Flora!
What the hell do you think you're doing? Didn't I tell you to wait for me?
You were supposed to.. supposed to wa.. wait...
Oh no...
Stop it!
It's not going to work this time..
Cut it out!
Don't even try!
Flora, wait!
Waaaaaa!
Looks like Trace still has the same impression on Keidran.

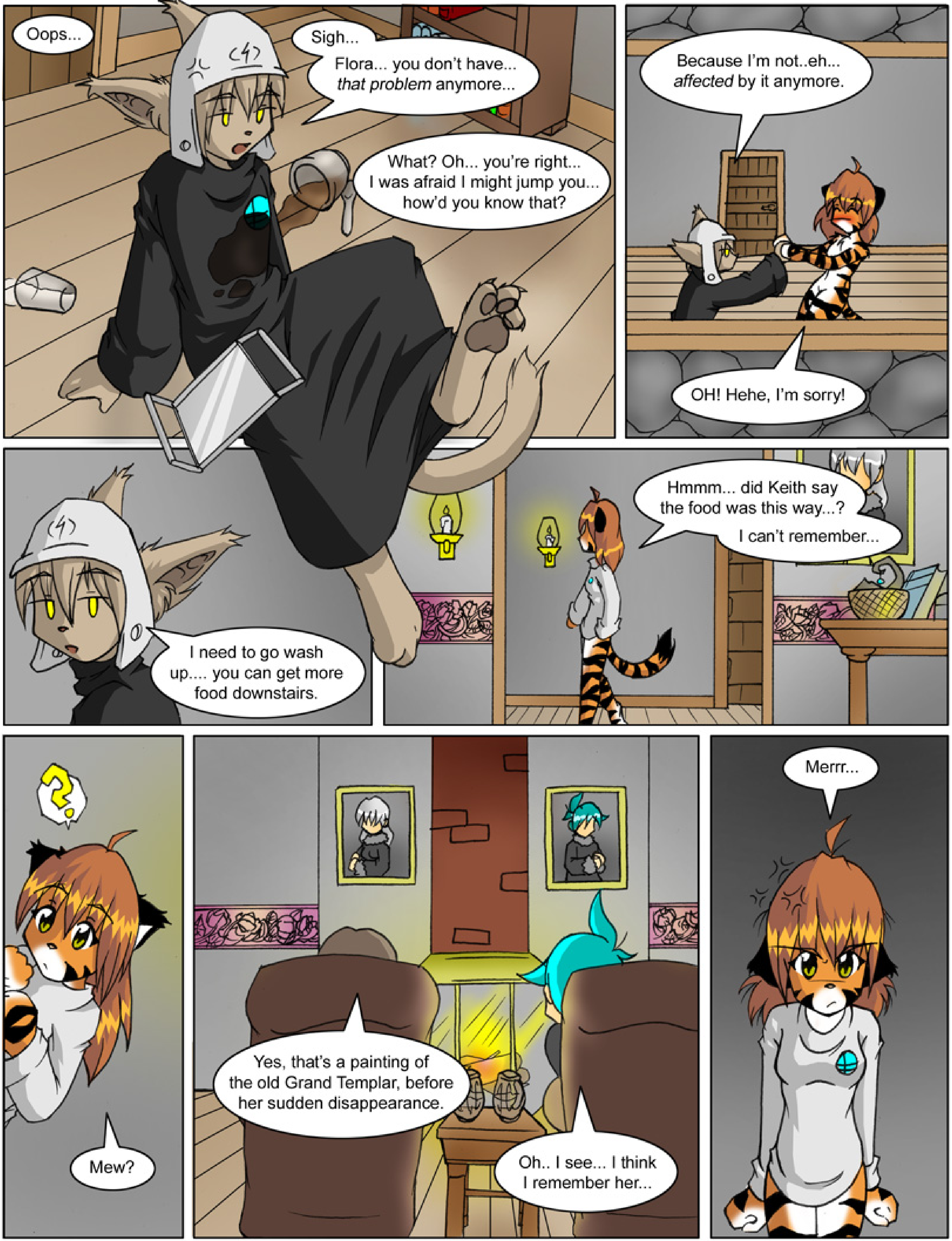

Flora, come on!
Arg...
...oh well..
It's not like she can go anywhere.
I'll deal with her later.
Aren't you going to go after her?
Huh?
I thi-think you should.
I don't know who this Keidran is.. but..
I saw that look on your face as she left.
I can tell you're going to regret it if you don't.
You... really think so...?
Ah...
Yeah, you're right.
What's wrong with me? How could I do that to her?
I need to go talk to her.
I'll be back in a few minutes.
I've... waited so long.. to see you again, my love.
This body of mine... can hold on... just a little longer.

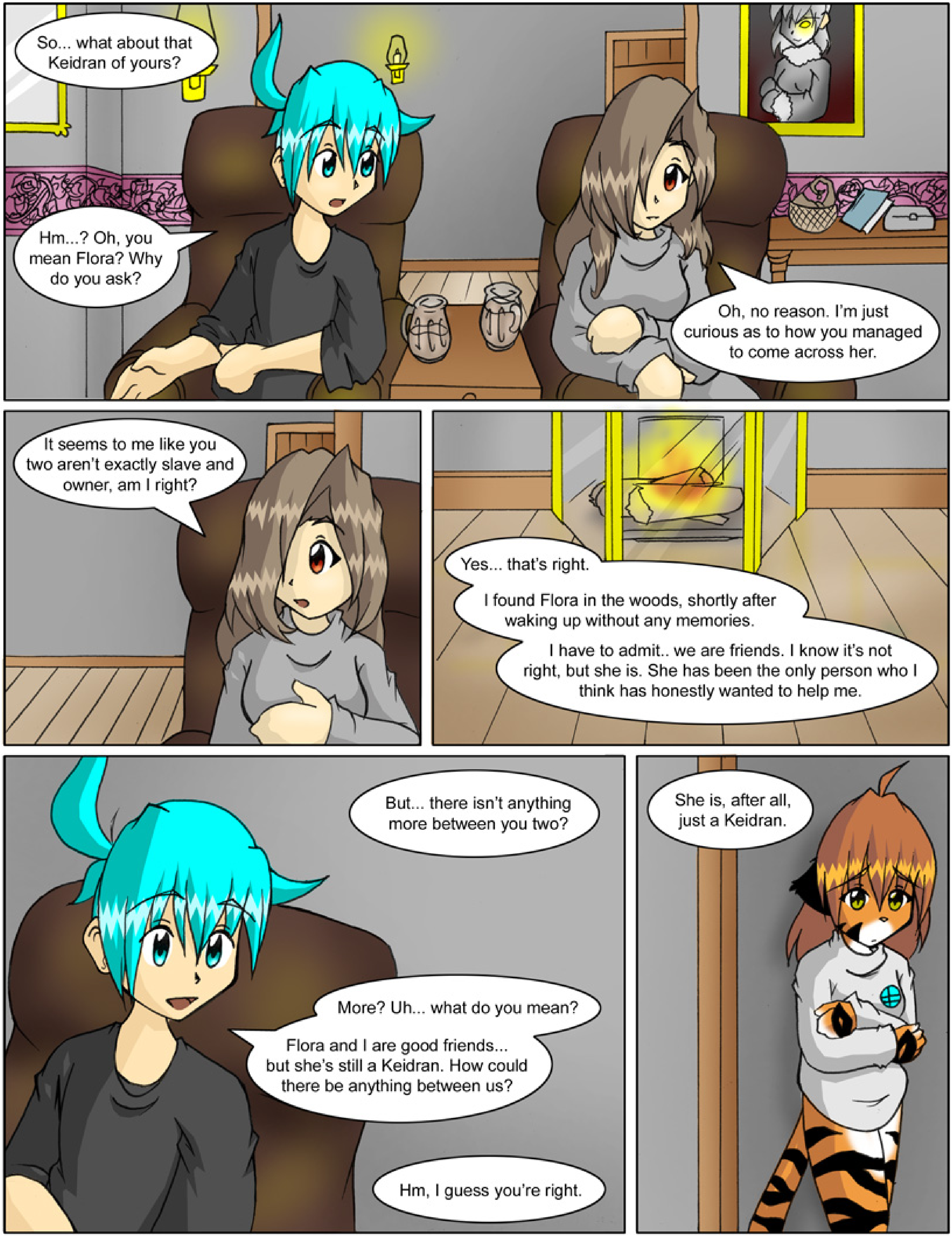

Get out of there!
28
You crazy Keidran!
Ya can't just run in and take a room like it was yours!
You flee-bitten animal! I'm telling you, get out!
Um... excuse me, have you seen an orange Keidran with stripes around here?
Ah!
28
Grand Templar! I-I didn't know she was your Keidran, me Lord. Keep the room, it's fine!
uh...
28
Okay, whatever. Flora, it's me, Trace. Let me in.
Woah, it's dark in here!
Flora? Where are you?
I think we need to talk... Flora?
RAAAWR!
GAH!
I agree.

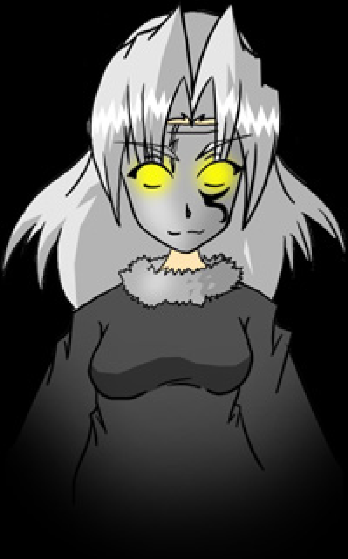

Ever since we've been here it seems like you've been acting... different.
Giving me orders and ignoring what I say. I hate it. It's almost as if you really think of me as your slave.
Flora, that's not true...
I know... or.. I think I know. But it hurts. I don't want to be treated like I used to be, as a slave.
Flora, I'm really, really sorry.
I don't know why I've been acting like this recently.
It's just that.. you're a Keidran, we have to pretend at least.
Yeah, I know.
But I'll be easier on you from now on, I promise.
Mmhm...
Flora?
Heehee...
Flora, what...?
Oh, crap!
You-you're still...
That's right...
Flora, no! You don't know what your doing, stop!
And for no reason...
Sigh...
I think everyone forgot about me...


Flora, cut it out!
Come on, don't let your instincts control you like this.
But why not?
You know why. I'm not ready for this. Neither of us are. This just isn't the time for it!
That's better.
Flora, I care about you.
I don't want to take advantage of what you're going through.
Yes, I know... er.. sorry...
Heh, that's okay. I have to get back to Saria now. No hard feelings, right?
...no...
Trace doesn't want to do it now because he cares about me...
I know it's true, but... I can't help feeling rejected.
Later...
Flora? Hey, Flora! Wake up, will ya?
Mrrrr.....
Huh? Wha-? Wake up?
I must have fallen asleep.. how long have I been out?

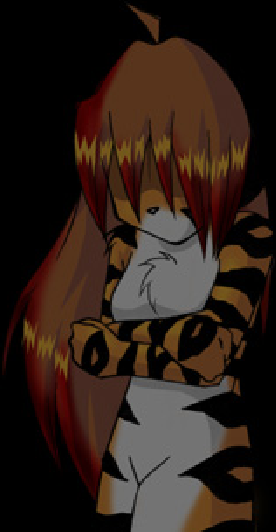

You've been asleep for more then a full day.
Here, I thought you could use something to eat.
A whole day?
Wow!
Yeah, I was- er.. Trace was getting worried.
I think.. it's because I've been exhausted from being in heat so long.. without-
Mer...!
Get out of here! Quick!

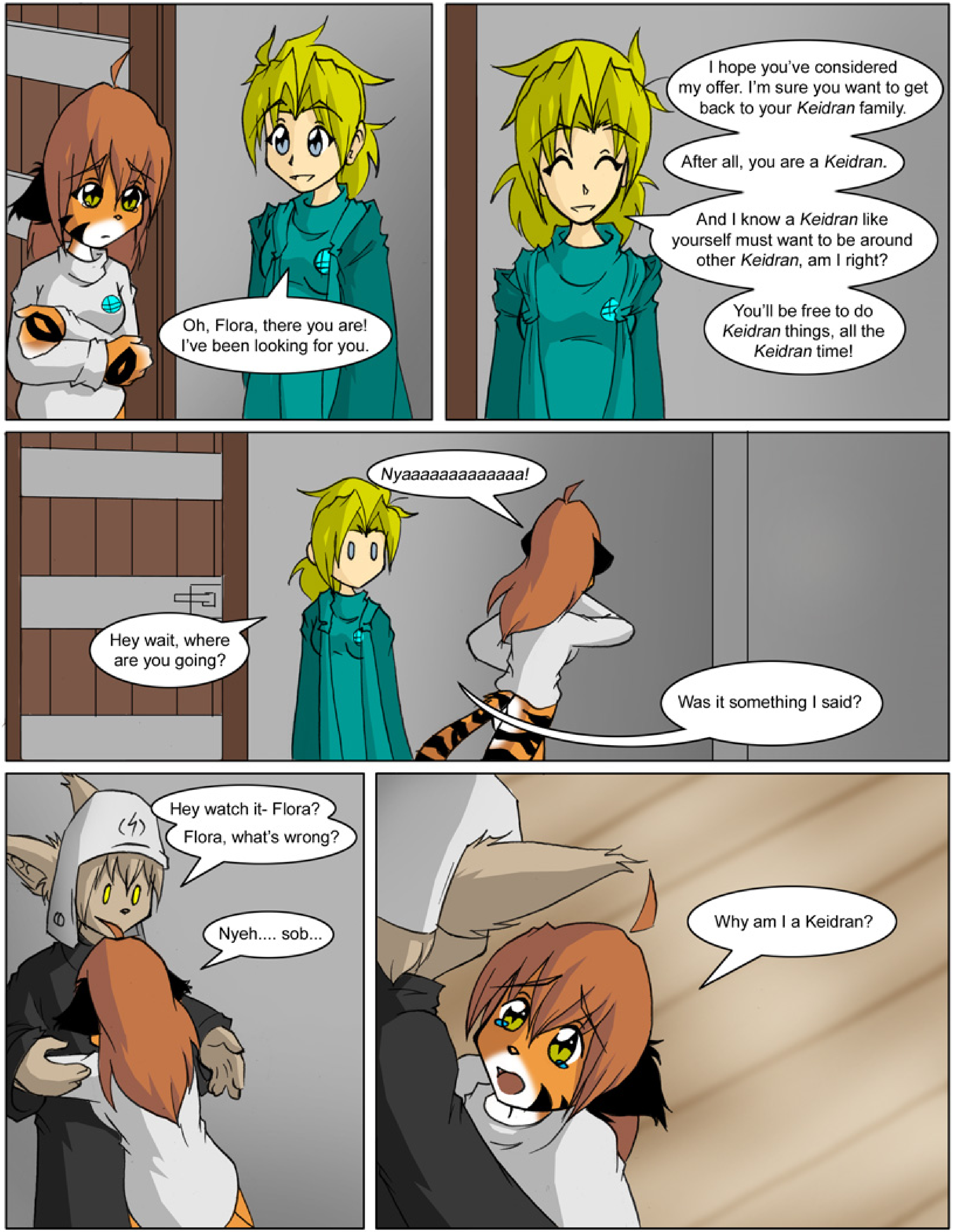

Oops...
Sigh...
Flora... you don't have... *that problem* anymore...
What? Oh... you're right... I was afraid I might jump you... how'd you know that?
Because I'm not..eh... *affected* by it anymore.
OH! Hehe, I'm sorry!
I need to go wash up.... you can get more food downstairs.
Hmmm... did Keith say the food was this way...?
I can't remember...
?
Mew?
Yes, that's a painting of the old Grand Templar, before her sudden disappearance.
Oh.. I see... I think I remember her...
Merrr...

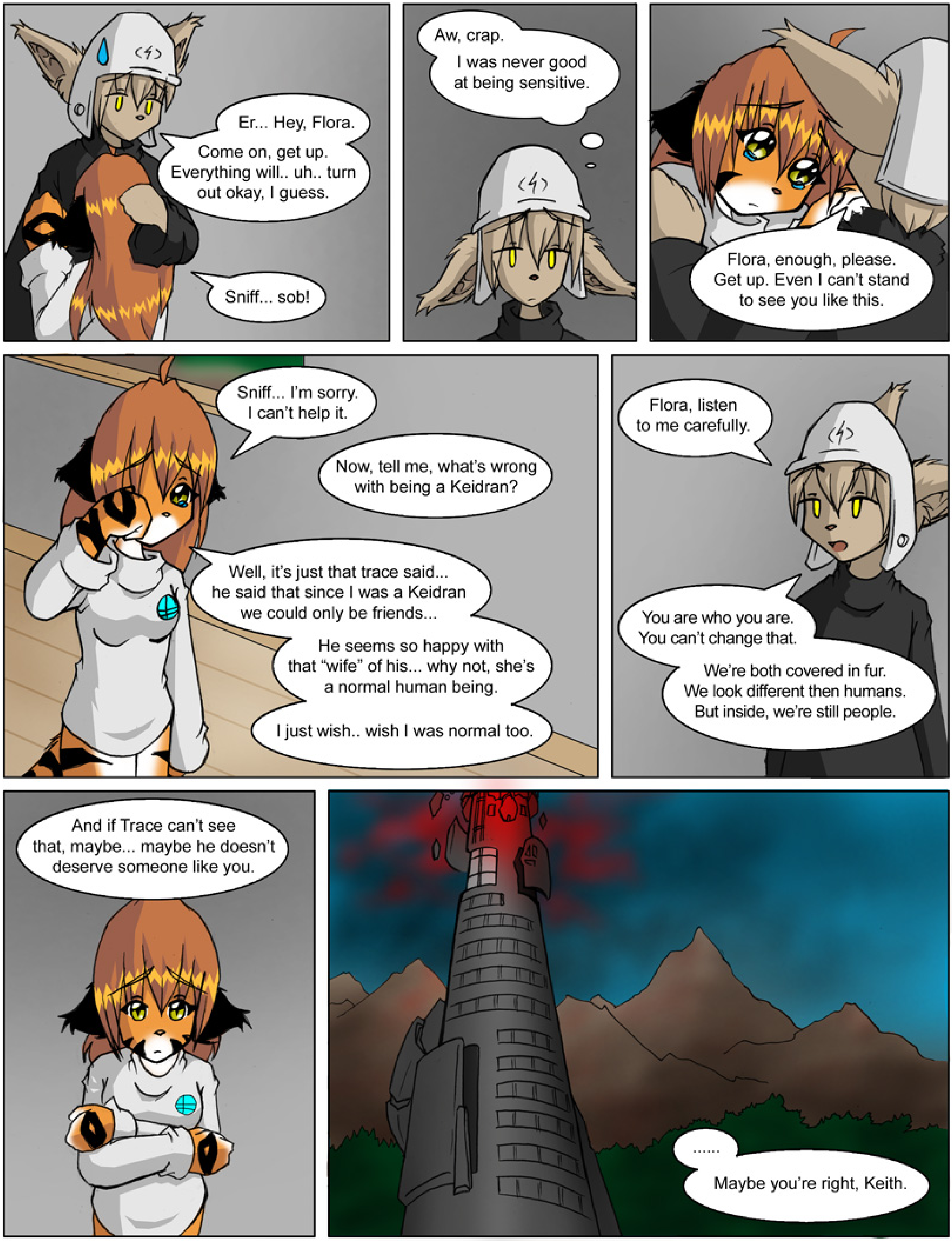

So... what about that Keidran of yours?
Hm...? Oh, you mean Flora? Why do you ask?
Oh, no reason. I'm just curious as to how you managed to come across her.
It seems to me like you two aren't exactly slave and owner, am I right?
Yes... that's right.
I found Flora in the woods, shortly after waking up without any memories.
I have to admit.. we are friends. I know it's not right, but she is. She has been the only person who I think has honestly wanted to help me.
But... there isn't anything more between you two?
More? Uh... what do you mean?
Flora and I are good friends... but she's still a Keidran. How could there be anything between us?
Hm, I guess you're right.
She is, after all, just a Keidran.

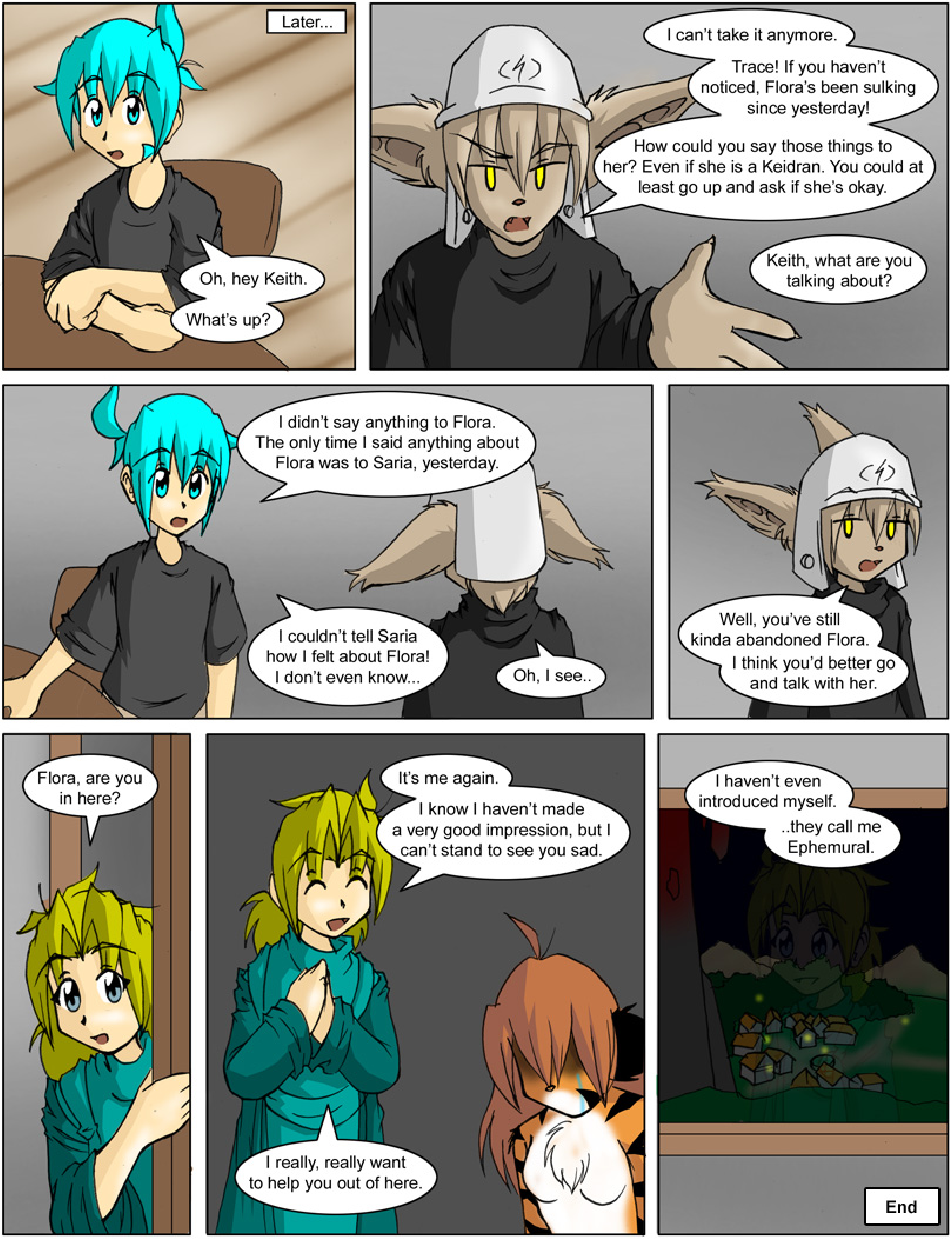


It's all mine now.



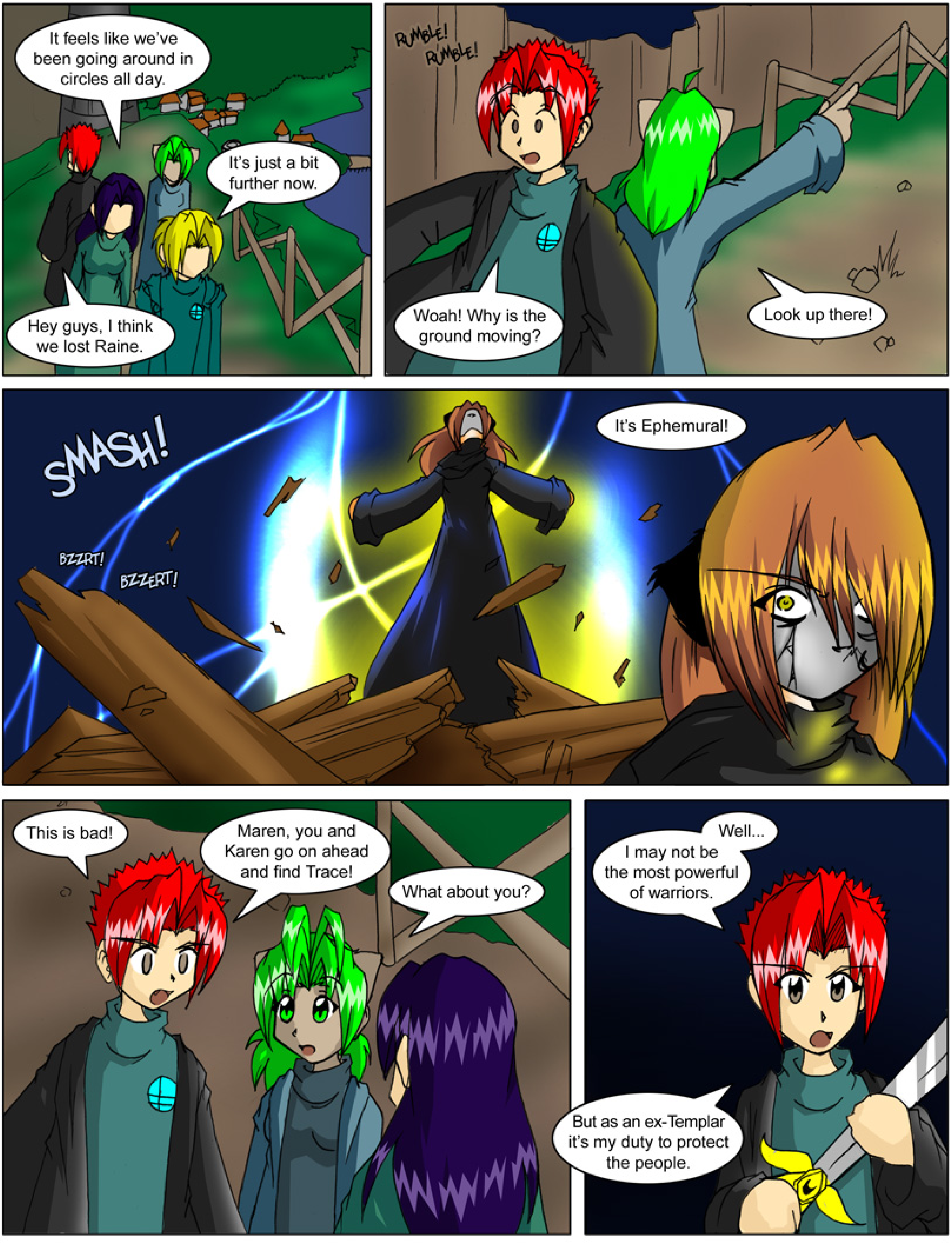

Oh, Flora, there you are! I've been looking for you.
I hope you've considered my offer. I'm sure you want to get back to your *Keidran* family.
After all, you are a *Keidran*.
And I know a *Keidran* like yourself must want to be around other *Keidran*, am I right?
You'll be free to do *Keidran* things, all the *Keidran* time!
Nyaaaaaaaaaaaaa!
Hey wait, where are you going?
Was it something I said?
Hey watch it- Flora?
Flora, what's wrong?
Nyeh.... sob...
Why am I a Keidran?

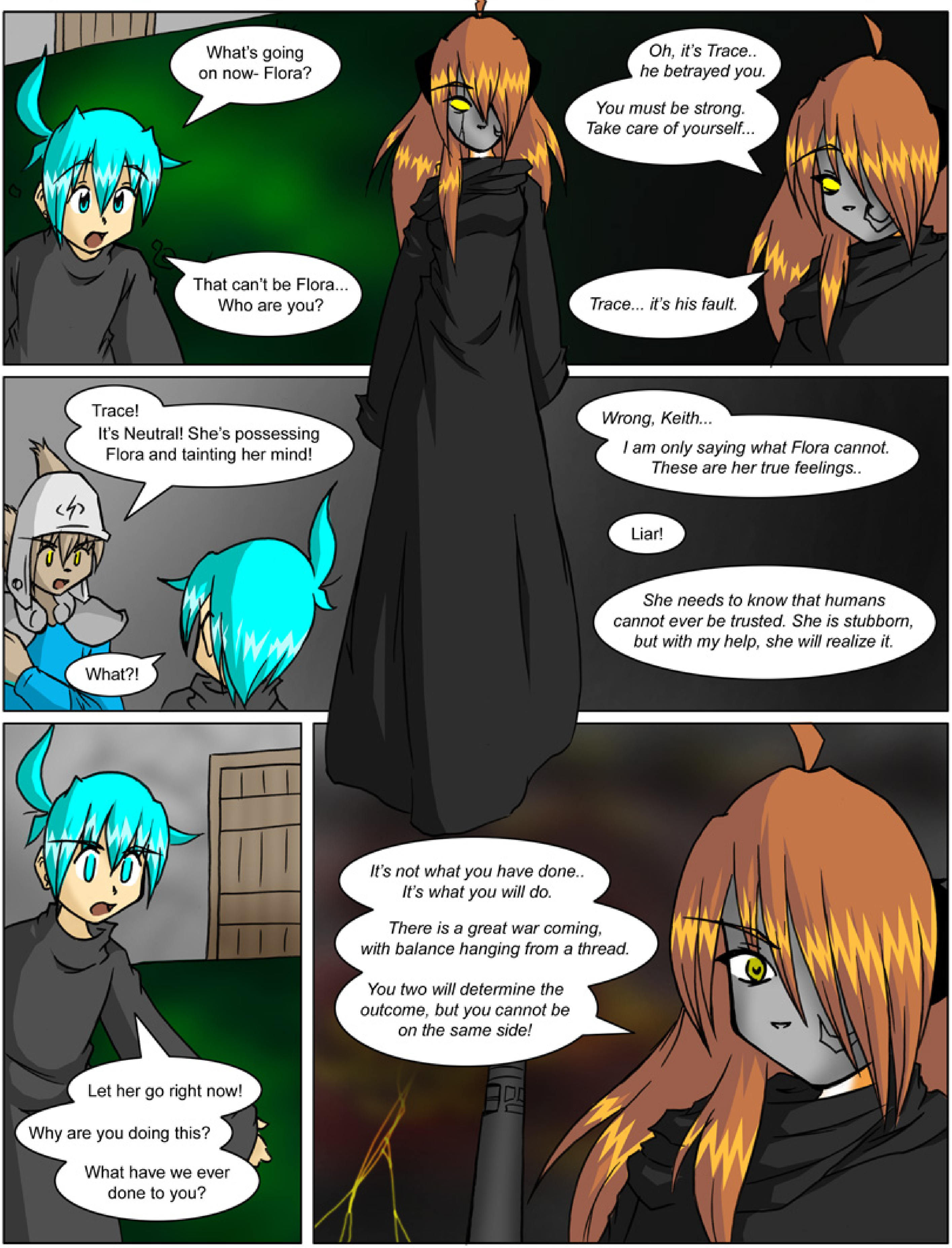

Er... Hey, Flora.
Come on, get up. Everything will.. uh.. turn out okay, I guess.
Sniff... sob!
Aw, crap.
I was never good at being sensitive.
Flora, enough, please. Get up. Even I can't stand to see you like this.
Sniff... I'm sorry. I can't help it.
Now, tell me, what's wrong with being a Keidran?
Well, it's just that trace said... he said that since I was a Keidran we could only be friends...
He seems so happy with that "wife" of his... why not, she's a normal human being.
I just wish.. wish I was normal too.
Flora, listen to me carefully.
You are who you are. You can't change that.
We're both covered in fur. We look different then humans. But inside, we're still people.
And if Trace can't see that, maybe... maybe he doesn't deserve someone like you.
......
Maybe you're right, Keith.

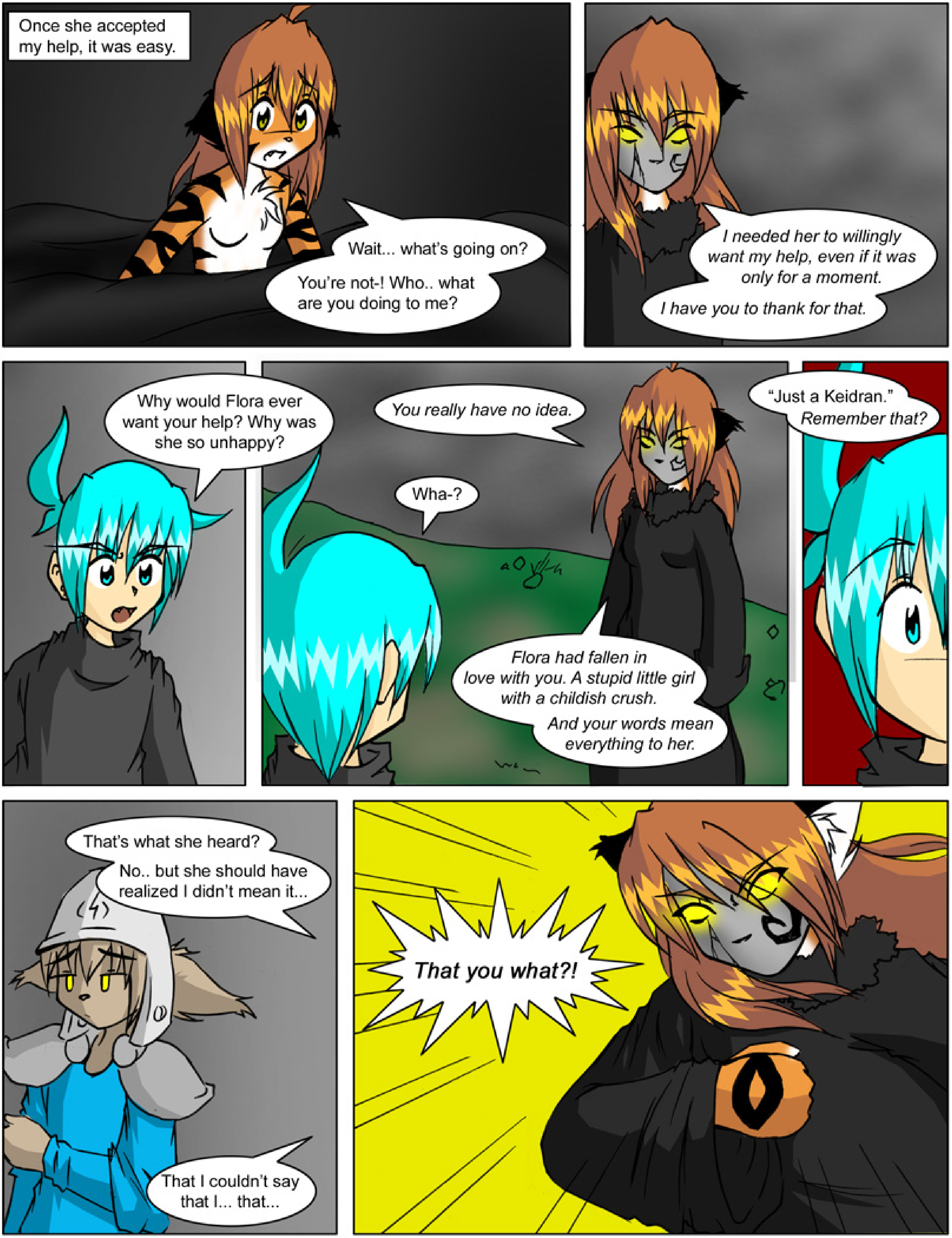

Later...
Oh, hey Keith.
What's up?
I can't take it anymore.
Trace! If you haven't noticed, Flora's been sulking since yesterday!
How could you say those things to her? Even if she is a Keidran. You could at least go up and ask if she's okay.
Keith, what are you talking about?
I didn't say anything to Flora. The only time I said anything about Flora was to Saria, yesterday.
I couldn't tell Saria how I felt about Flora! I don't even know...
Oh, I see..
Well, you've still kinda abandoned Flora.
I think you'd better go and talk with her.
Flora, are you in here?
It's me again.
I know I haven't made a very good impression, but I can't stand to see you sad.
I really, really want to help you out of here.
I haven't even introduced myself.
..they call me Ephemural.
End

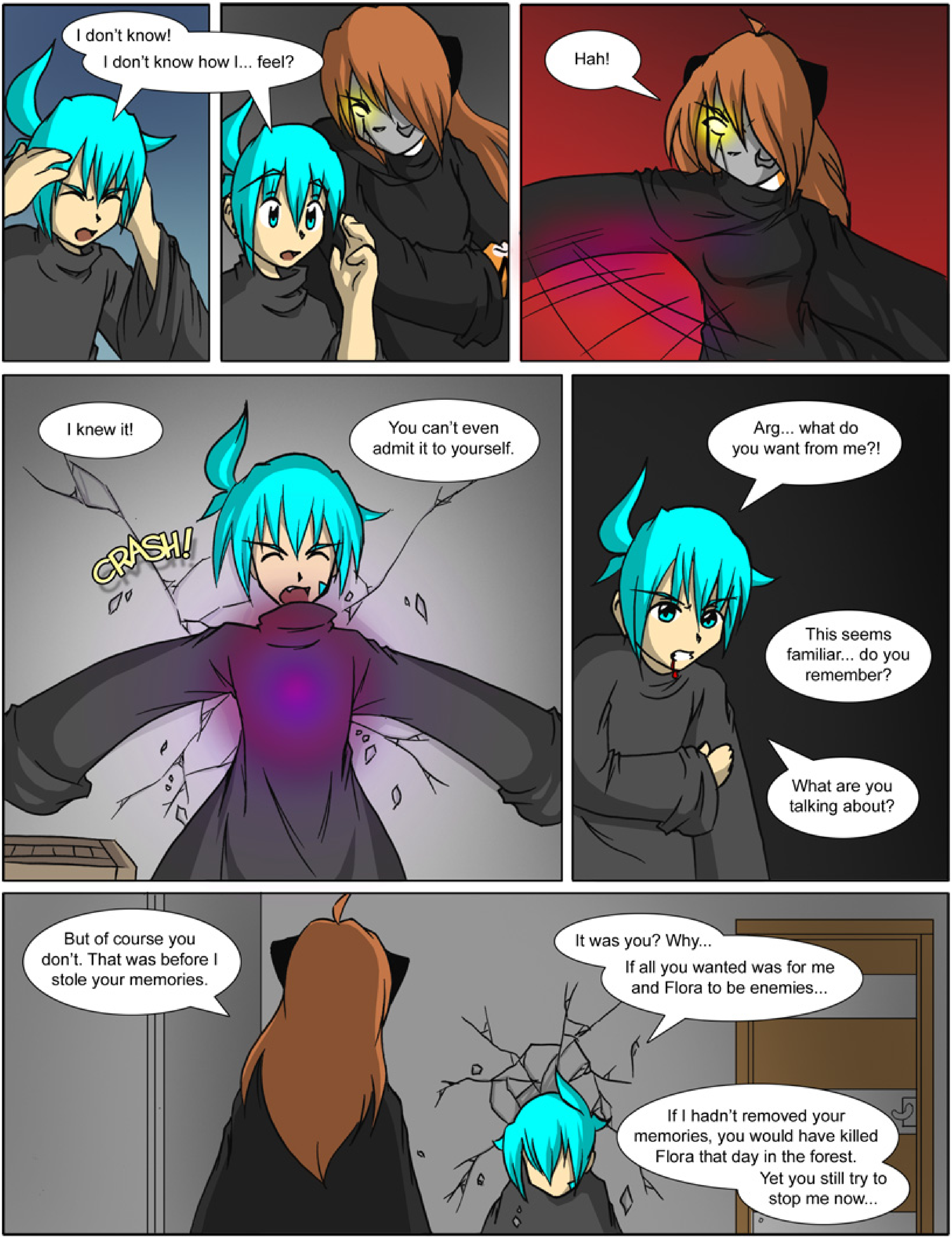
Twokinds

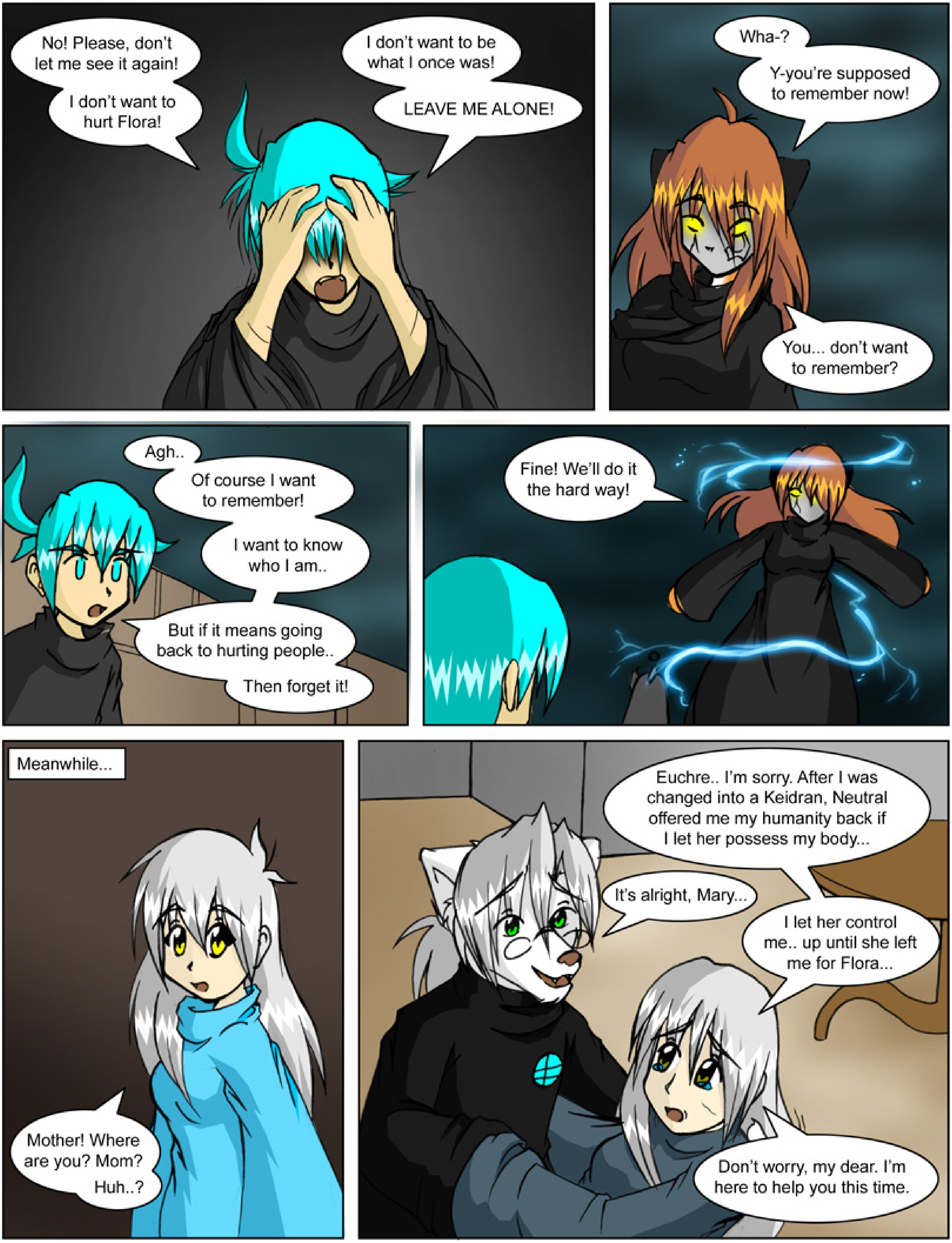
Chapter 6, part 2

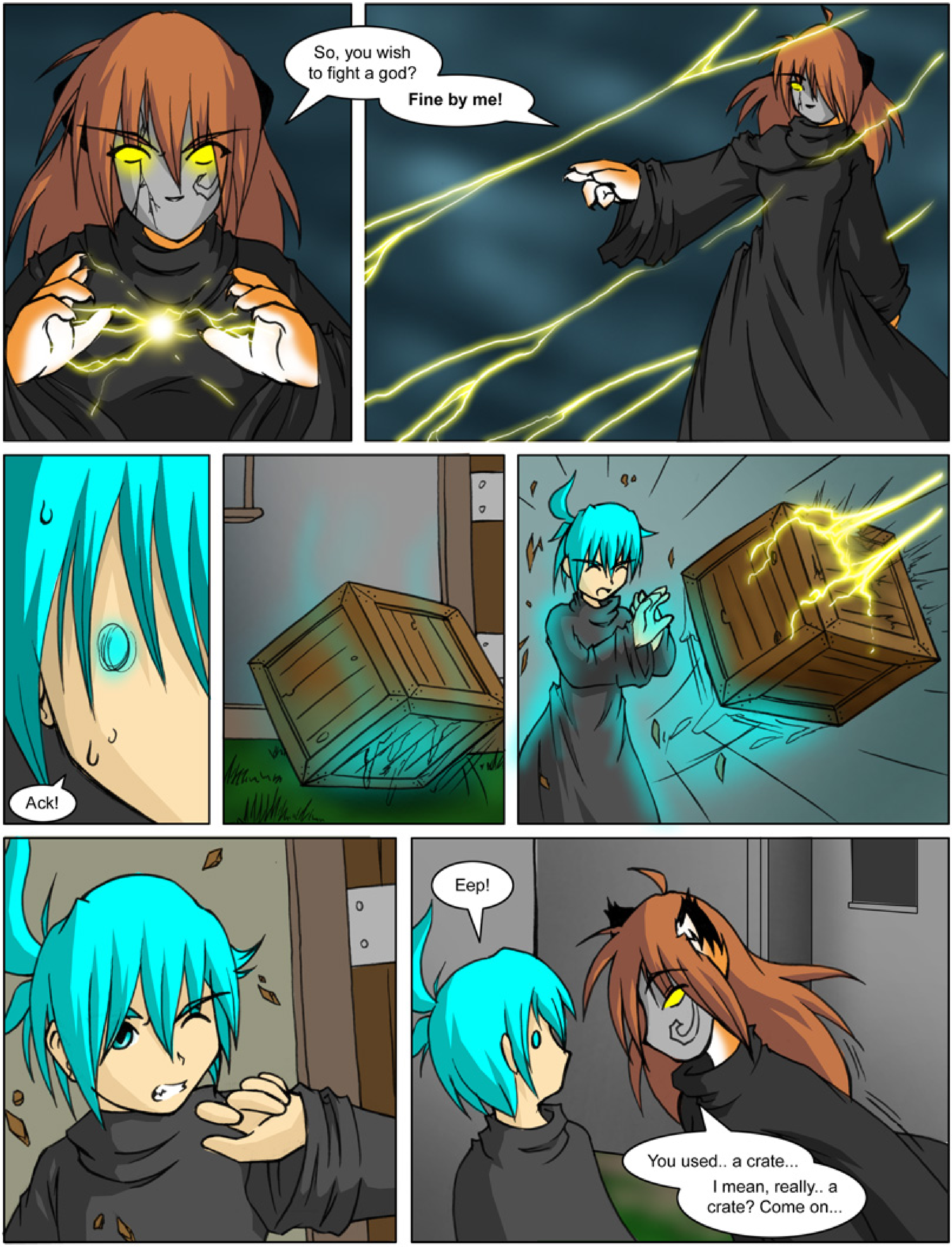

It feels like we've been going around in circles all day.
It's just a bit further now.
Hey guys, I think we lost Raine.
RUMBLE! RUMBLE!
Woah! Why is the ground moving?
Look up there!
SMASH!
BZZRT!
BZZERT!
It's Ephemural!
This is bad!
Maren, you and Karen go on ahead and find Trace!
What about you?
Well...
I may not be the most powerful of warriors.
But as an ex-Templar it's my duty to protect the people.

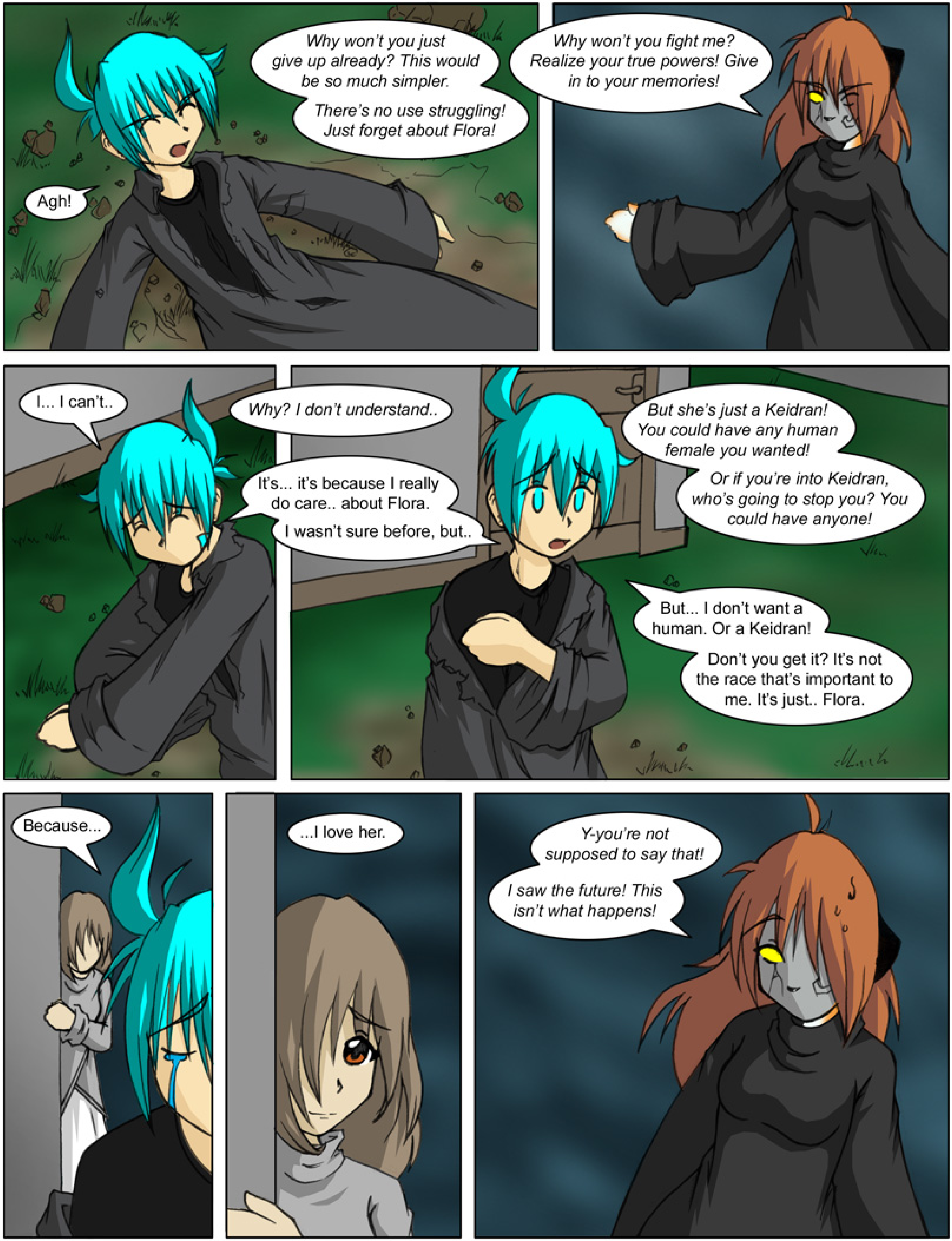

What's going on now- Flora?
That can't be Flora... Who are you?
Oh, it's Trace.. he betrayed you.
You must be strong. Take care of yourself...
Trace... it's his fault.
Trace! It's Neutral! She's possessing Flora and tainting her mind!
What?!
Wrong, Keith... I am only saying what Flora cannot. These are her true feelings..
Liar!
She needs to know that humans cannot ever be trusted. She is stubborn, but with my help, she will realize it.
Let her go right now!
Why are you doing this?
What have we ever done to you?
It's not what you have done.. It's what you will do.
There is a great war coming, with balance hanging from a thread.
You two will determine the outcome, but you cannot be on the same side!

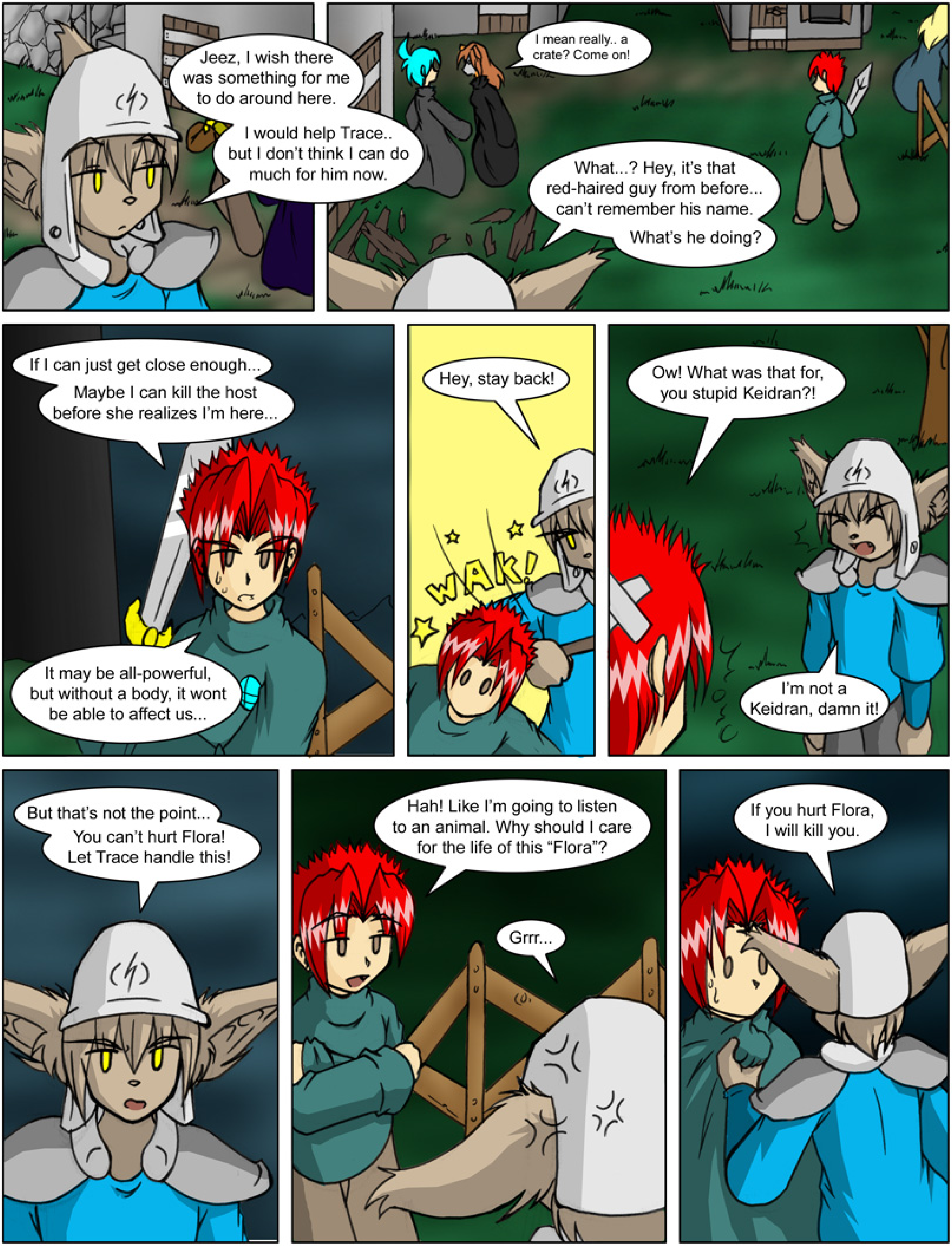

Once she accepted my help, it was easy.
Wait... what's going on?
You're not-! Who.. what are you doing to me?
I needed her to willingly want my help, even if it was only for a moment.
I have you to thank for that.
Why would Flora ever want your help? Why was she so unhappy?
You really have no idea.
Wha-?
Flora had fallen in love with you. A stupid little girl with a childish crush.
And your words mean everything to her.
"Just a Keidran." Remember that?
That's what she heard?
No.. but she should have realized I didn't mean it...
That I couldn't say that I... that...
That you what?!

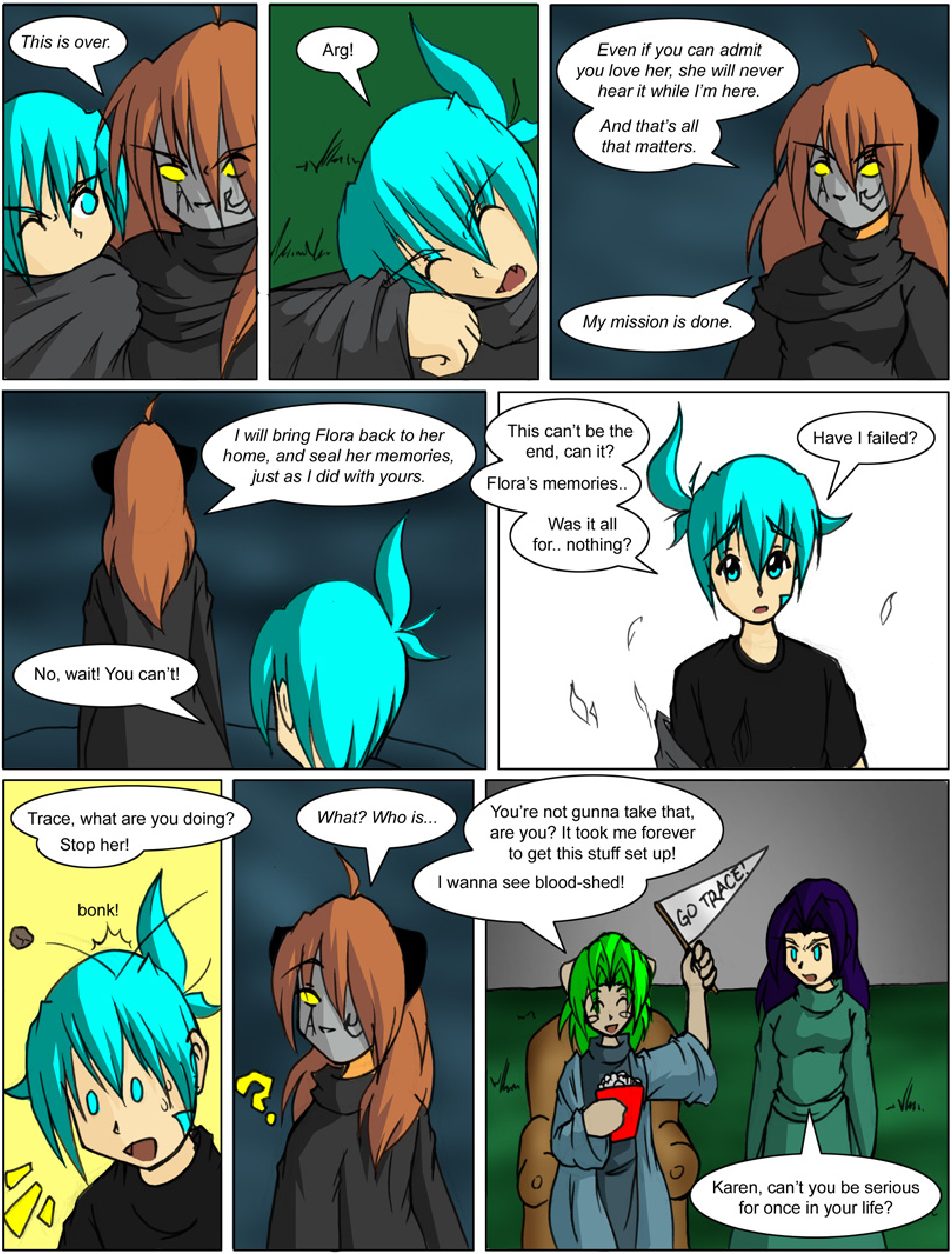

I don't know!
I don't know how I... feel?
Hah!
I knew it!
You can't even admit it to yourself.
CRASH!
Arg... what do you want from me?!
This seems familiar... do you remember?
What are you talking about?
But of course you don't. That was before I stole your memories.
It was you? Why...
If all you wanted was for me and Flora to be enemies...
If I hadn't removed your memories, you would have killed Flora that day in the forest.
Yet you still try to stop me now...

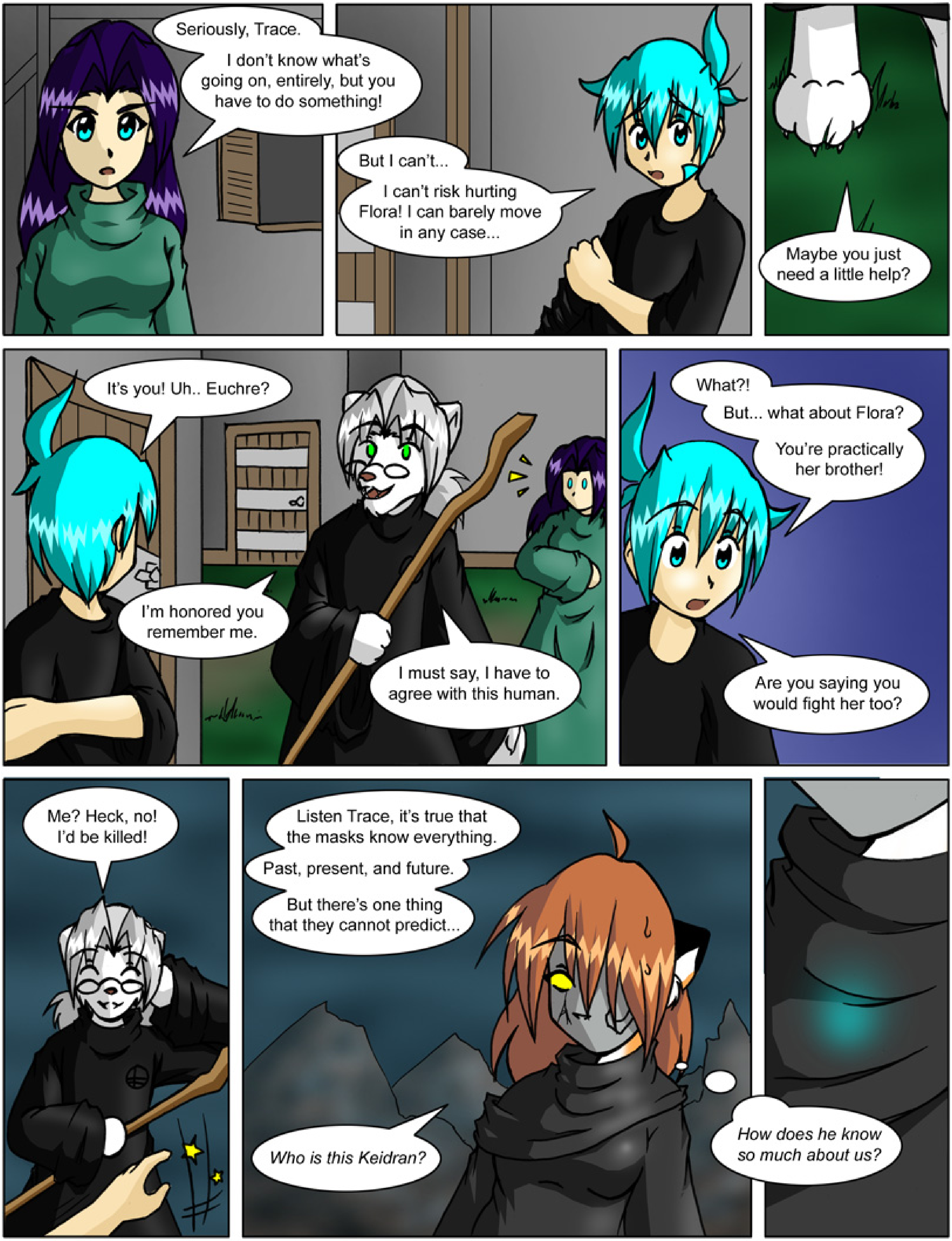

No! Please, don't let me see it again!
I don't want to hurt Flora!
I don't want to be what I once was!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
Wha-?
Y-you're supposed to remember now!
You... don't want to remember?
Agh..
Of course I want to remember!
I want to know who I am..
But if it means going back to hurting people..
Then forget it!
Fine! We'll do it the hard way!
Meanwhile...
Mother! Where are you? Mom? Huh..?
Euchre.. I'm sorry. After I was changed into a Keidran, Neutral offered me my humanity back if I let her possess my body...
It's alright, Mary...
I let her control me.. up until she left me for Flora...
Don't worry, my dear. I'm here to help you this time.

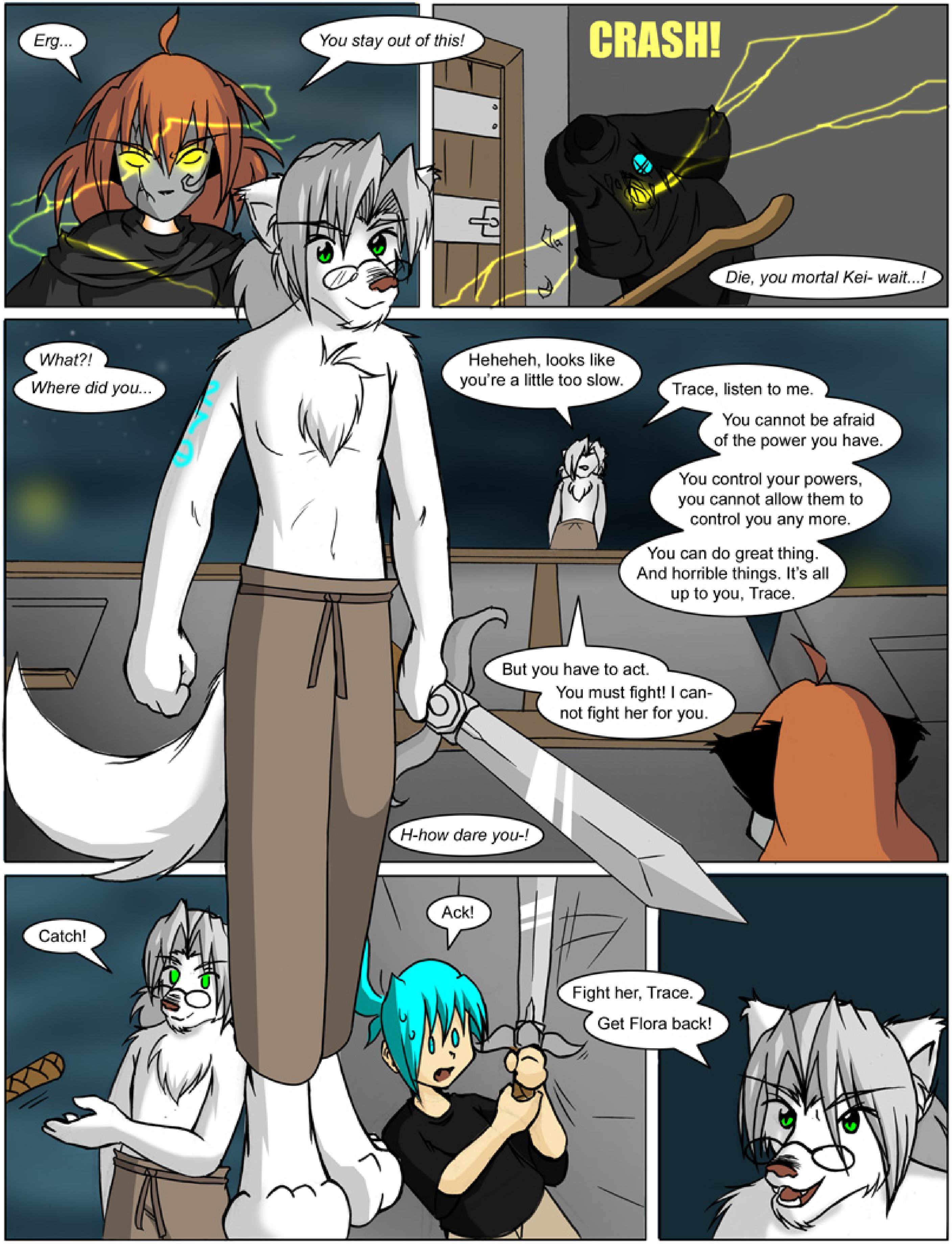

So, you wish to fight a god?
Fine by me!
Ack!
Eep!
You used.. a crate...
I mean, really.. a crate? Come on...

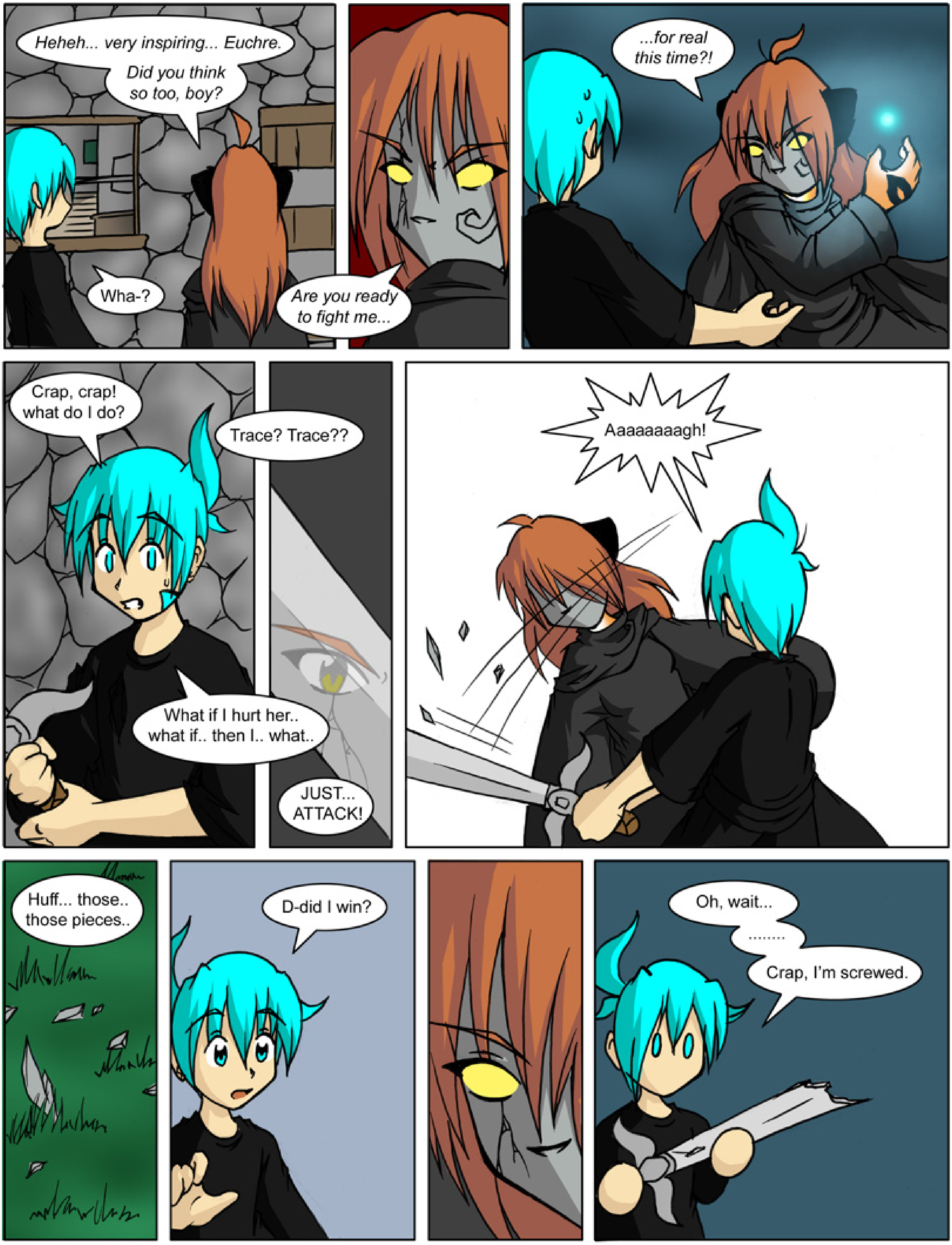

Why won't you just give up already? This would be so much simpler.
There's no use struggling! Just forget about Flora!
Agh!
Why won't you fight me? Realize your true powers! Give in to your memories!
I... I can't..
Why? I don't understand..
It's... it's because I really do care.. about Flora.
I wasn't sure before, but..
But she's just a Keidran! You could have any human female you wanted!
Or if you're into Keidran, who's going to stop you? You could have anyone!
But... I don't want a human. Or a Keidran!
Don't you get it? It's not the race that's important to me. It's just.. Flora.
Because...
...I love her.
Y-you're not supposed to say that!
I saw the future! This isn't what happens!

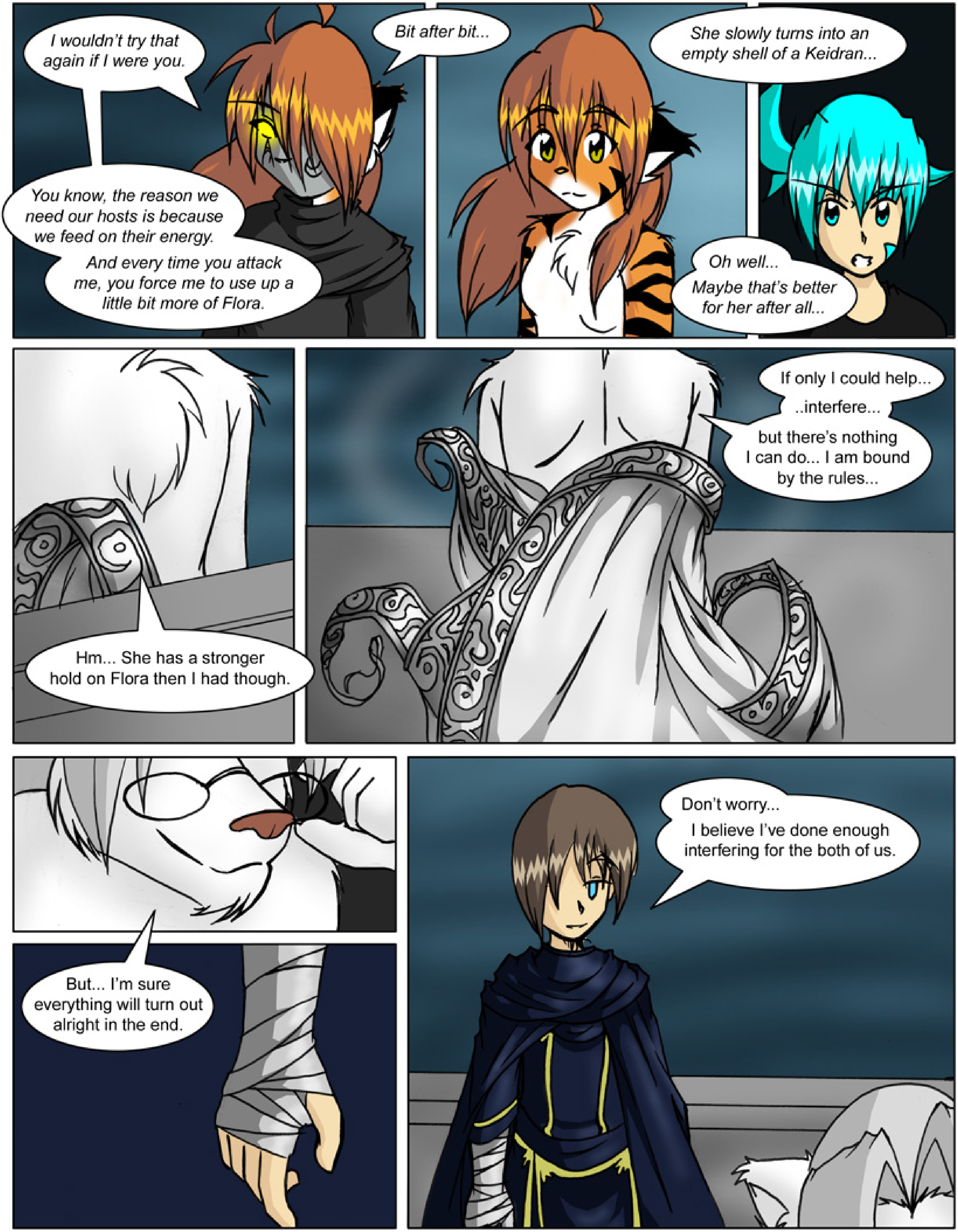

Jeez, I wish there was something for me to do around here.
I would help Trace.. but I don't think I can do much for him now.
I mean really.. a crate? Come on!
What...? Hey, it's that red-haired guy from before... can't remember his name.
What's he doing?
If I can just get close enough...
Maybe I can kill the host before she realizes I'm here...
It may be all-powerful, but without a body, it wont be able to affect us...
Hey, stay back!
WAK!
Ow! What was that for, you stupid Keidran?!
I'm not a Keidran, damn it!
But that's not the point...
You can't hurt Flora! Let Trace handle this!
Hah! Like I'm going to listen to an animal. Why should I care for the life of this "Flora"?
Grrr...
If you hurt Flora, I will kill you.

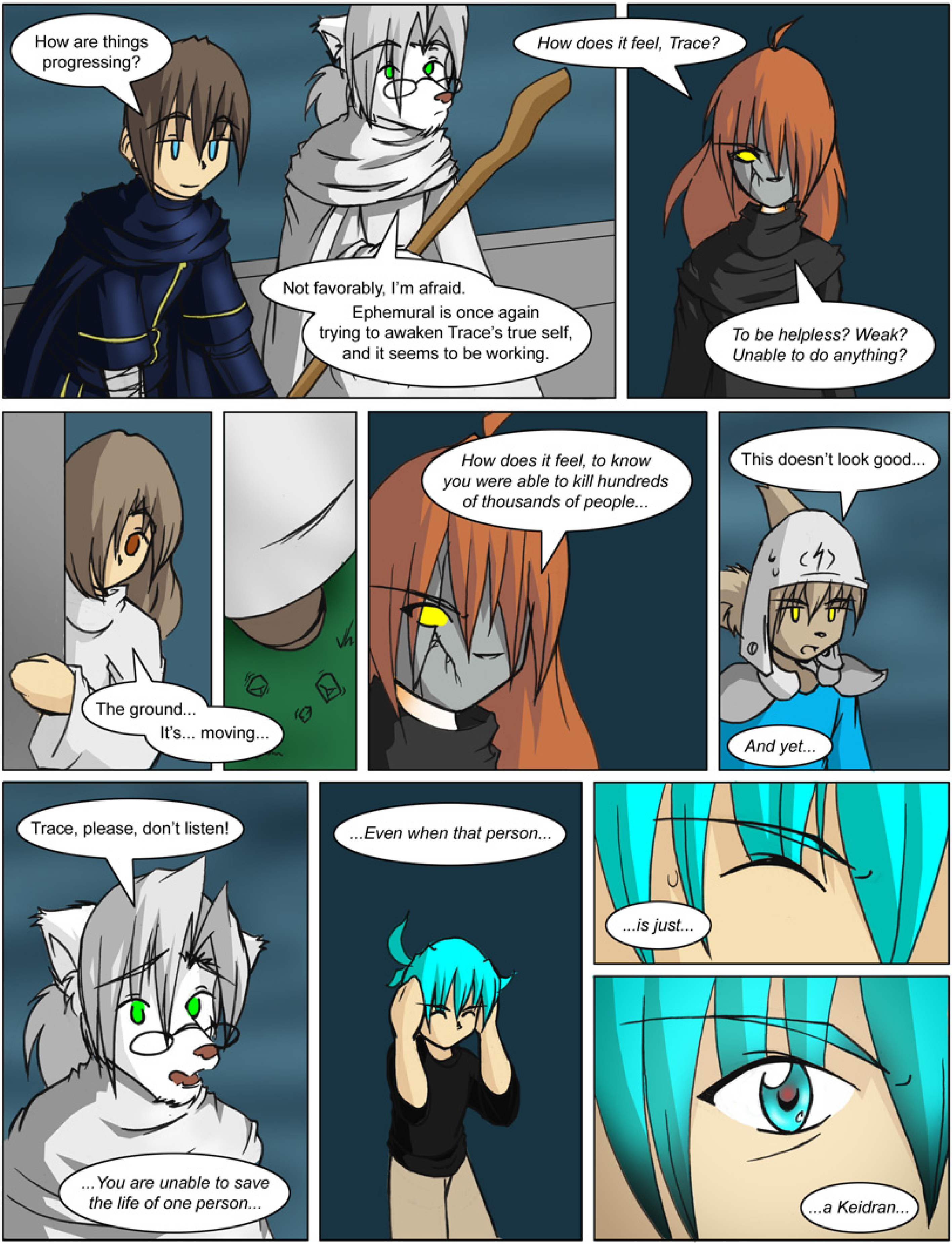

This is over.
Arg!
Even if you can admit you love her, she will never hear it while I'm here.
And that's all that matters.
My mission is done.
I will bring Flora back to her home, and seal her memories, just as I did with yours.
No, wait! You can't!
This can't be the end, can it?
Flora's memories..
Was it all for.. nothing?
Have I failed?
Trace, what are you doing? Stop her!
bonk!
What? Who is...
You're not gunna take that, are you? It took me forever to get this stuff set up!
I wanna see blood-shed!
GO TRACE!
Karen, can't you be serious for once in your life?

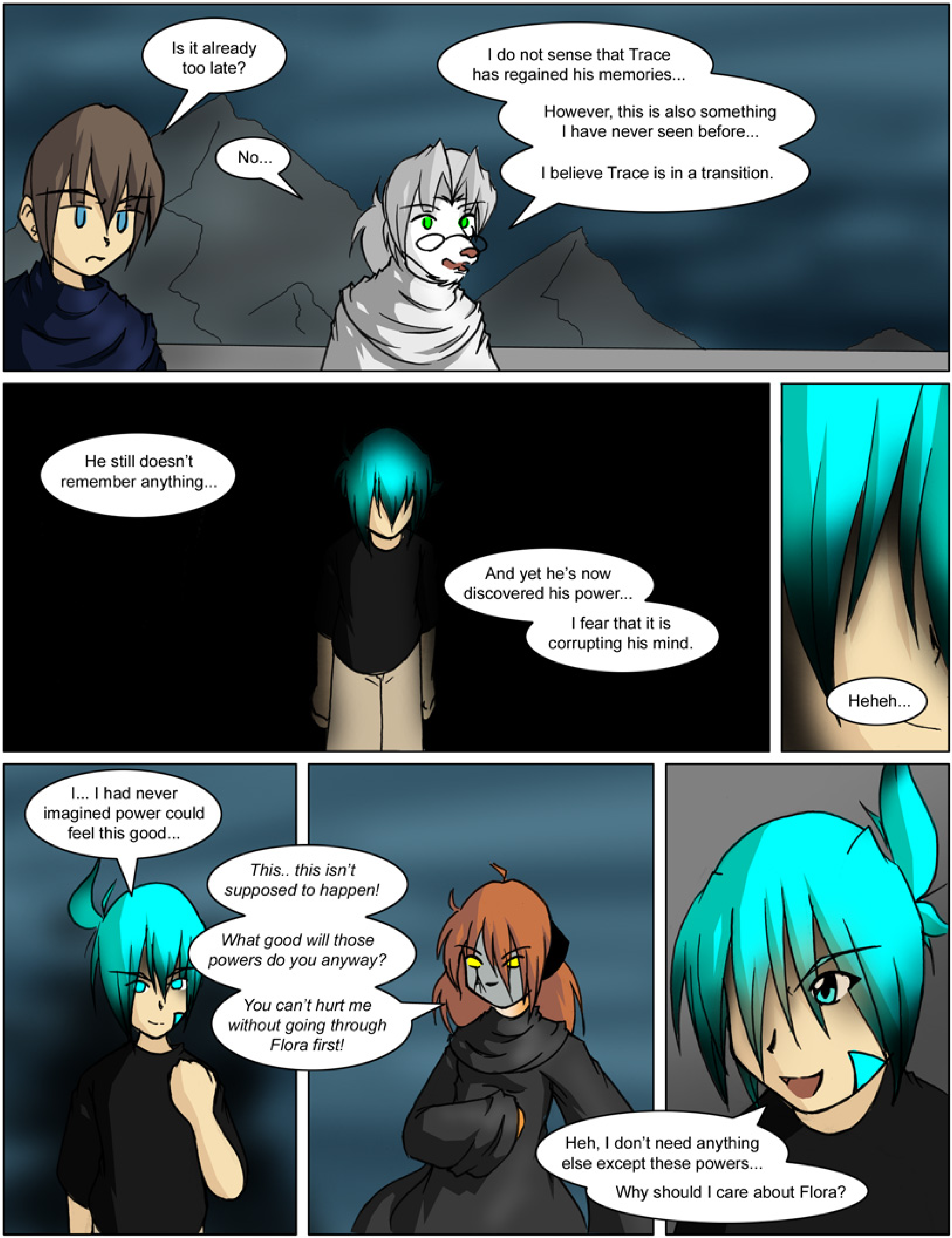

Seriously, Trace.
I don't know what's going on, entirely, but you have to do something!
But I can't...
I can't risk hurting Flora! I can barely move in any case...
Maybe you just need a little help?
It's you! Uh.. Euchre?
I'm honored you remember me.
I must say, I have to agree with this human.
What?!
But... what about Flora?
You're practically her brother!
Are you saying you would fight her too?
Me? Heck, no! I'd be killed!
Listen Trace, it's true that the masks know everything.
Past, present, and future.
But there's one thing that they cannot predict...
Who is this Keidran?
How does he know so much about us?

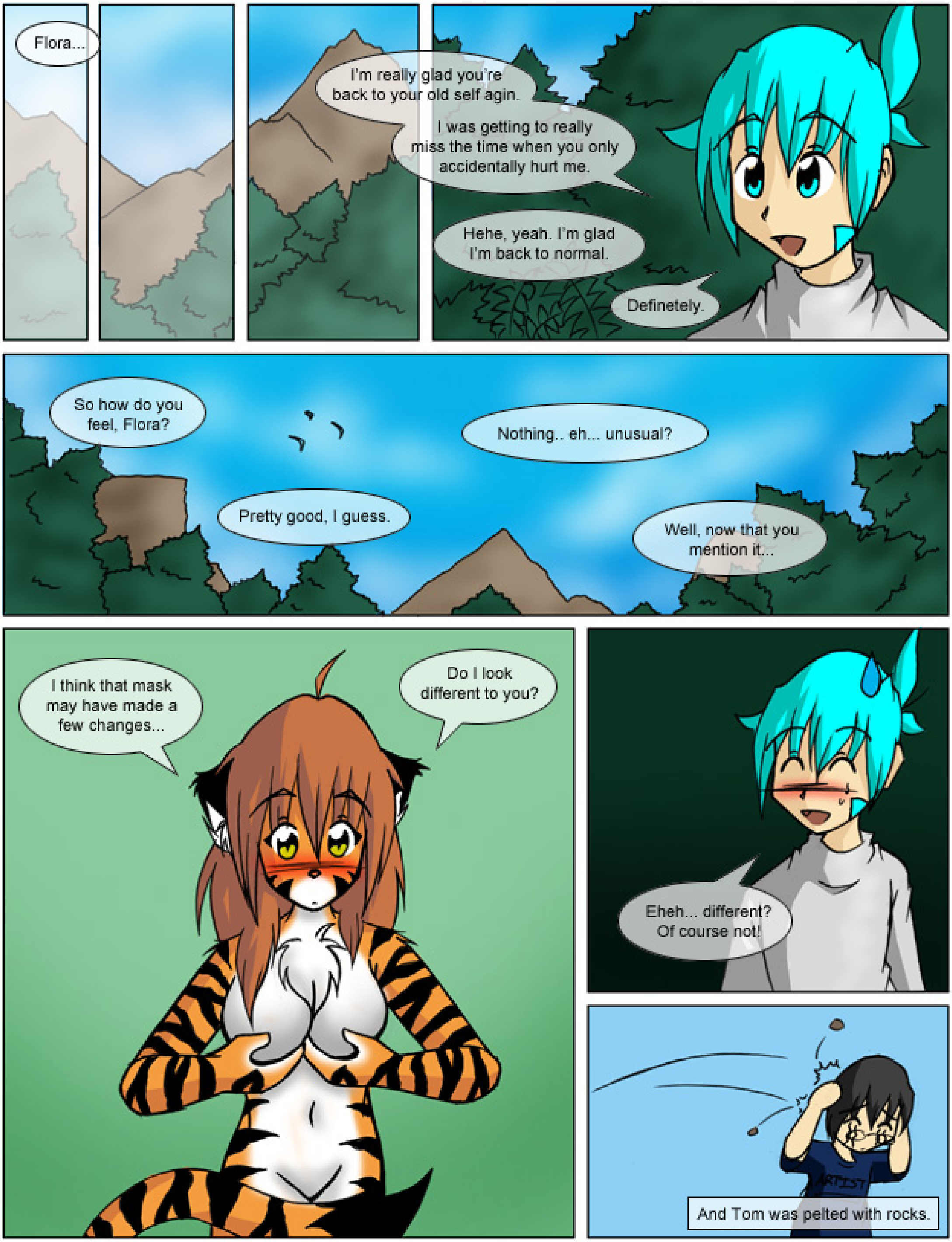

Erg...
You stay out of this!
CRASH!
Die, you mortal Kei- wait...!
What?!
Where did you...
Heheheh, looks like you're a little too slow.
Trace, listen to me.
You cannot be afraid of the power you have.
You control your powers, you cannot allow them to control you any more.
You can do great thing. And horrible things. It's all up to you, Trace.
But you have to act.
You must fight! I cannot fight her for you.
H-how dare you-!
Catch!
Ack!
Fight her, Trace.
Get Flora back!

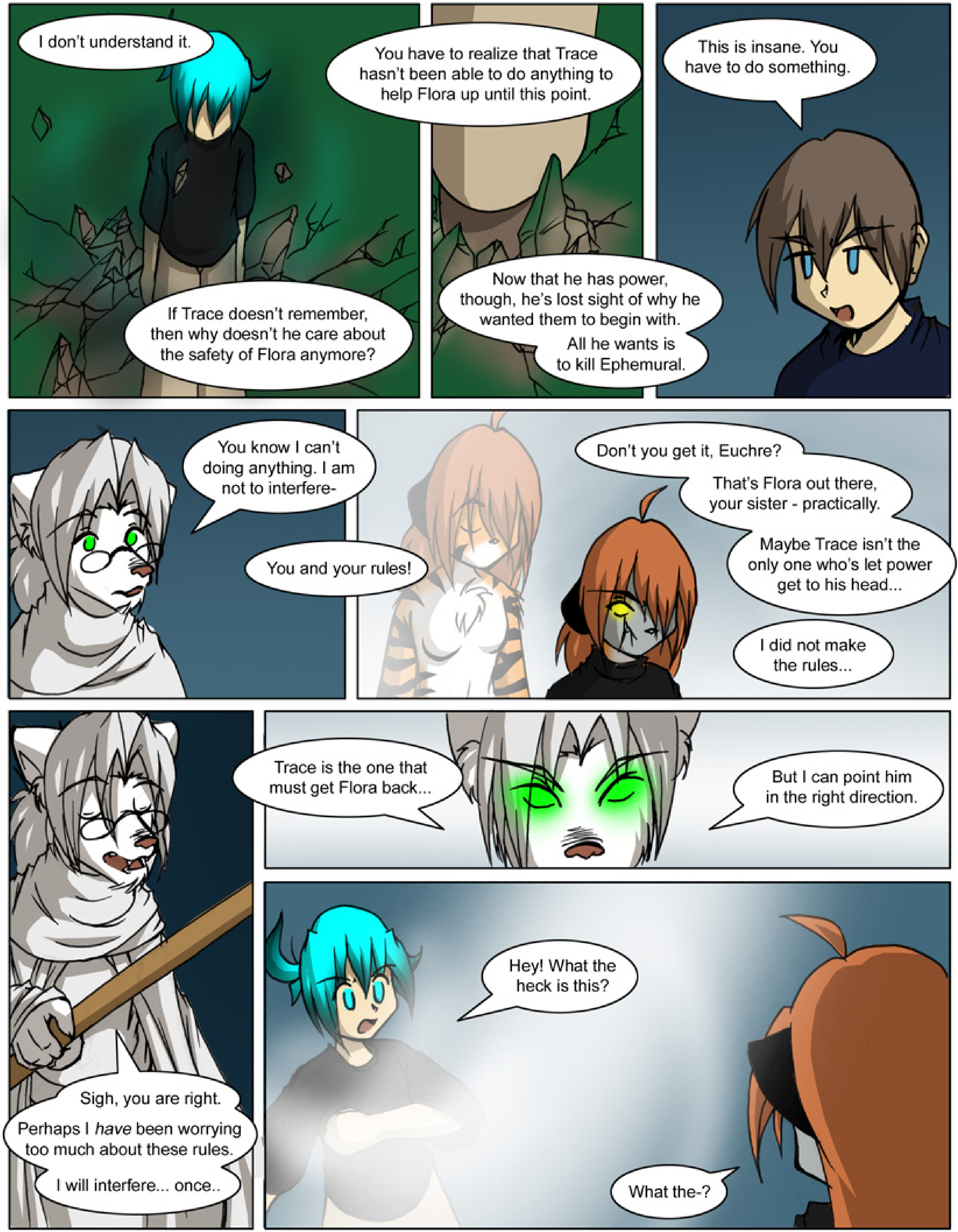

Heheh... very inspiring... Euchre.
Did you think so too, boy?
Wha-?
Are you ready to fight me...
...for real this time?!
Crap, crap! what do I do?
Trace? Trace??
What if I hurt her.. what if.. then I.. what..
JUST... ATTACK!
Aaaaaaaagh!
Huff... those.. those pieces..
D-did I win?
Oh, wait...
....
Crap, I'm screwed.

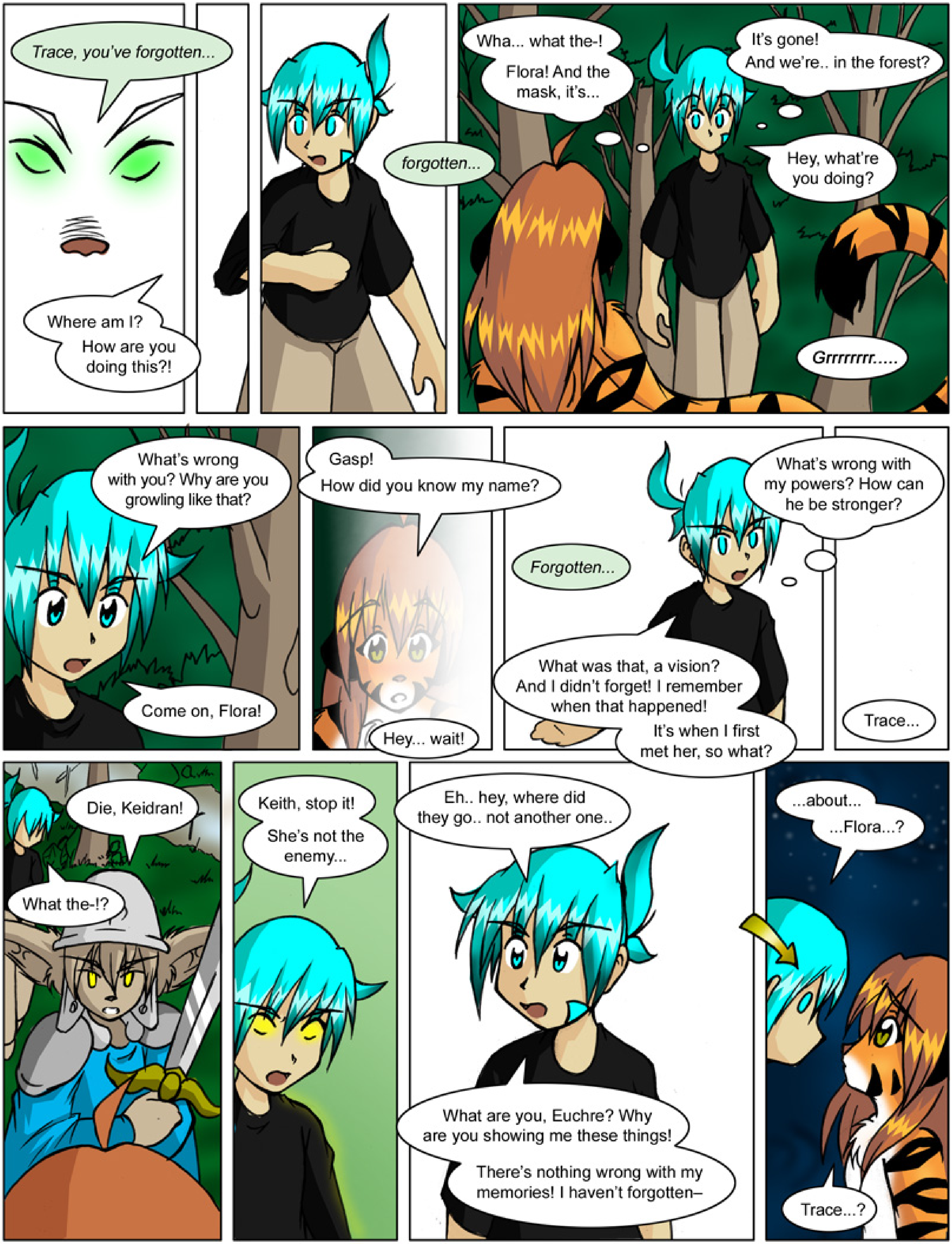

I wouldn't try that again if I were you.
You know, the reason we need our hosts is because we feed on their energy.
And every time you attack me, you force me to use up a little bit more of Flora.
Bit after bit...
She slowly turns into an empty shell of a Keidran...
Oh well... Maybe that's better for her after all...
Hm... She has a stronger hold on Flora then I had though.
If only I could help...
..interfere...
but there's nothing I can do... I am bound by the rules...
But... I'm sure everything will turn out alright in the end.
Don't worry... I believe I've done enough interfering for the both of us.

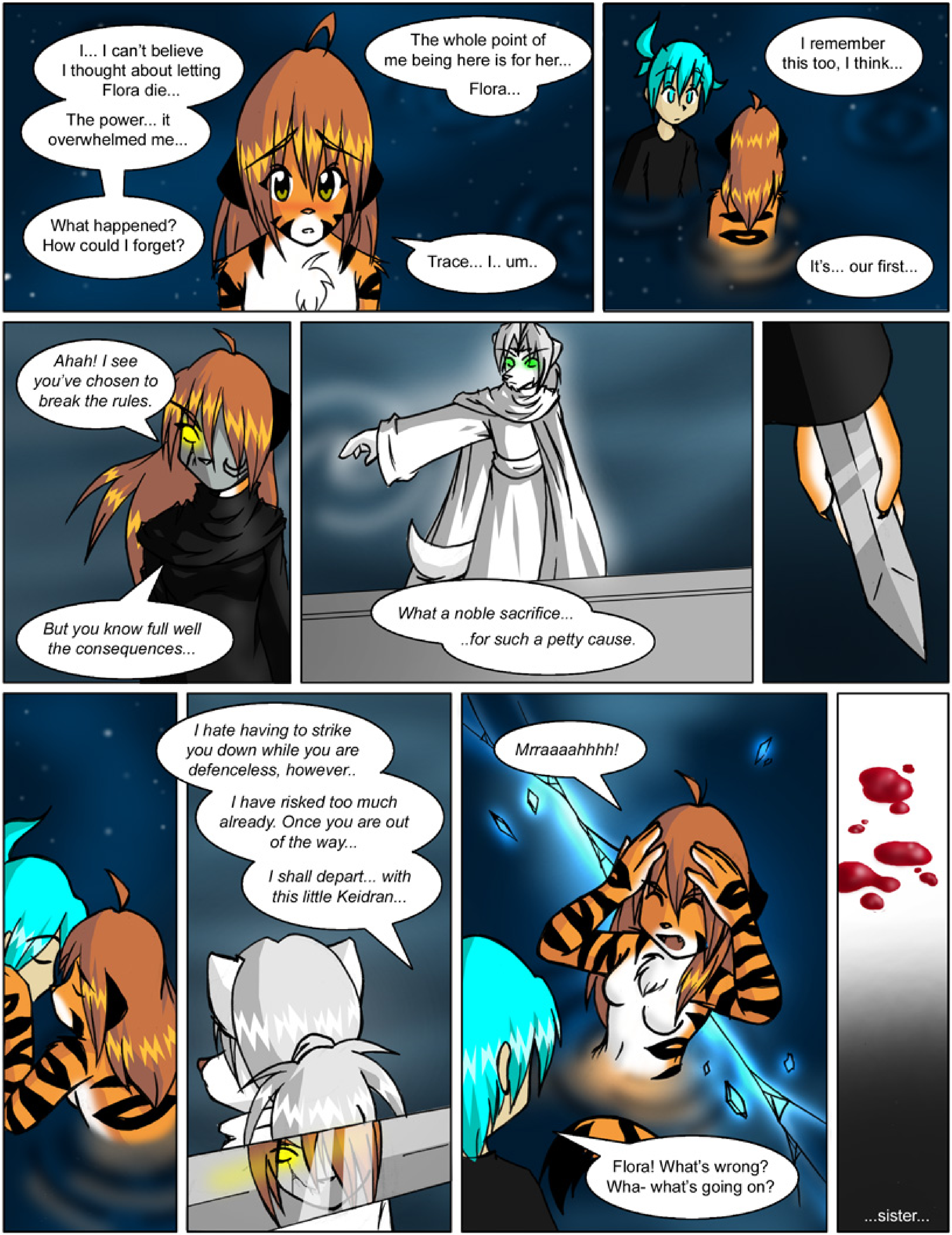

How are things progressing?
Not favorably, I'm afraid.
Ephemural is once again trying to awaken Trace's true self, and it seems to be working.
How does it feel, Trace?
To be helpless? Weak? Unable to do anything?
The ground... It's... moving...
How does it feel, to know you were able to kill hundreds of thousands of people...
This doesn't look good...
And yet...
Trace, please, don't listen!
...You are unable to save the life of one person...
...Even when that person...
...is just...
...a Keidran...


Is it already too late?
No...
I do not sense that Trace has regained his memories...
However, this is also something I have never seen before...
I believe Trace is in a transition.
He still doesn't remember anything...
And yet he's now discovered his power...
I fear that it is corrupting his mind.
Heheh...
I... I had never imagined power could feel this good...
This.. this isn't supposed to happen!
What good will those powers do you anyway?
You can't hurt me without going through Flora first!
Heh, I don't need anything else except these powers...
Why should I care about Flora?


Flora...
I'm really glad you're back to your old self agin.
I was getting to really miss the time when you only accidentally hurt me.
Hehe, yeah. I'm glad I'm back to normal.
Definetely.
So how do you feel, Flora?
Nothing.. eh... unusual?
Pretty good, I guess.
Well, now that you mention it...
I think that mask may have made a few changes...
Do I look different to you?
Eheh... different? Of course not!
ARTIST
And Tom was pelted with rocks.


I don't understand it.
If Trace doesn't remember, then why doesn't he care about the safety of Flora anymore?
You have to realize that Trace hasn't been able to do anything to help Flora up until this point.
Now that he has power, though, he's lost sight of why he wanted them to begin with.
All he wants is to kill Ephemural.
This is insane. You have to do something.
You know I can't doing anything. I am not to interfere-
You and your rules!
Don't you get it, Euchre?
That's Flora out there, your sister - practically.
Maybe Trace isn't the only one who's let power get to his head...
I did not make the rules...
Sigh, you are right.
Perhaps I *have* been worrying too much about these rules.
I will interfere... once..
Trace is the one that must get Flora back...
But I can point him in the right direction.
Hey! What the heck is this?
What the-?

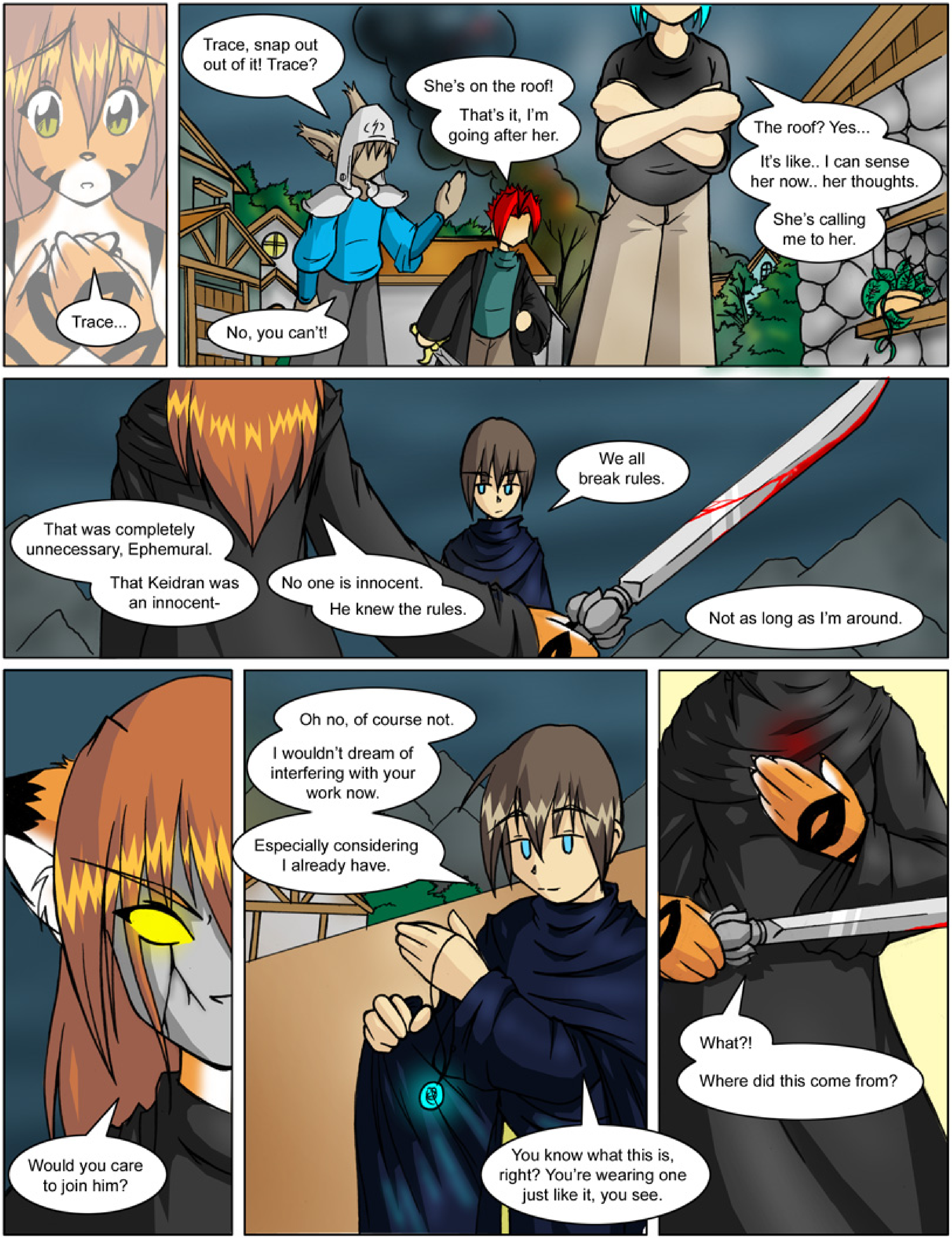

Trace, you've forgotten...
Where am I? How are you doing this?!
forgotten...
Wha... what the-! Flora! And the mask, it's...
It's gone! And we're.. in the forest?
Hey, what're you doing?
Grrrrrrrr.....
What's wrong with you? Why are you growling like that?
Come on, Flora!
Gasp! How did you know my name?
Hey... wait!
Forgotten...
What's wrong with my powers? How can he be stronger?
What was that, a vision? And I didn't forget! I remember when that happened!
It's when I first met her, so what?
Trace...
Die, Keidran!
What the-!?
Keith, stop it! She's not the enemy...
Eh.. hey, where did they go.. not another one..
What are you, Euchre? Why are you showing me these things!
There's nothing wrong with my memories! I haven't forgotten–
...about... ...Flora...?
Trace...?

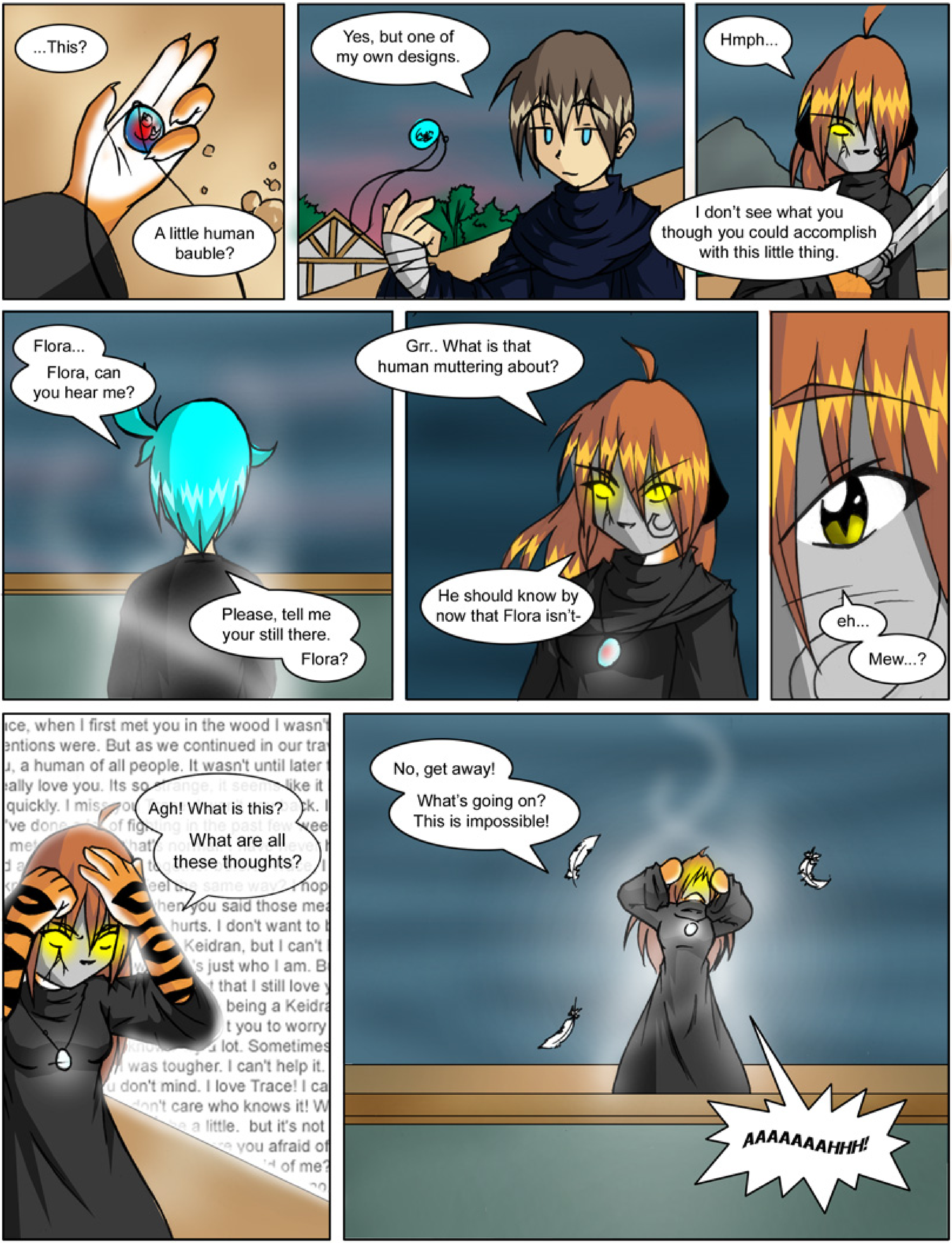

I... I can't believe I thought about letting Flora die...
The power... it overwhelmed me...
What happened? How could I forget?
The whole point of me being here is for her...
Flora...
Trace... I.. um..
I remember this too, I think...
It's... our first...
Ahah! I see you've chosen to break the rules.
But you know full well the consequences...
What a noble sacrifice...
..for such a petty cause.
I hate having to strike you down while you are defenceless, however..
I have risked too much already. Once you are out of the way...
I shall depart... with this little Keidran...
Mrraaaahhhh!
Flora! What's wrong? Wha- what's going on?
...sister...

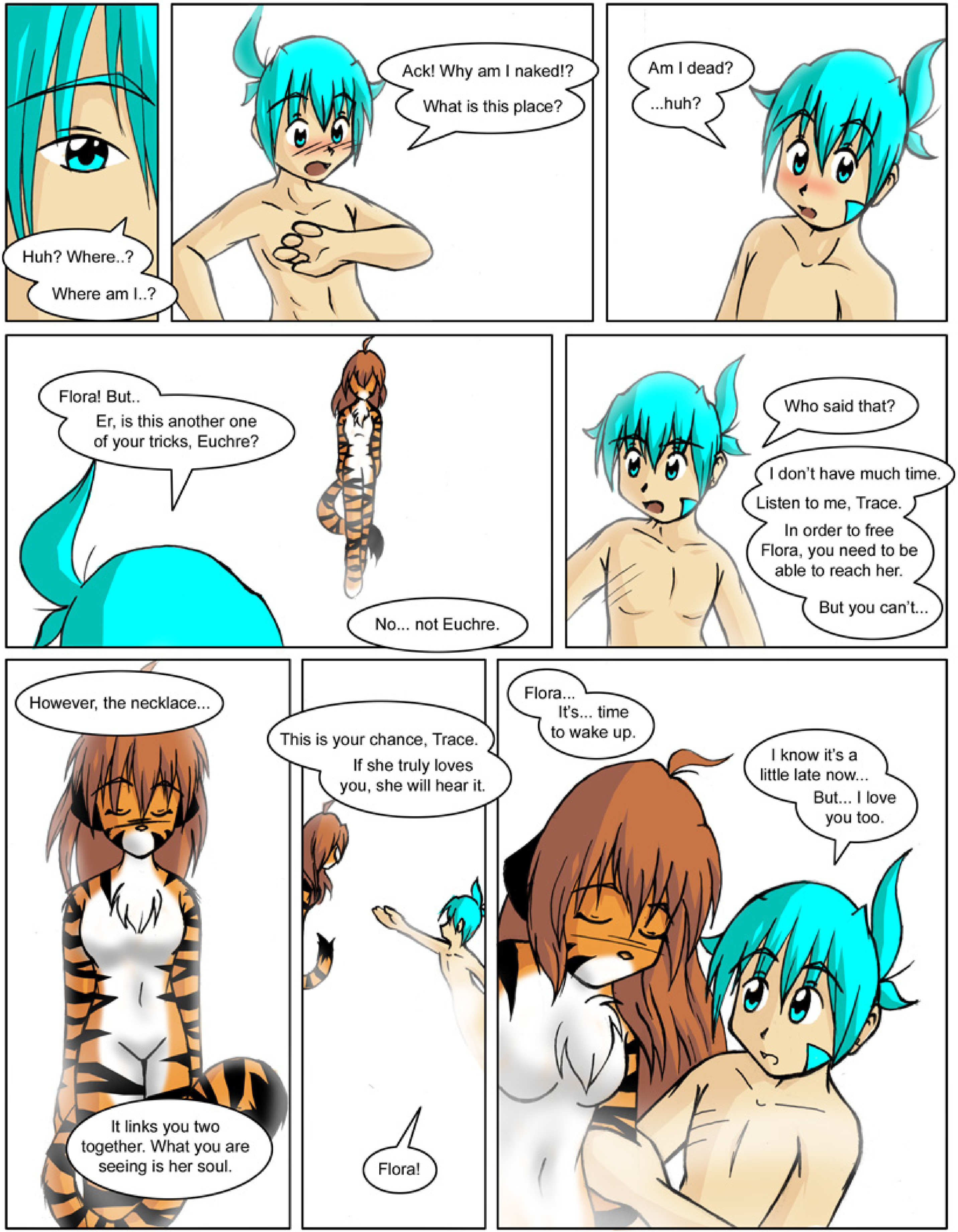
I would like to take a moment to apologies once again for the lack of update for today, as well as explain the reasoning behind the currently unfaithful schedule. For the past week, I have been a host to a German student visiting the United States through a student exchange program. Due to the busy schedule placed upon us by the school, I have had little time to do much of anything else. I am sincerely sorry for this inconvenience, and will strive to stay on schedule for the rest of this month.

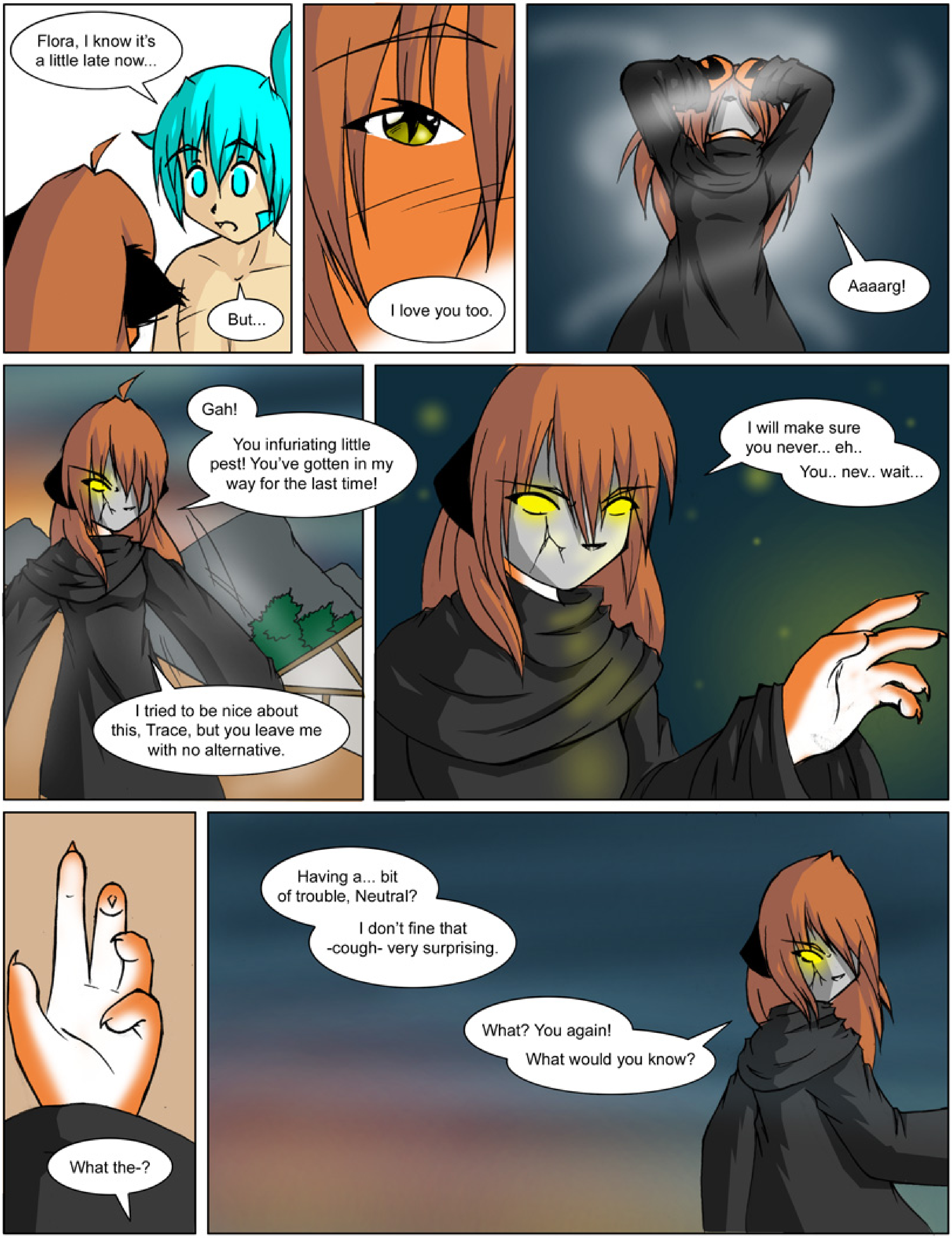
Please have patience, today's comic will be put up on Wednesday.

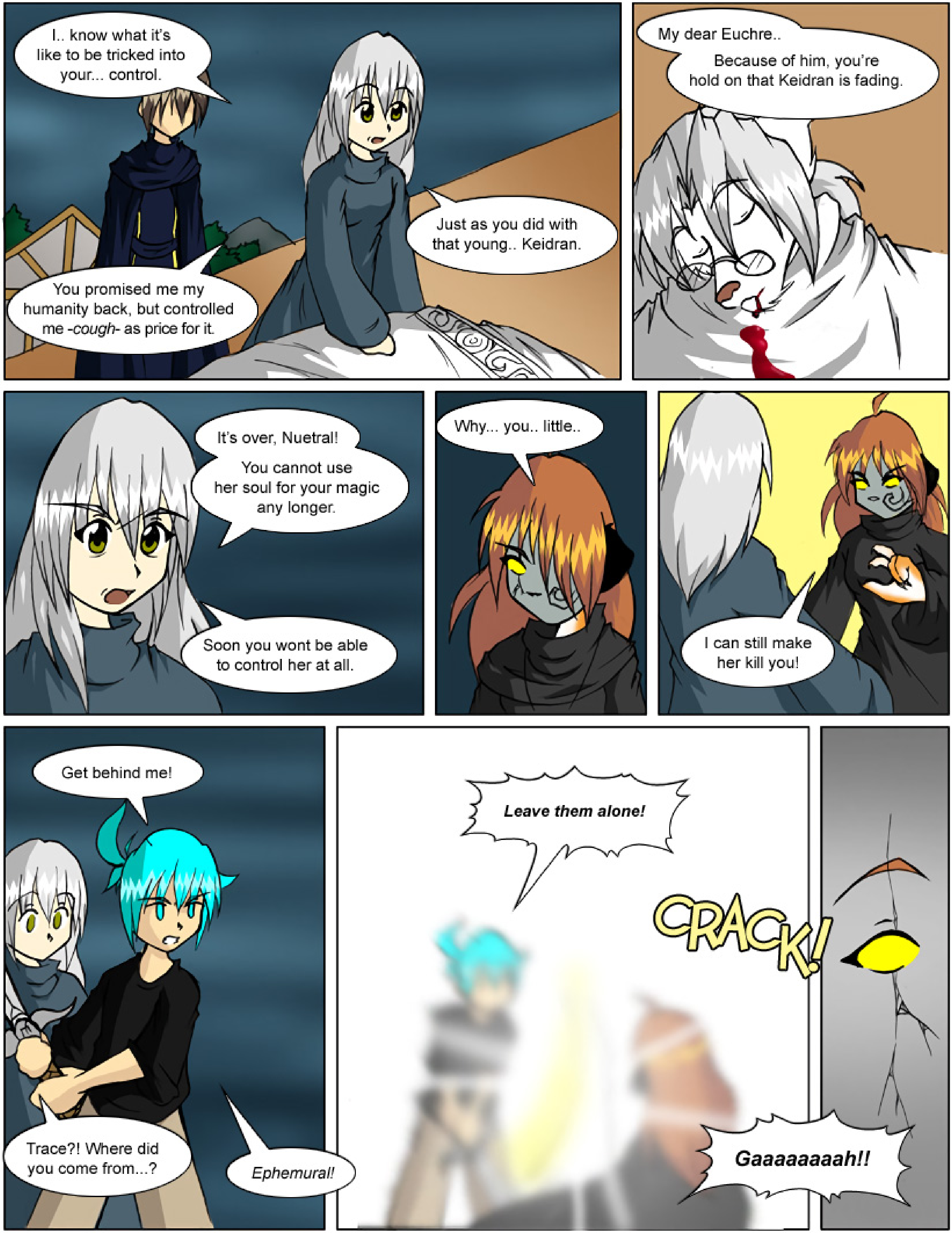
BE
RIGHT
BACK!
-TOM

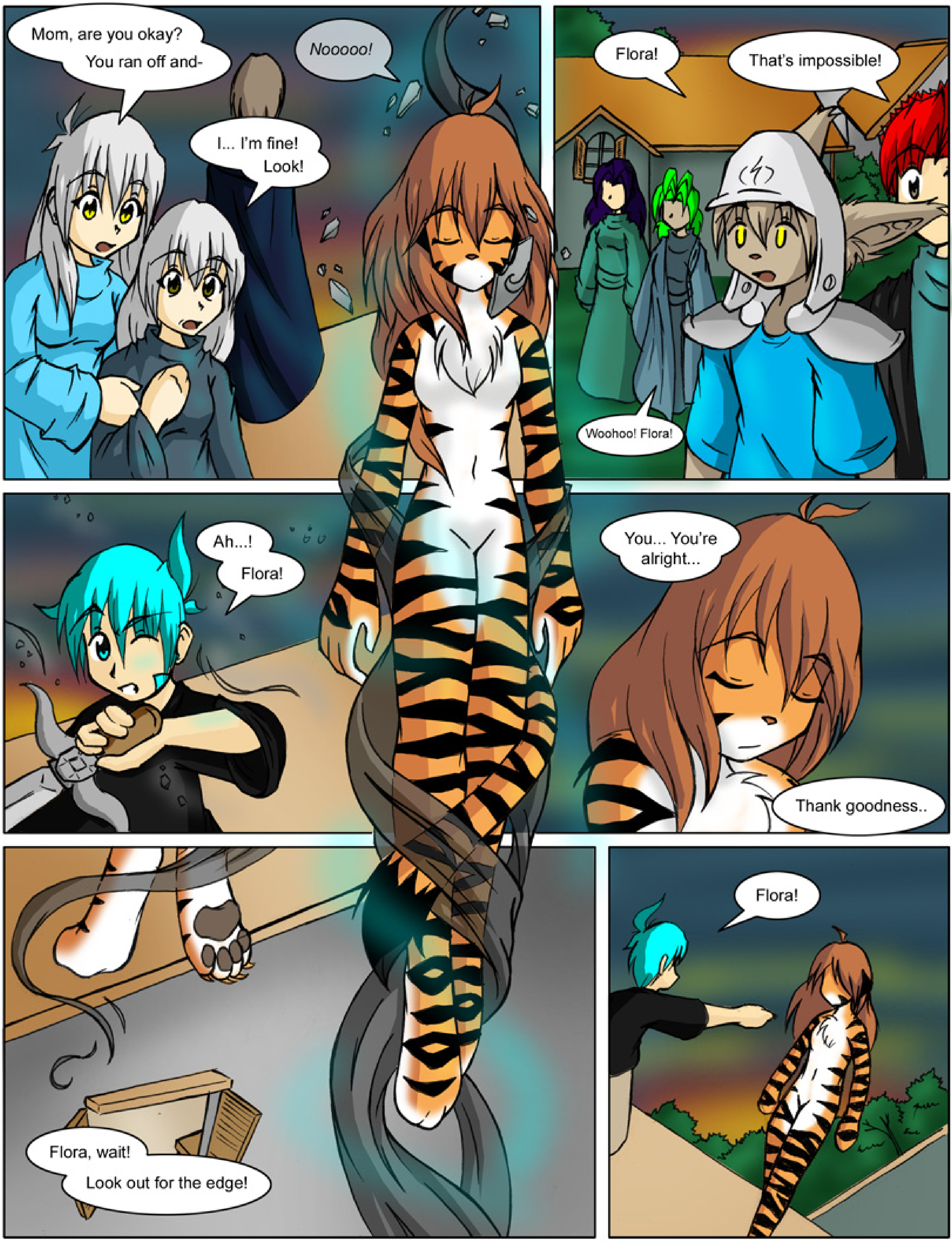

Trace...
Trace, snap out out of it! Trace?
She's on the roof!
That's it, I'm going after her.
No, you can't!
The roof? Yes...
It's like.. I can sense her now.. her thoughts.
She's calling me to her.
That was completely unnecessary, Ephemural.
That Keidran was an innocent-
No one is innocent.
He knew the rules.
We all break rules.
Not as long as I'm around.
Would you care to join him?
Oh no, of course not.
I wouldn't dream of interfering with your work now.
Especially considering I already have.
You know what this is, right? You're wearing one just like it, you see.
What?!
Where did this come from?

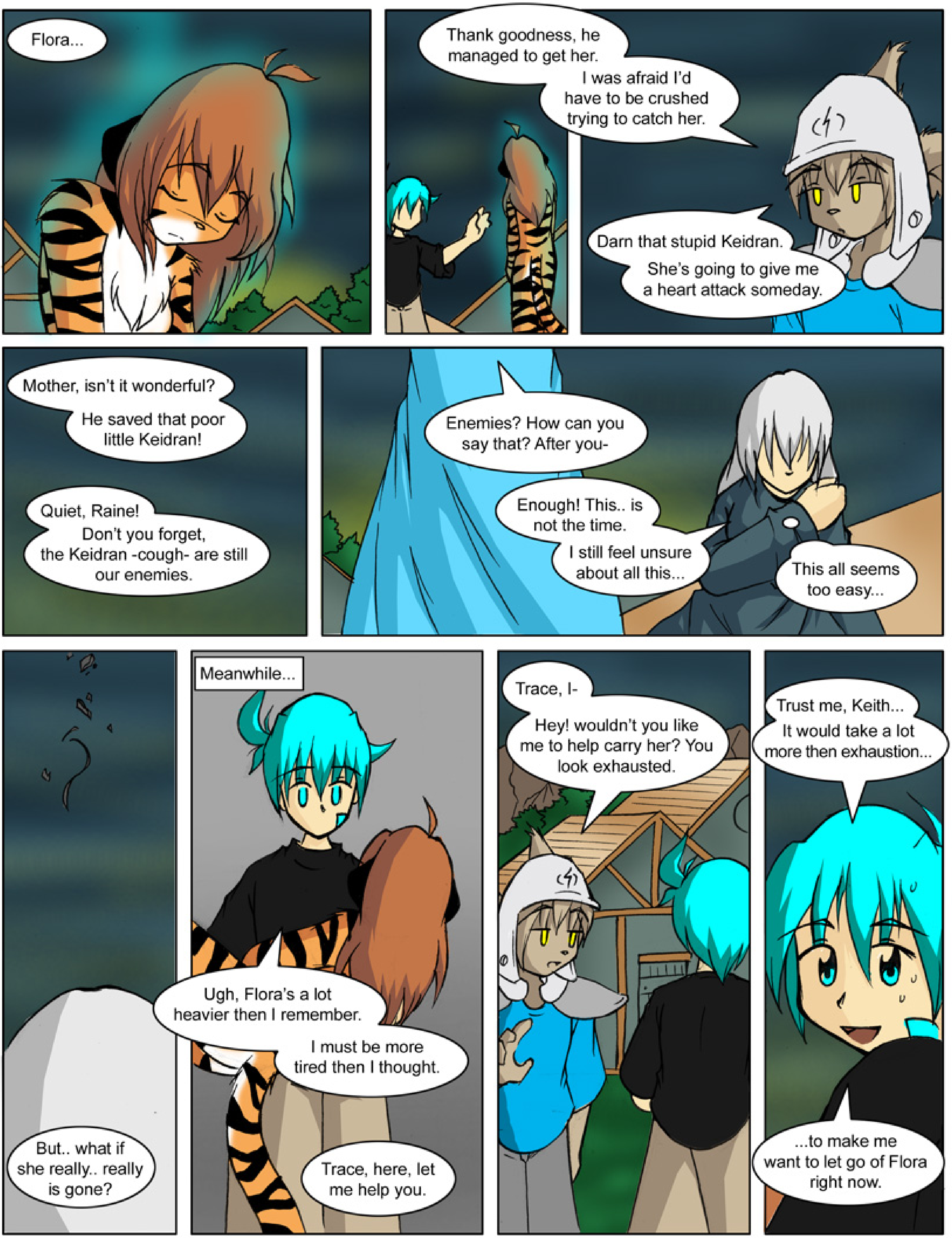

...This?
A little human bauble?
Yes, but one of my own designs.
Hmph...
I don't see what you though you could accomplish with this little thing.
Flora...
Flora, can you hear me?
Please, tell me your still there.
Flora?
Grr.. What is that human muttering about?
He should know by now that Flora isn't-
eh...
Mew...?
ice, when I first met you in the wood I wasn't
entions were. But as we continued in our tra
u, a human of all people. It wasn't until later
eally love you. Its so strange, it seems like it
quickly. I miss you.
hurts. I don't want to b
Keidran, but I can't
's just who I am. B
t that I still love y
being a Keidra
t you to worry
lot. Sometimes
was tougher. I can't help it.
u don't mind. I love Trace! I ca
don't care who knows it! W
a little. but it's not
re you afraid of
of me?
Agh! What is this?
What are all these thoughts?
No, get away!
What's going on? This is impossible!
AAAAAAAHHH!

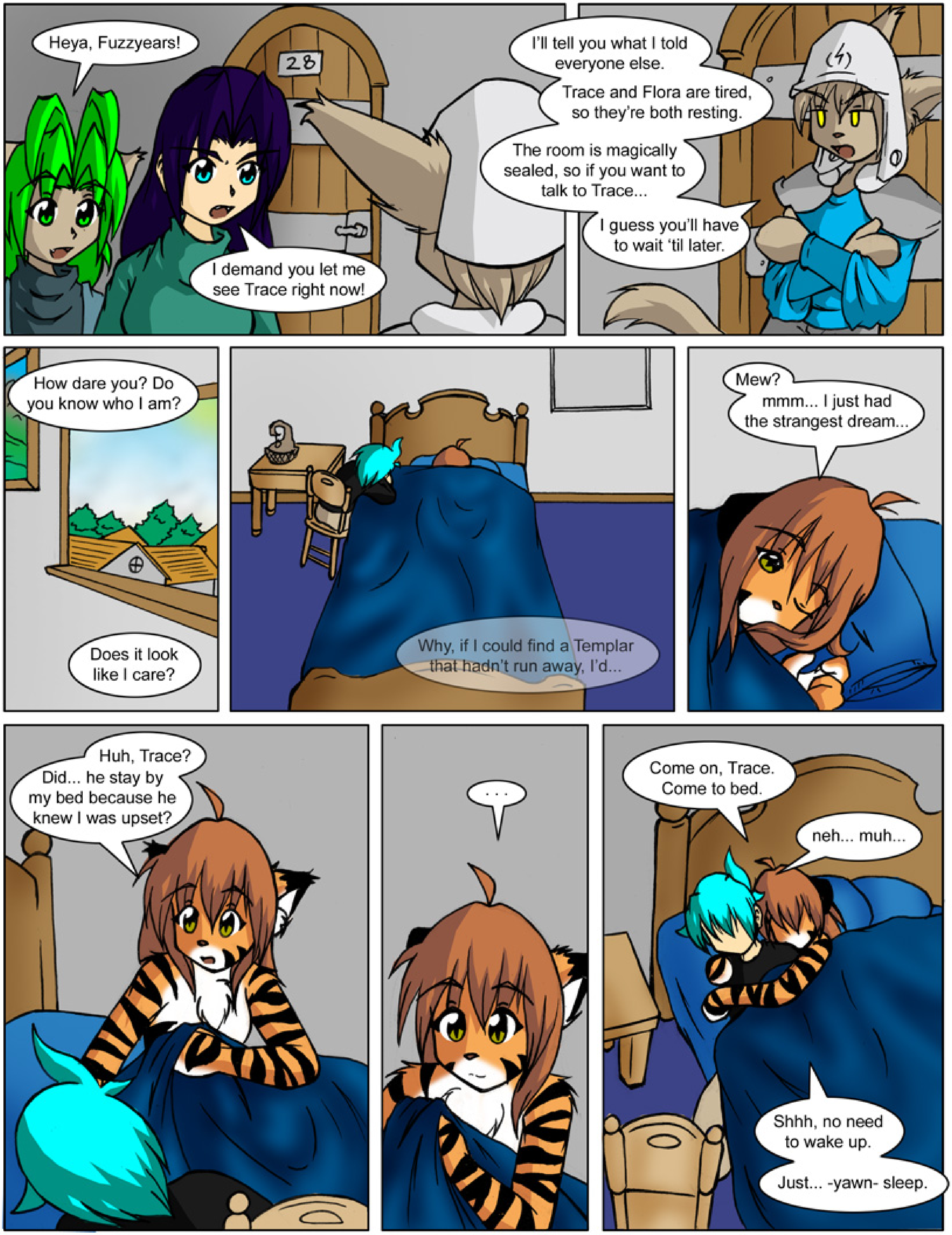

Huh? Where..?
Where am I..?
Ack! Why am I naked!?
What is this place?
Am I dead?
...huh?
Flora! But..
Er, is this another one of your tricks, Euchre?
No... not Euchre.
Who said that?
I don't have much time.
Listen to me, Trace.
In order to free Flora, you need to be able to reach her.
But you can't...
However, the necklace...
It links you two together. What you are seeing is her soul.
This is your chance, Trace.
If she truly loves you, she will hear it.
Flora!
Flora...
It's... time to wake up.
I know it's a little late now...
But... I love you too.

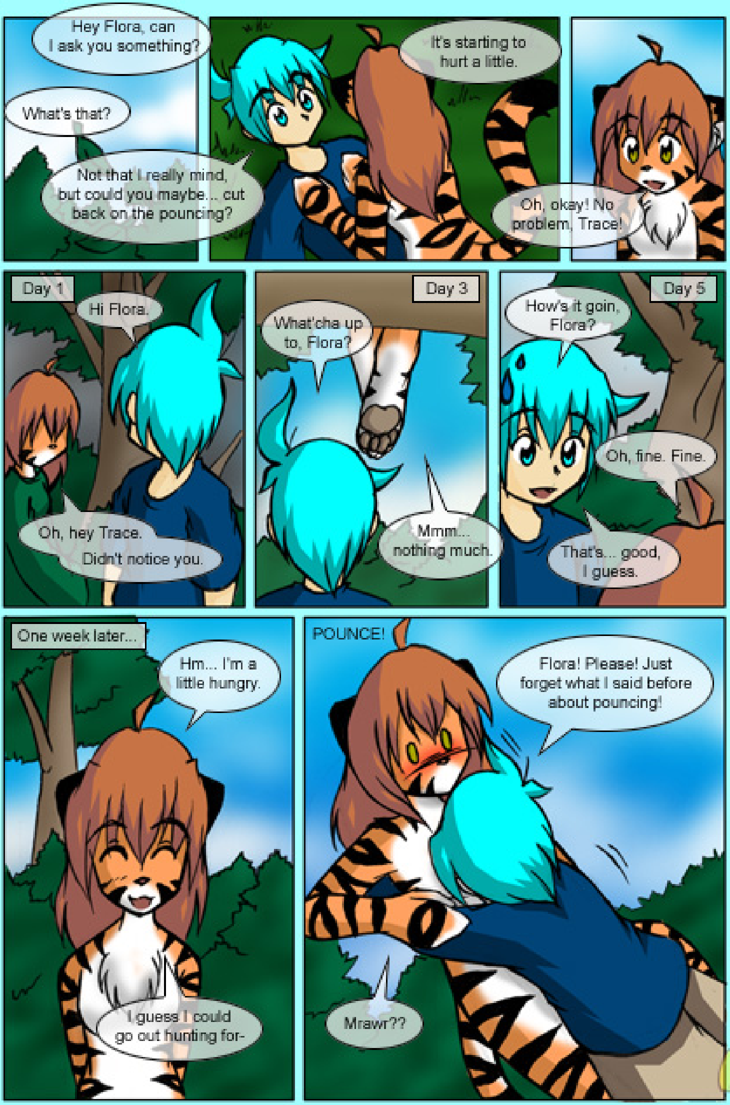

Flora, I know it's a little late now...
But...
I love you too.
Aaaarg!
Gah!
You infuriating little pest! You've gotten in my way for the last time!
I tried to be nice about this, Trace, but you leave me with no alternative.
I will make sure you never... eh..
You.. nev.. wait...
What the-?
Having a... bit of trouble, Neutral?
I don't fine that -cough- very surprising.
What? You again!
What would you know?

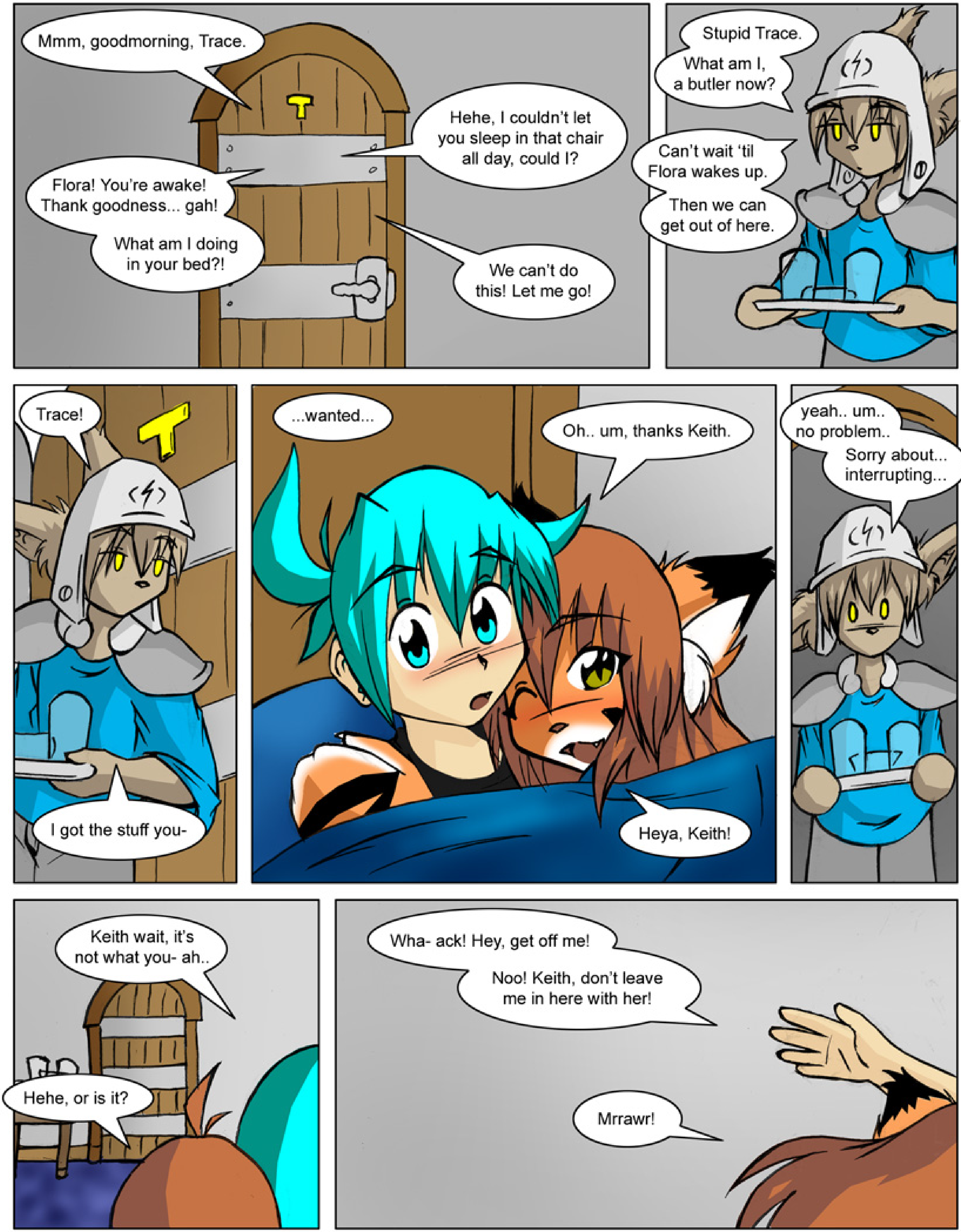

I.. know what it's like to be tricked into your... control.
You promised me my humanity back, but controlled me -*cough*- as price for it.
Just as you did with that young.. Keidran.
My dear Euchre..
Because of him, you're hold on that Keidran is fading.
It's over, Nuetral!
You cannot use her soul for your magic any longer.
Soon you wont be able to control her at all.
Why... you.. little..
I can still make her kill you!
Get behind me!
Trace?! Where did you come from...?
Ephemural!
Leave them alone!
CRACK!
Gaaaaaaaah!!

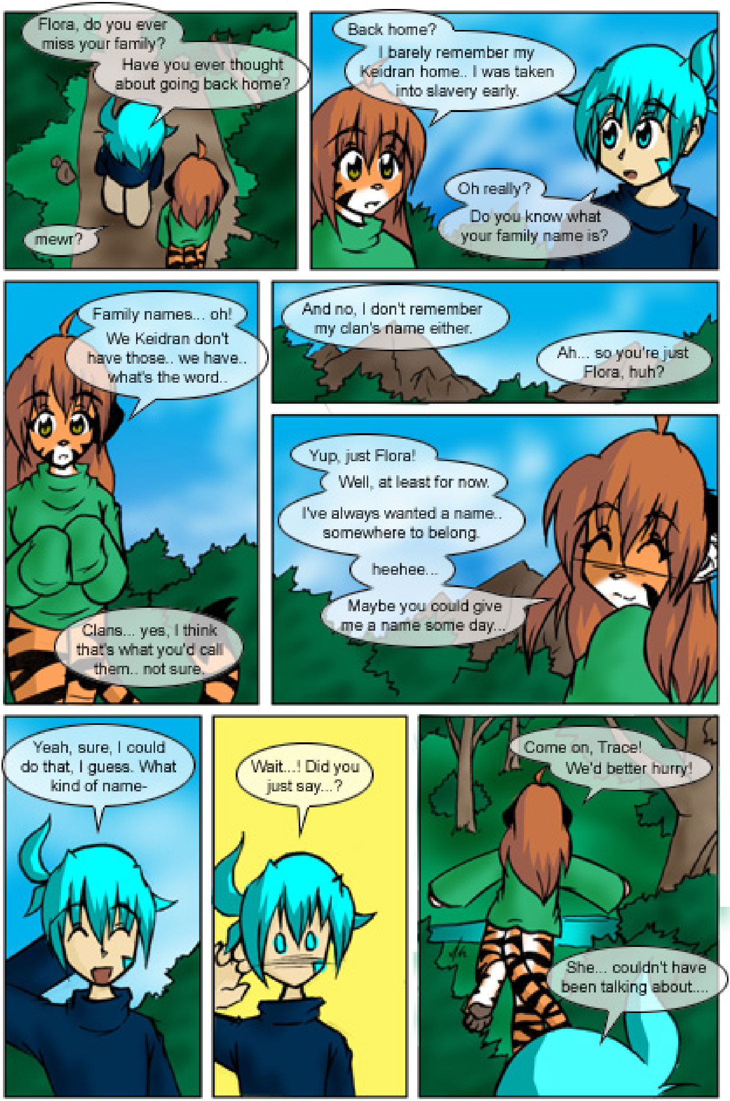

Mom, are you okay?
You ran off and-
Nooooo!
I... I'm fine!
Look!
Flora!
That's impossible!
Woohoo! Flora!
Ah...!
Flora!
You... You're alright...
Thank goodness..
Flora, wait!
Look out for the edge!
Flora!

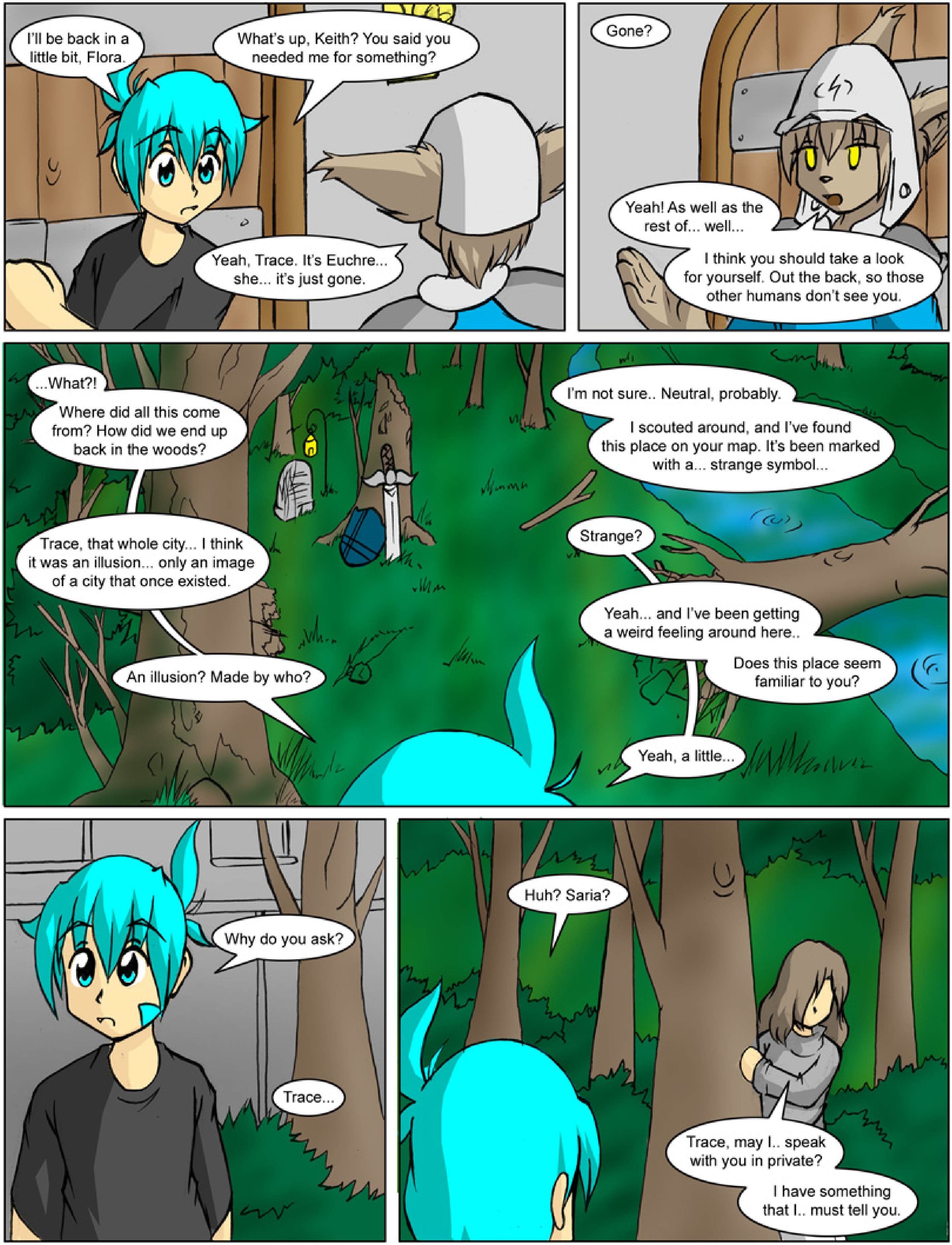

Flora...
Thank goodness, he managed to get her.
I was afraid I'd have to be crushed trying to catch her.
Darn that stupid Keidran.
She's going to give me a heart attack someday.
Mother, isn't it wonderful?
He saved that poor little Keidran!
Quiet, Raine!
Don't you forget, the Keidran -cough- are still our enemies.
Enemies? How can you say that? After you-
Enough! This.. is not the time.
I still feel unsure about all this...
This all seems too easy...
But.. what if she really.. really is gone?
Meanwhile...
Ugh, Flora's a lot heavier then I remember.
I must be more tired then I thought.
Trace, here, let me help you.
Trace, I-
Hey! wouldn't you like me to help carry her? You look exhausted.
Trust me, Keith...
It would take a lot more then exhaustion...
...to make me want to let go of Flora right now.

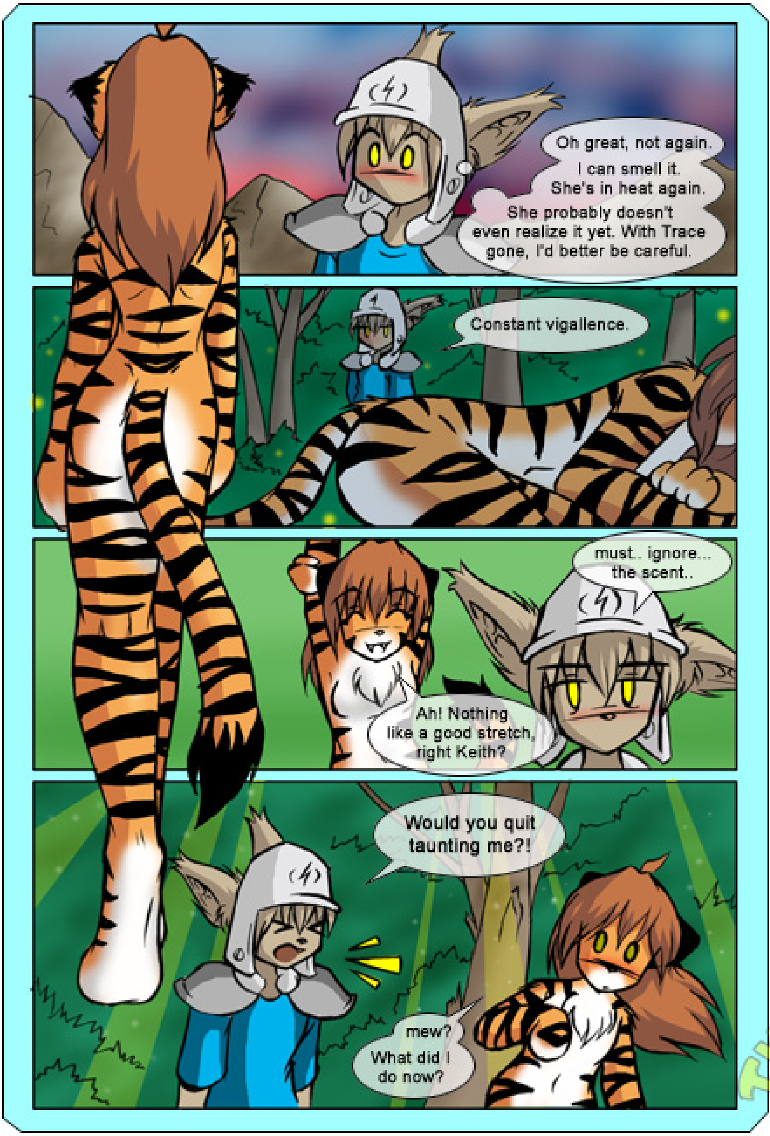

Heya, Fuzzyears!
I demand you let me see Trace right now!
28
I'll tell you what I told everyone else.
Trace and Flora are tired, so they're both resting.
The room is magically sealed, so if you want to talk to Trace...
I guess you'll have to wait 'til later.
How dare you? Do you know who I am?
Does it look like I care?
Why, if I could find a Templar that hadn't run away, I'd...
Mew? mmm... I just had the strangest dream...
Huh, Trace? Did... he stay by my bed because he knew I was upset?
. . .
Come on, Trace. Come to bed.
neh... muh...
Shhh, no need to wake up.
Just... -yawn- sleep.

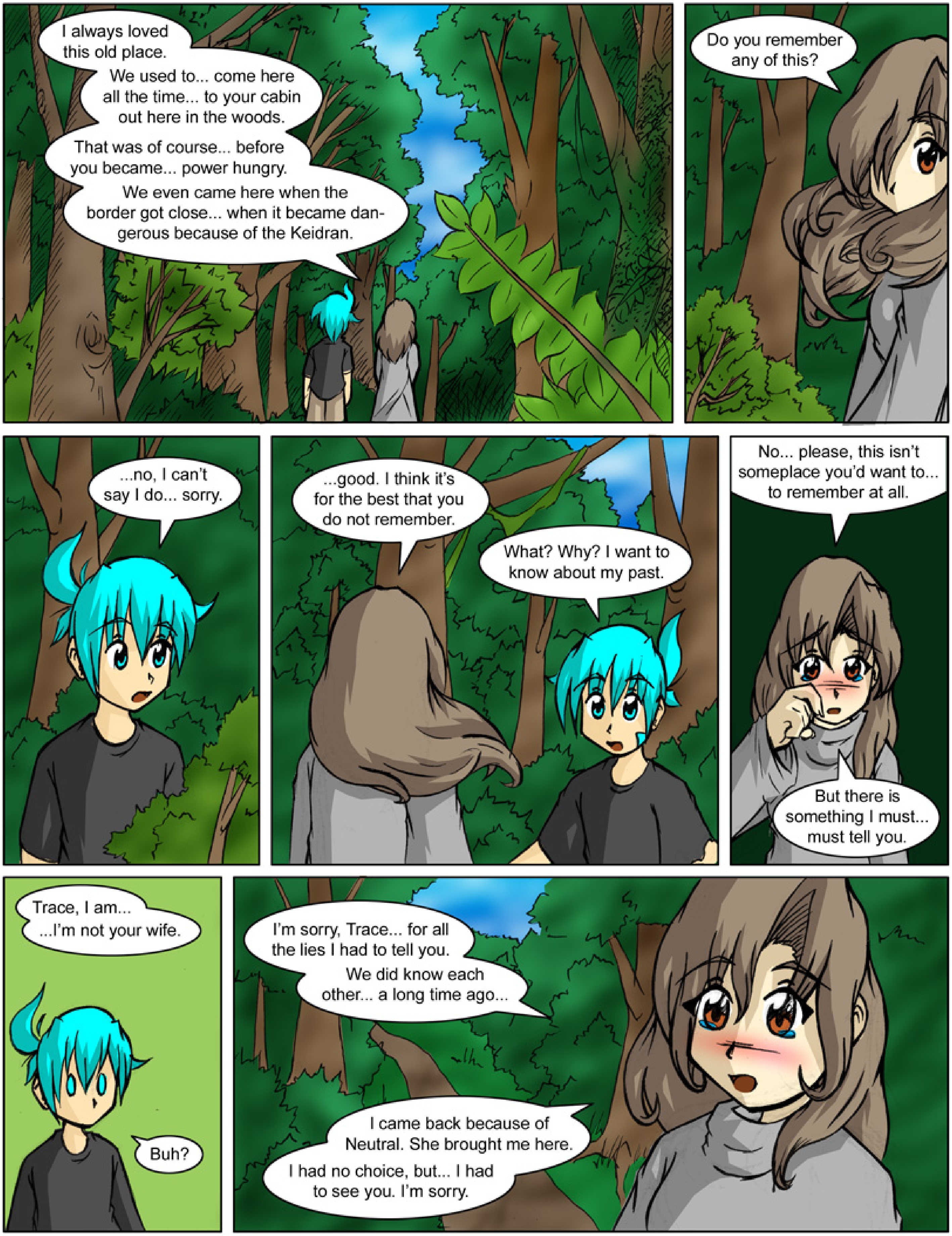

Hey Flora, can I ask you something?
What's that?
Not that I really mind, but could you maybe... cut back on the pouncing?
It's starting to hurt a little.
Oh, okay! No problem, Trace!
Day 1
Hi Flora.
Oh, hey Trace.
Didn't notice you.
Day 3
What'cha up to, Flora?
Mmm... nothing much.
Day 5
How's it goin, Flora?
Oh, fine. Fine.
That's... good, I guess.
One week later...
Hm... I'm a little hungry.
I guess I could go out hunting for-
POUNCE!
Flora! Please! Just forget what I said before about pouncing!
Mrawr??

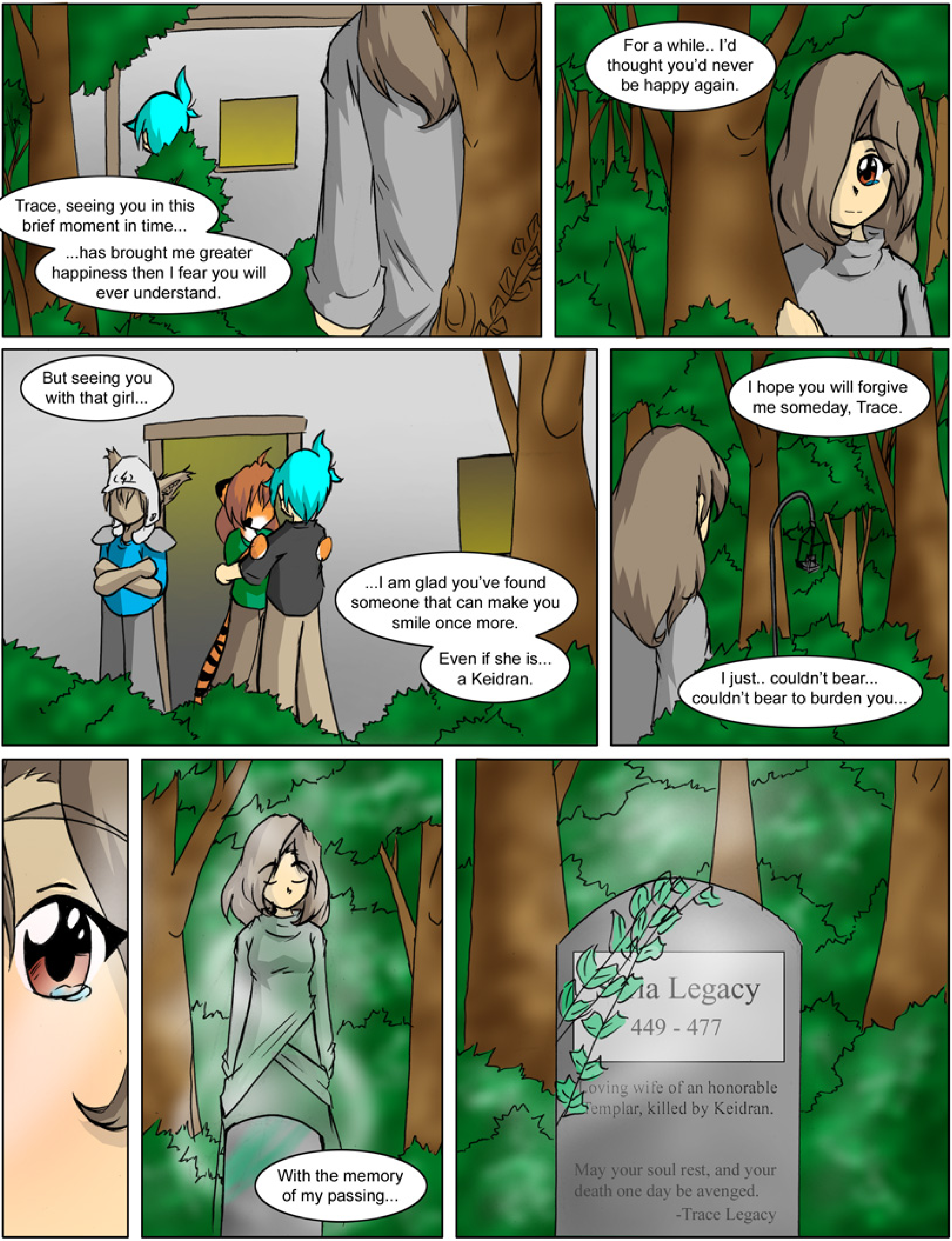

Mmm, goodmorning, Trace.
Hehe, I couldn't let you sleep in that chair all day, could I?
Flora! You're awake! Thank goodness... gah!
What am I doing in your bed?!
We can't do this! Let me go!
Stupid Trace.
What am I, a butler now?
Can't wait 'til Flora wakes up.
Then we can get out of here.
Trace!
I got the stuff you-
...wanted...
Oh.. um, thanks Keith.
Heya, Keith!
yeah.. um.. no problem..
Sorry about... interrupting...
Keith wait, it's not what you- ah..
Hehe, or is it?
Wha- ack! Hey, get off me!
Noo! Keith, don't leave me in here with her!
Mrrawr!

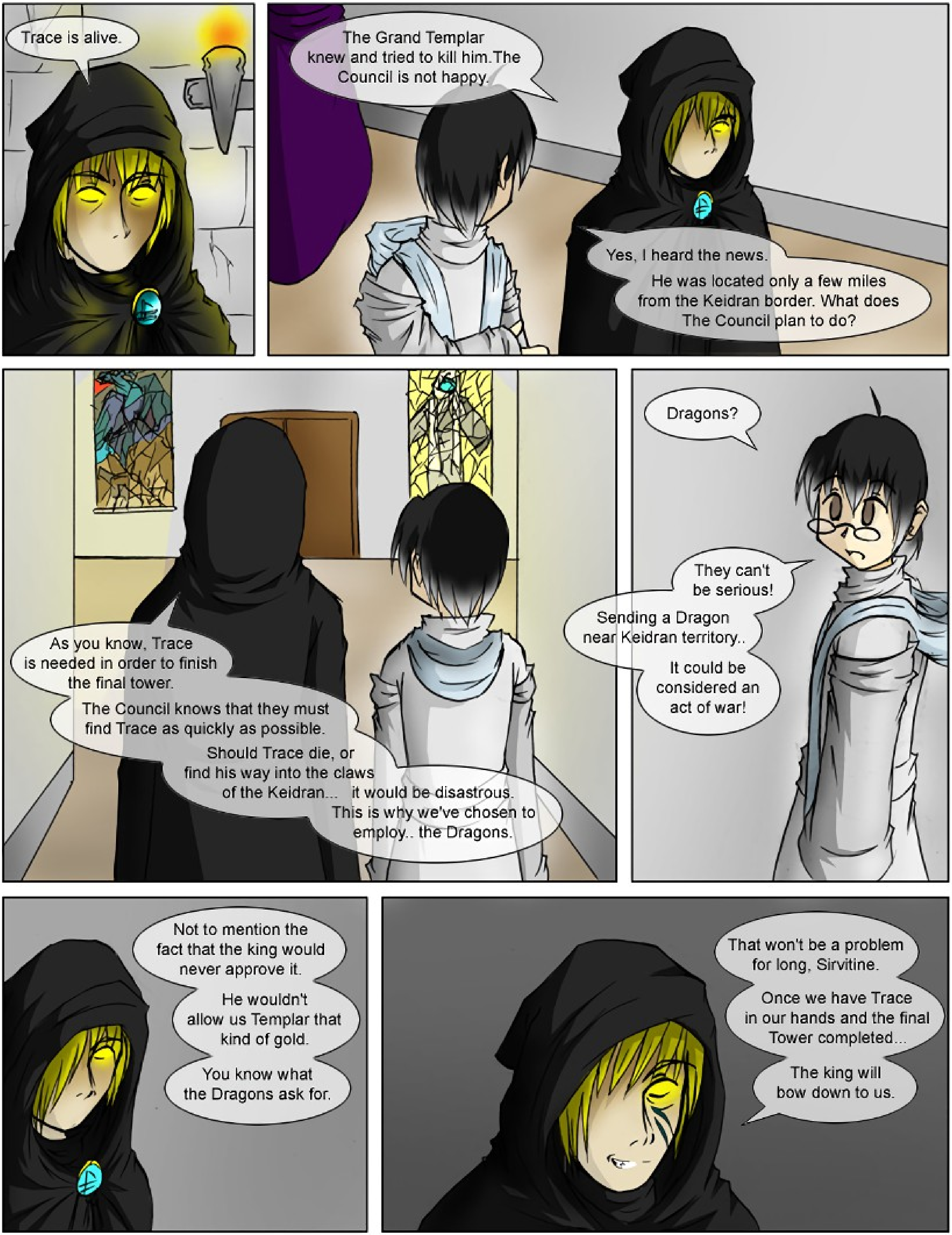

Flora, do you ever miss your family?
Have you ever thought about going back home?
mewr?
Back home?
I barely remember my Keidran home.. I was taken into slavery early.
Oh really?
Do you know what your family name is?
Family names... oh!
We Keidran don't have those.. we have.. what's the word..
Clans... yes, I think that's what you'd call them.. not sure.
And no, I don't remember my clan's name either.
Ah... so you're just Flora, huh?
Yup, just Flora!
Well, at least for now.
I've always wanted a name.. somewhere to belong.
heehee...
Maybe you could give me a name some day...
Yeah, sure, I could do that, I guess. What kind of name-
Wait...! Did you just say...?
Come on, Trace! We'd better hurry!
She... couldn't have been talking about....

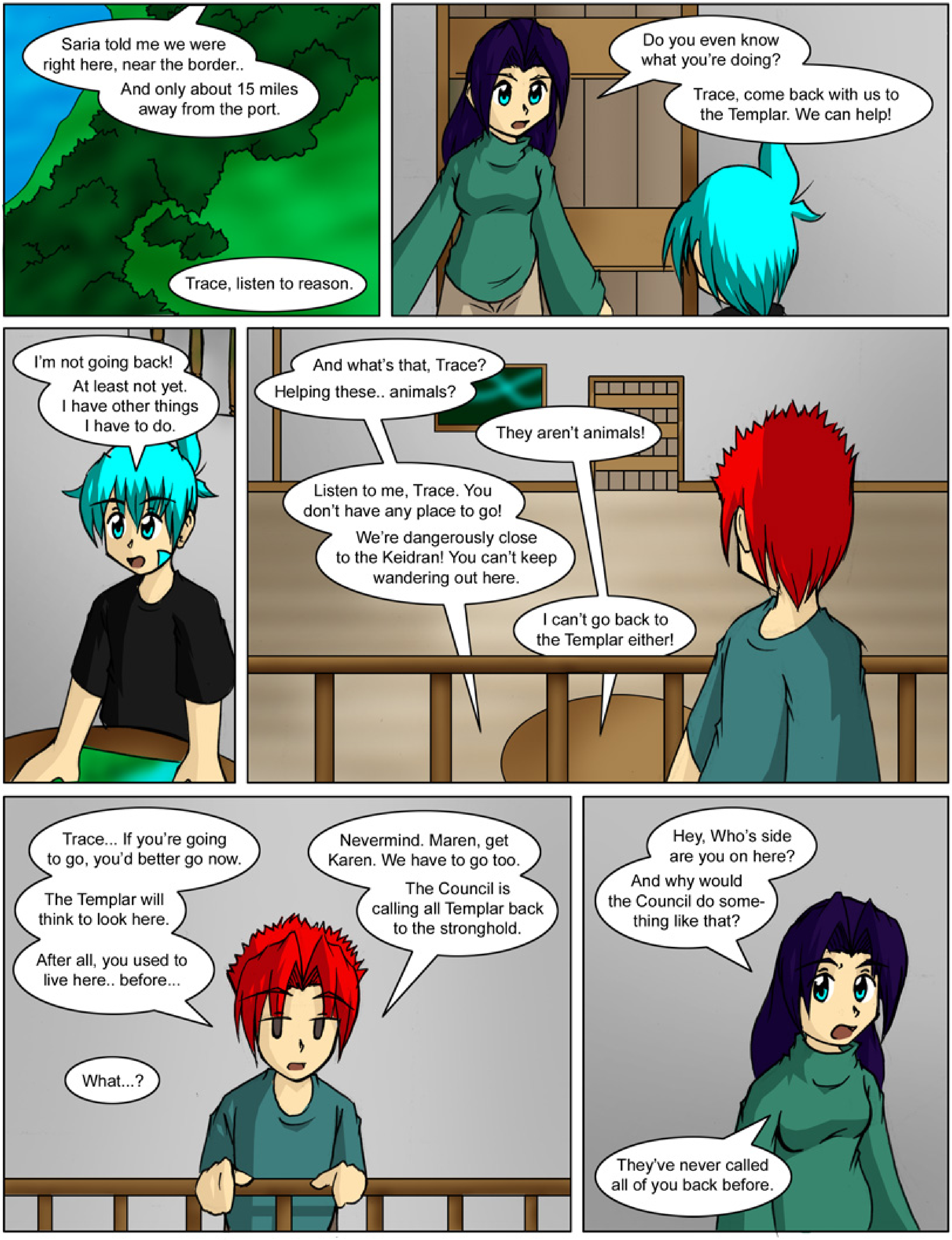

I'll be back in a little bit, Flora.
What's up, Keith? You said you needed me for something?
Yeah, Trace. It's Euchre... she... it's just gone.
Gone?
Yeah! As well as the rest of... well...
I think you should take a look for yourself. Out the back, so those other humans don't see you.
...What?!
Where did all this come from? How did we end up back in the woods?
Trace, that whole city... I think it was an illusion... only an image of a city that once existed.
An illusion? Made by who?
I'm not sure.. Neutral, probably.
I scouted around, and I've found this place on your map. It's been marked with a... strange symbol...
Strange?
Yeah... and I've been getting a weird feeling around here..
Does this place seem familiar to you?
Yeah, a little...
Why do you ask?
Trace...
Huh? Saria?
Trace, may I.. speak with you in private?
I have something that I.. must tell you.

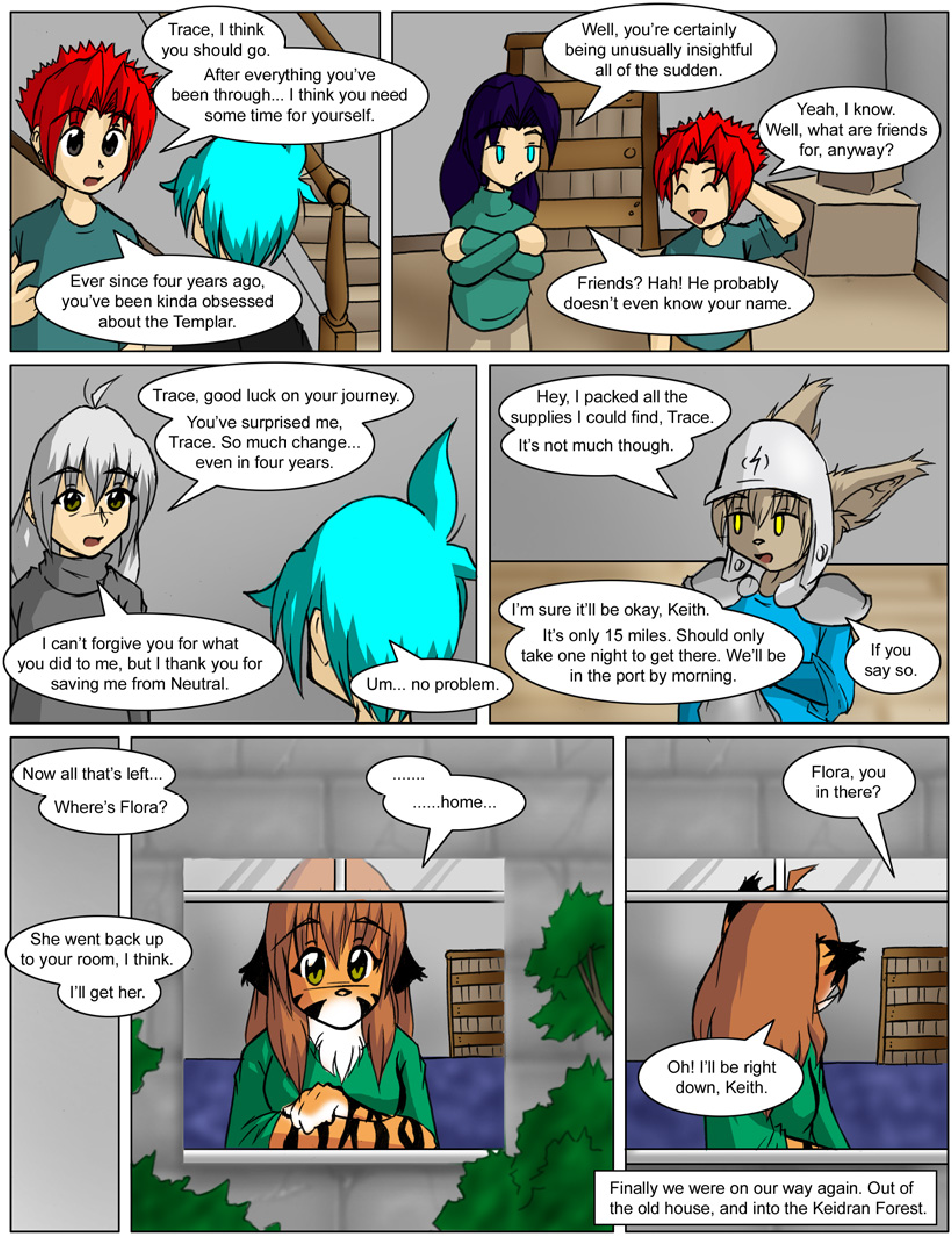

Oh great, not again.
I can smell it. She's in heat again.
She probably doesn't even realize it yet. With Trace gone, I'd better be careful.
Constant vigallence.
must.. ignore... the scent..
Ah! Nothing like a good stretch, right Keith?
Would you quit taunting me?!
mew? What did I do now?


I always loved this old place.
We used to... come here all the time... to your cabin out here in the woods.
That was of course... before you became... power hungry.
We even came here when the border got close... when it became dangerous because of the Keidran.
Do you remember any of this?
...no, I can't say I do... sorry.
...good. I think it's for the best that you do not remember.
What? Why? I want to know about my past.
No... please, this isn't someplace you'd want to... to remember at all.
But there is something I must... must tell you.
Trace, I am...
...I'm not your wife.
Buh?
I'm sorry, Trace... for all the lies I had to tell you.
We did know each other... a long time ago...
I came back because of Neutral. She brought me here.
I had no choice, but... I had to see you. I'm sorry.

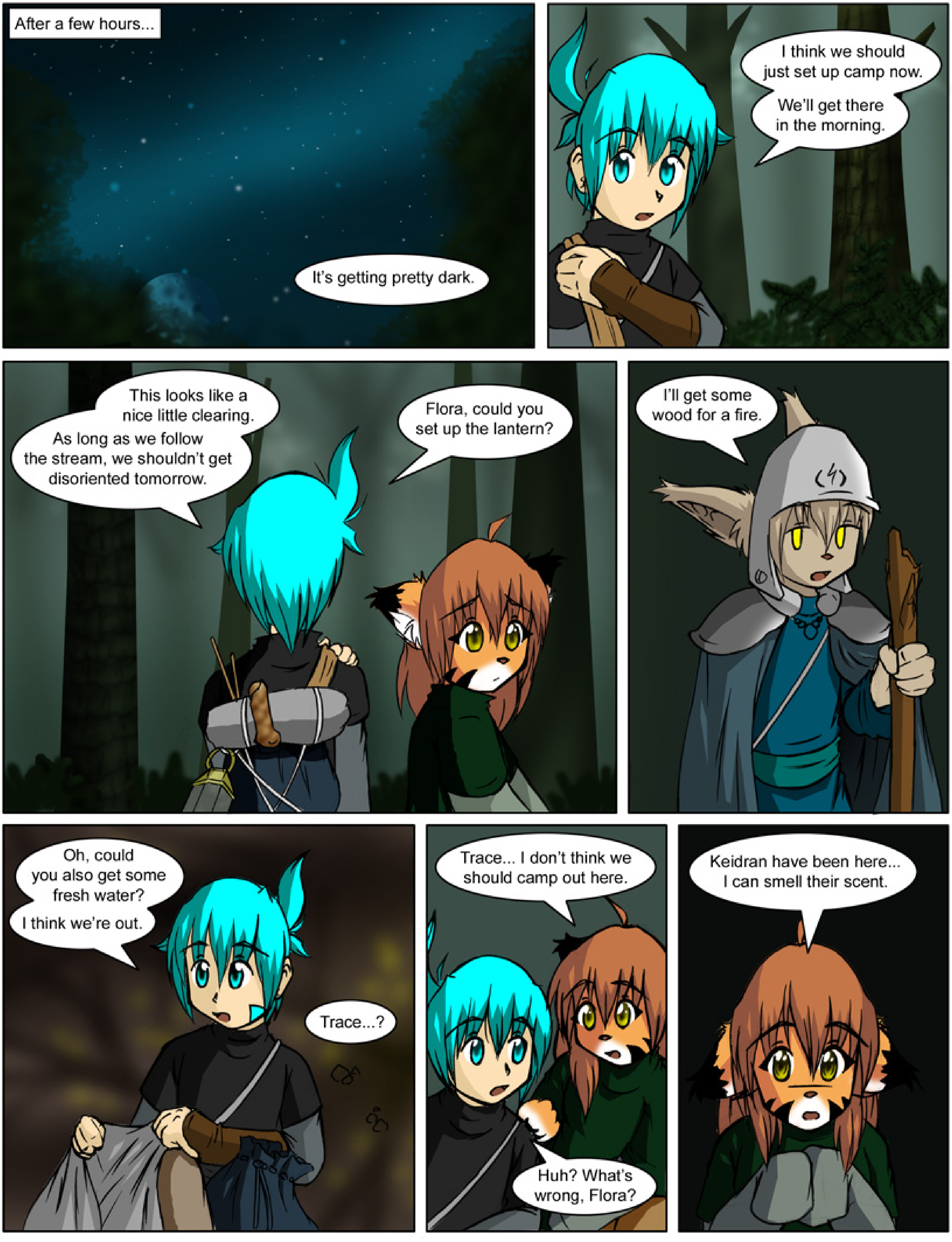

Trace, seeing you in this brief moment in time...
...has brought me greater happiness then I fear you will ever understand.
For a while.. I'd thought you'd never be happy again.
But seeing you with that girl...
...I am glad you've found someone that can make you smile once more.
Even if she is... a Keidran.
I hope you will forgive me someday, Trace.
I just.. couldn't bear... couldn't bear to burden you...
With the memory of my passing...
ia Legacy
449 - 477
Loving wife of an honorable Templar, killed by Keidran.
May your soul rest, and your death one day be avenged.
-Trace Legacy

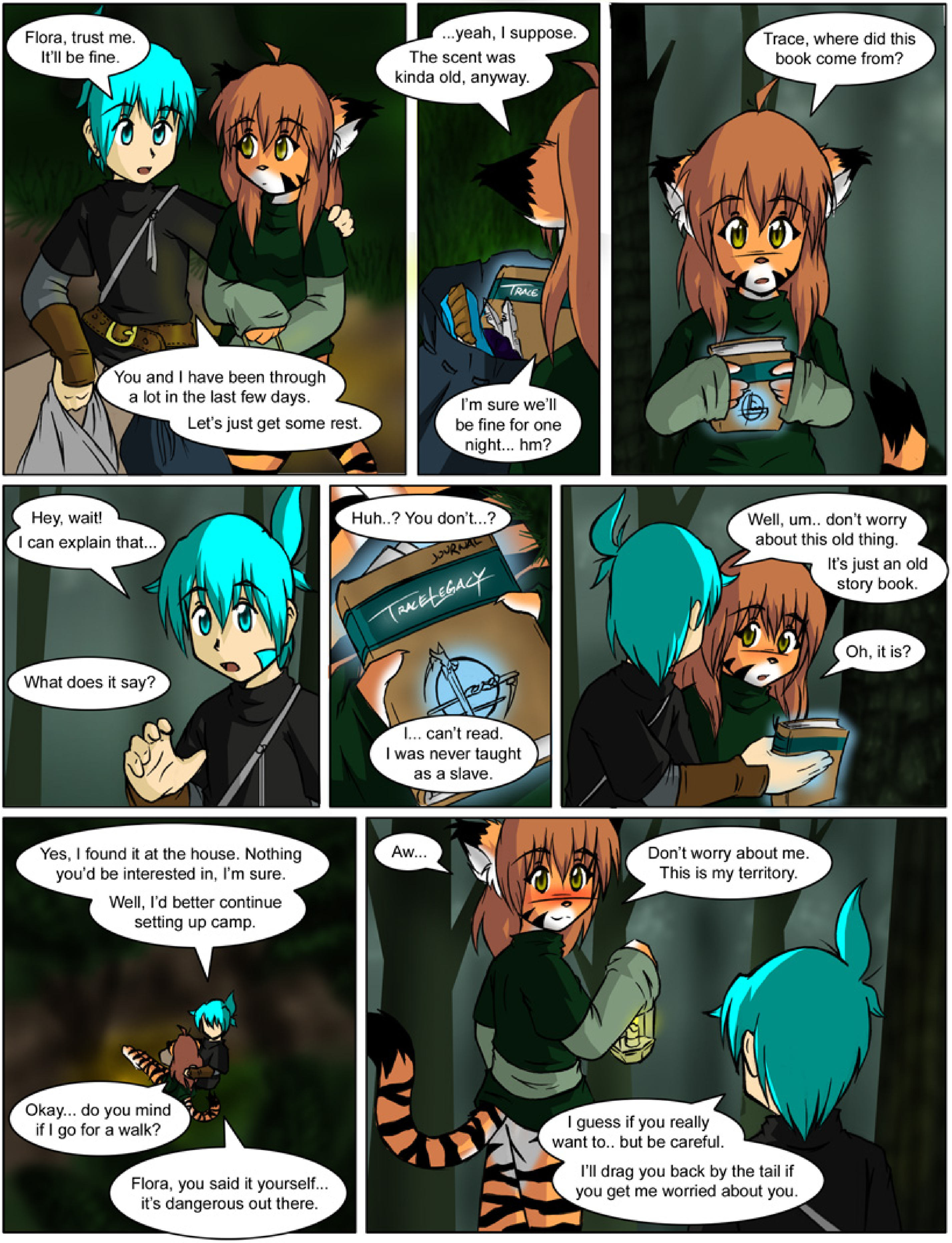

Trace is alive.
The Grand Templar knew and tried to kill him.The Council is not happy.
Yes, I heard the news.
He was located only a few miles from the Keidran border. What does The Council plan to do?
As you know, Trace is needed in order to finish the final tower.
The Council knows that they must find Trace as quickly as possible.
Should Trace die, or find his way into the claws of the Keidran... it would be disastrous.
This is why we've chosen to employ.. the Dragons.
Dragons?
They can't be serious!
Sending a Dragon near Keidran territory..
It could be considered an act of war!
Not to mention the fact that the king would never approve it.
He wouldn't allow us Templar that kind of gold.
You know what the Dragons ask for.
That won't be a problem for long, Sirvitine.
Once we have Trace in our hands and the final Tower completed...
The king will bow down to us.

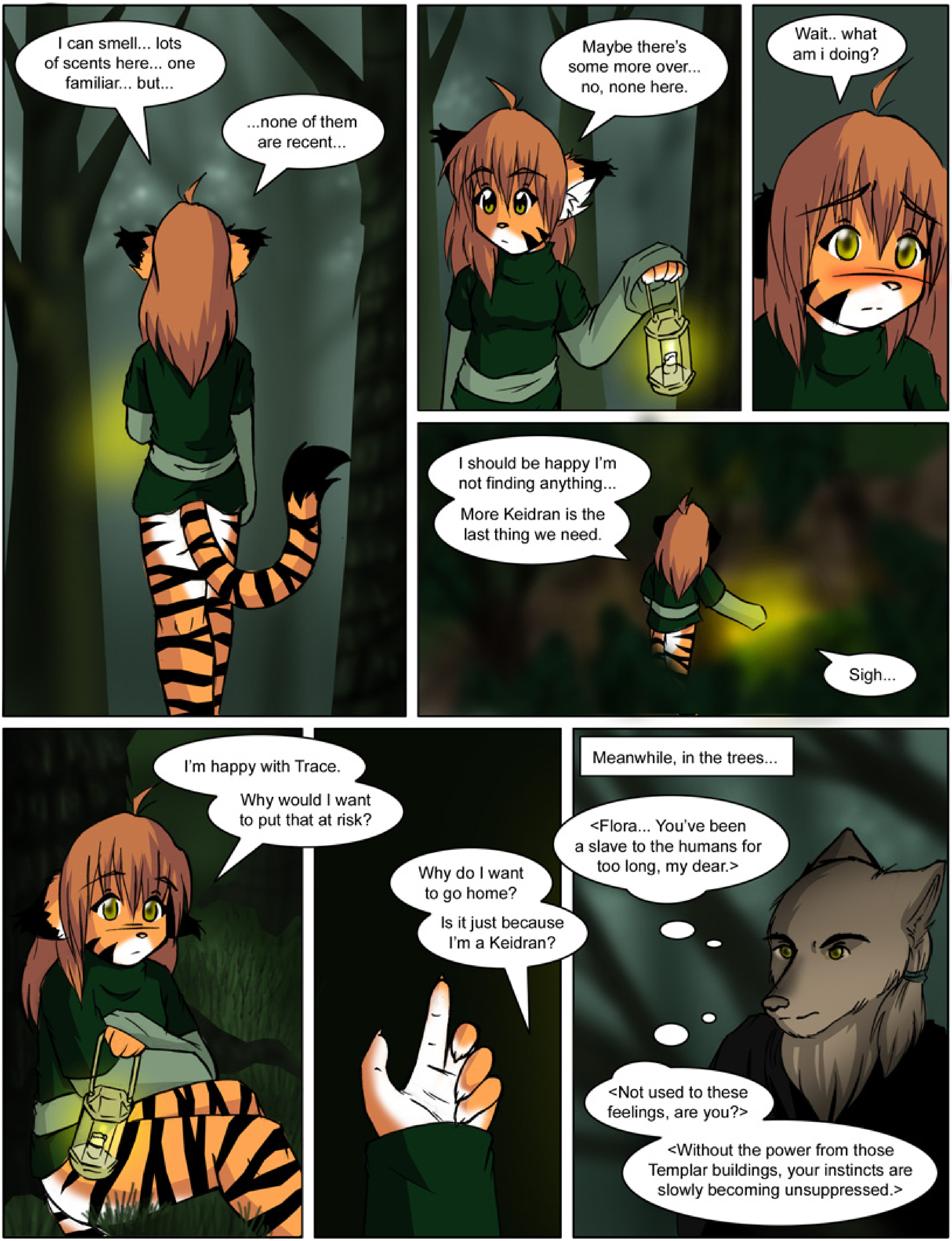

Saria told me we were right here, near the border..
And only about 15 miles away from the port.
Trace, listen to reason.
Do you even know what you're doing?
Trace, come back with us to the Templar. We can help!
I'm not going back!
At least not yet. I have other things I have to do.
And what's that, Trace?
Helping these.. animals?
They aren't animals!
Listen to me, Trace. You don't have any place to go!
We're dangerously close to the Keidran! You can't keep wandering out here.
I can't go back to the Templar either!
Trace... If you're going to go, you'd better go now.
The Templar will think to look here.
After all, you used to live here.. before...
What...?
Nevermind. Maren, get Karen. We have to go too.
The Council is calling all Templar back to the stronghold.
Hey, Who's side are you on here?
And why would the Council do something like that?
They've never called all of you back before.

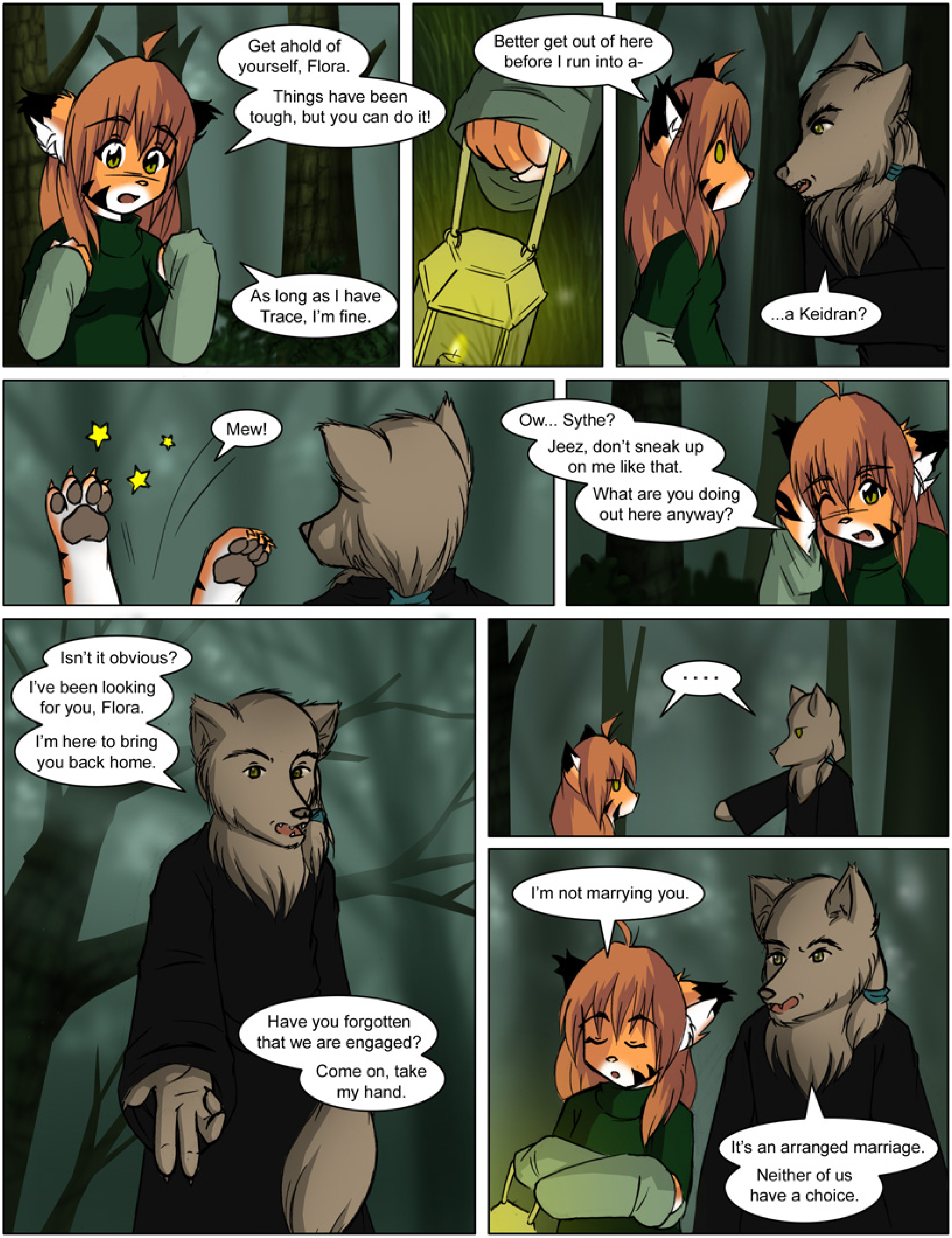

Trace, I think you should go.
After everything you've been through... I think you need some time for yourself.
Ever since four years ago, you've been kinda obsessed about the Templar.
Well, you're certainly being unusually insightful all of the sudden.
Yeah, I know. Well, what are friends for, anyway?
Friends? Hah! He probably doesn't even know your name.
Trace, good luck on your journey.
You've surprised me, Trace. So much change... even in four years.
I can't forgive you for what you did to me, but I thank you for saving me from Neutral.
Um... no problem.
Hey, I packed all the supplies I could find, Trace.
It's not much though.
I'm sure it'll be okay, Keith.
It's only 15 miles. Should only take one night to get there. We'll be in the port by morning.
If you say so.
Now all that's left...
Where's Flora?
She went back up to your room, I think.
I'll get her.
....
......home...
Flora, you in there?
Oh! I'll be right down, Keith.
Finally we were on our way again. Out of the old house, and into the Keidran Forest.

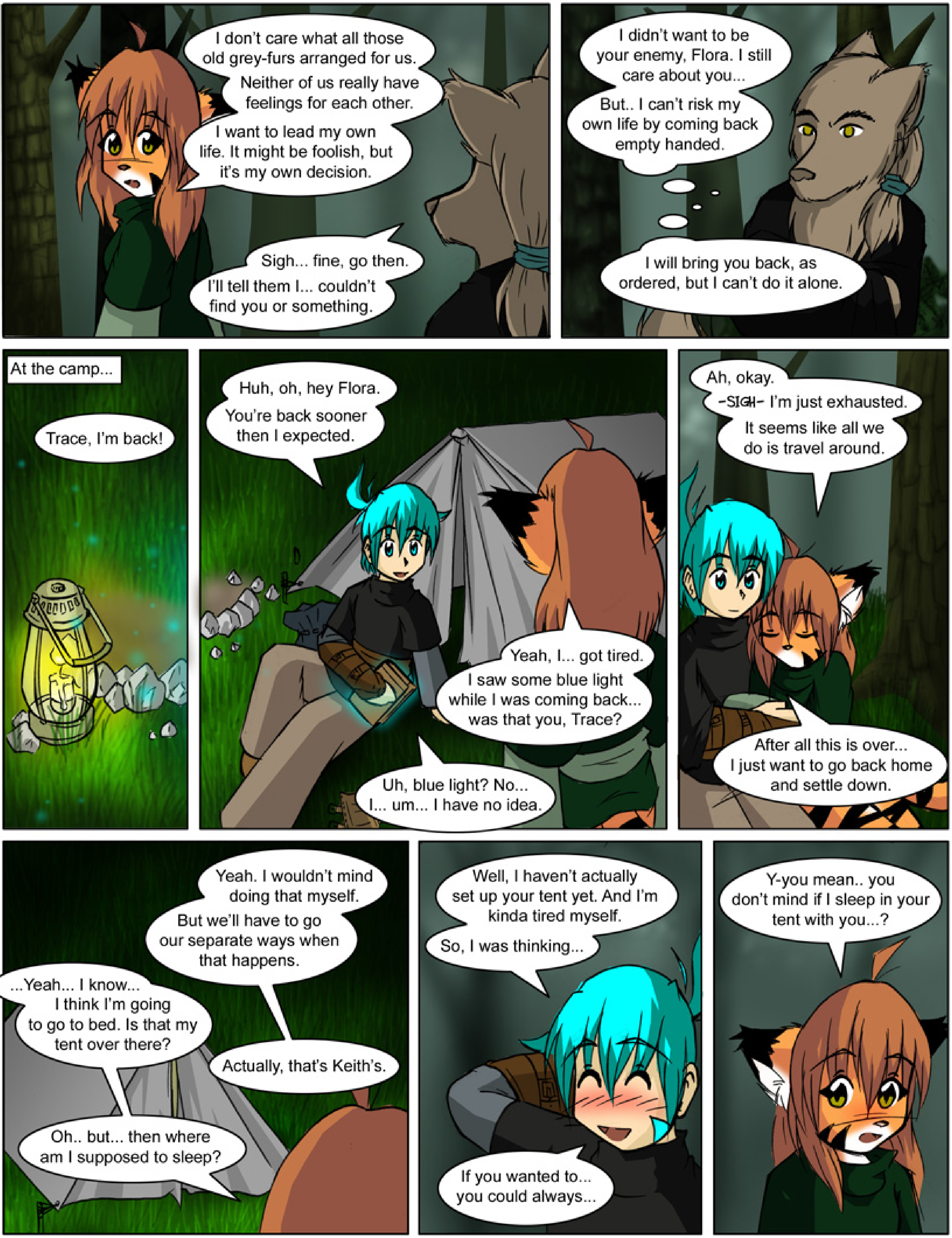
Chapter 7
Instincts

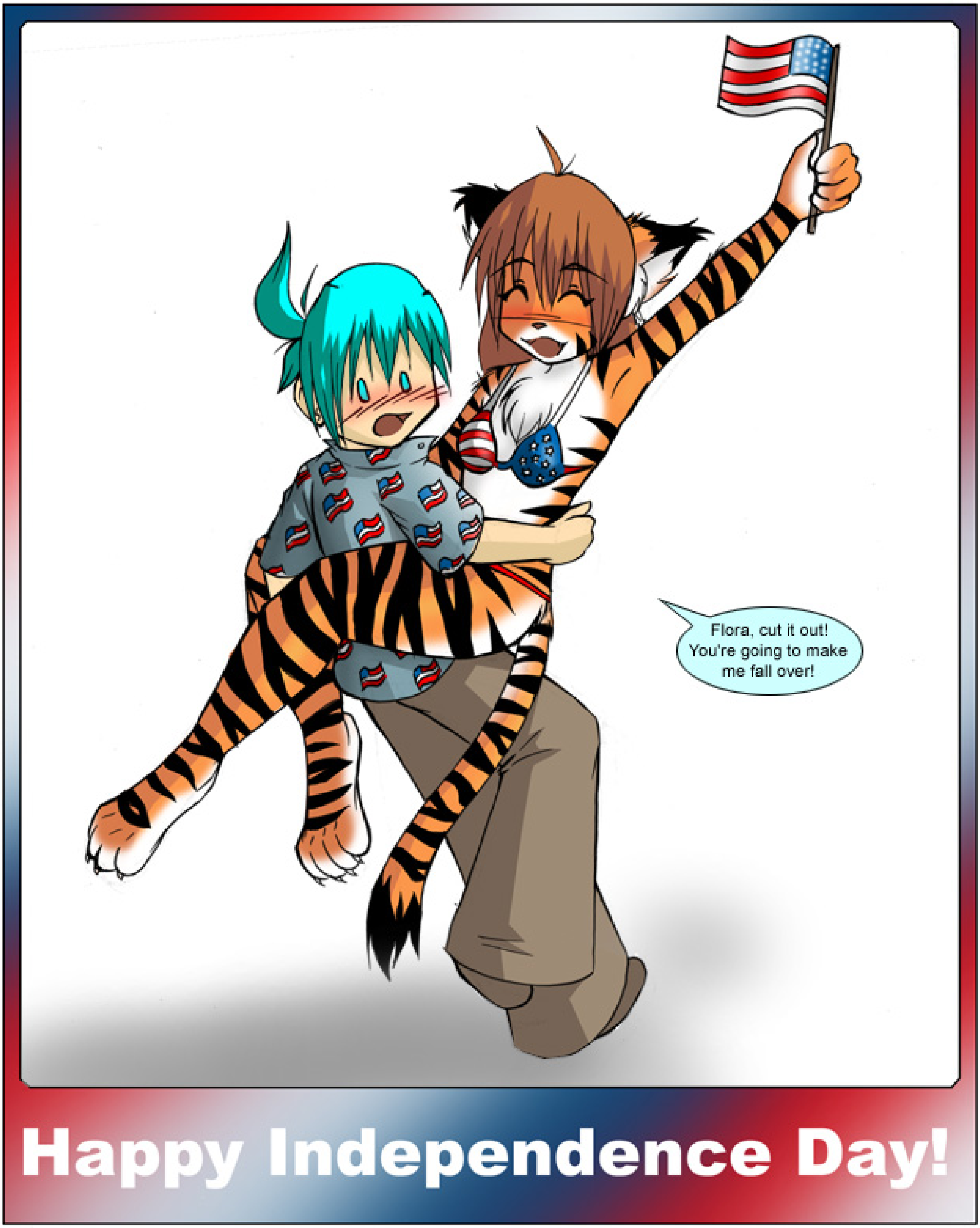

After a few hours...
It's getting pretty dark.
I think we should just set up camp now.
We'll get there in the morning.
This looks like a nice little clearing.
As long as we follow the stream, we shouldn't get disoriented tomorrow.
Flora, could you set up the lantern?
I'll get some wood for a fire.
Oh, could you also get some fresh water?
I think we're out.
Trace...?
Trace... I don't think we should camp out here.
Huh? What's wrong, Flora?
Keidran have been here... I can smell their scent.

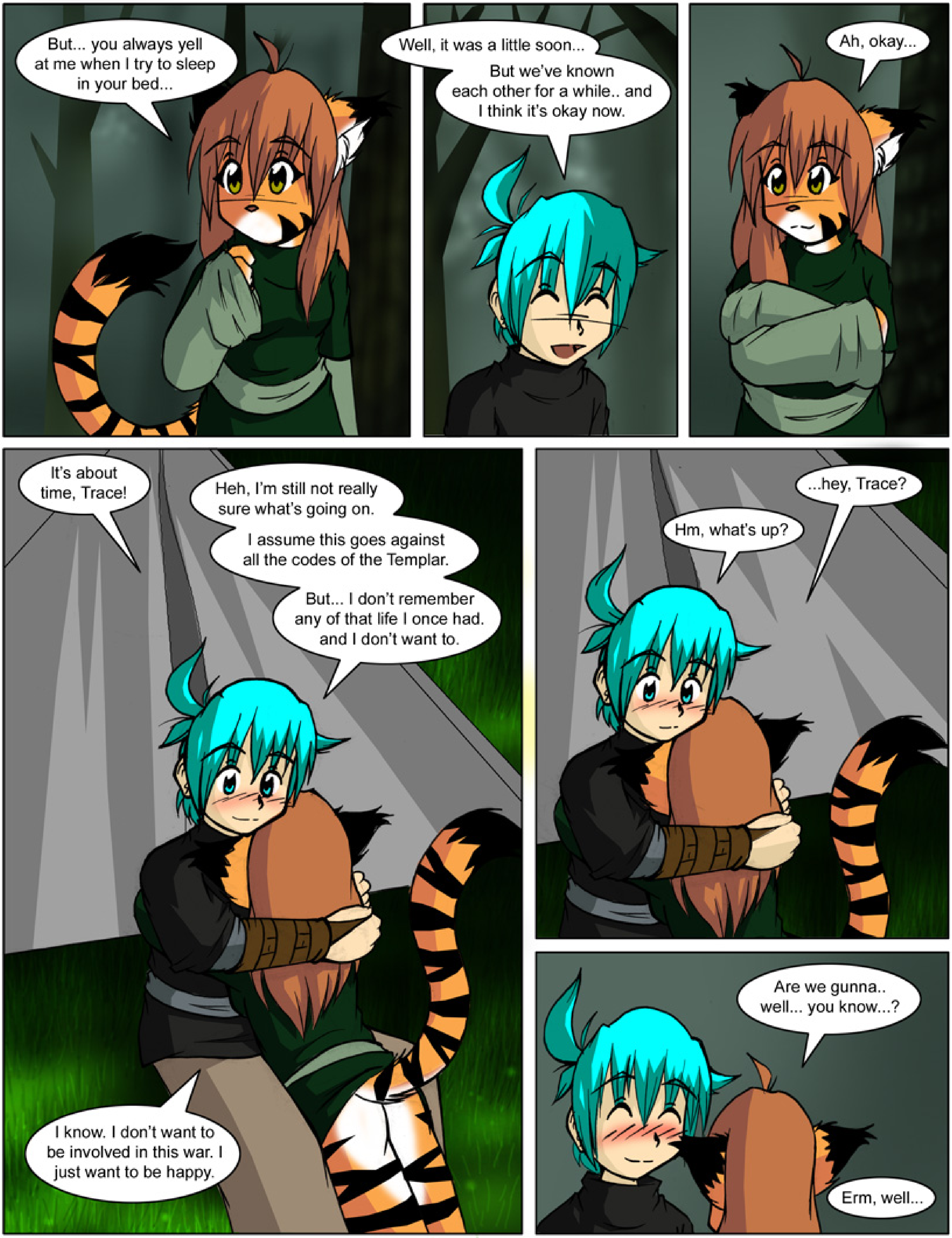

Flora, trust me. It'll be fine.
You and I have been through a lot in the last few days.
Let's just get some rest.
...yeah, I suppose.
The scent was kinda old, anyway.
TRACE
I'm sure we'll be fine for one night... hm?
Trace, where did this book come from?
Hey, wait! I can explain that...
What does it say?
Huh..? You don't...?
JOURNAL
TRACELEGACY
I... can't read. I was never taught as a slave.
Well, um.. don't worry about this old thing.
It's just an old story book.
Oh, it is?
Yes, I found it at the house. Nothing you'd be interested in, I'm sure.
Well, I'd better continue setting up camp.
Okay... do you mind if I go for a walk?
Flora, you said it yourself... it's dangerous out there.
Aw...
Don't worry about me. This is my territory.
I guess if you really want to.. but be careful.
I'll drag you back by the tail if you get me worried about you.

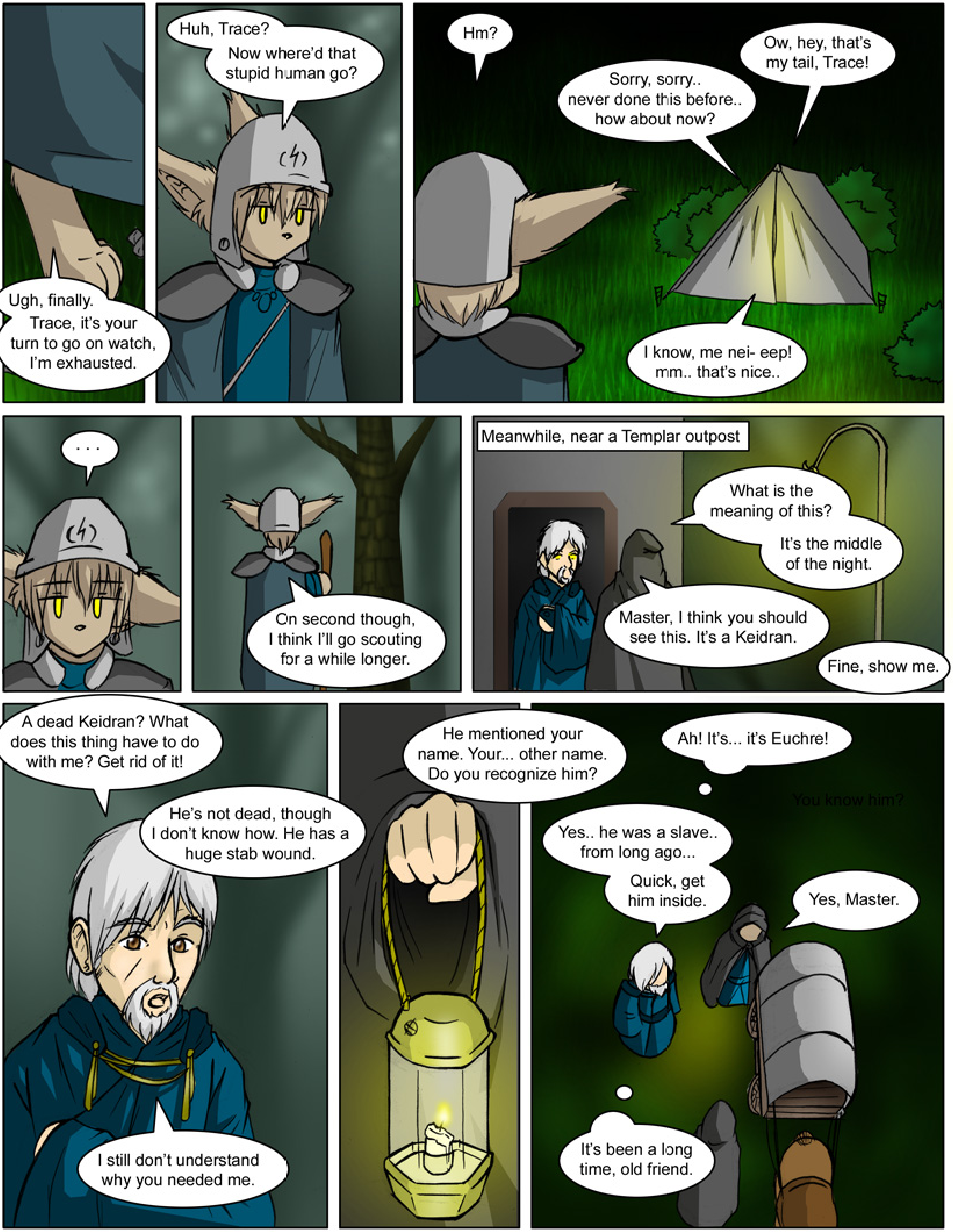

I can smell... lots of scents here... one familiar... but...
...none of them are recent...
Maybe there's some more over... no, none here.
Wait.. what am i doing?
I should be happy I'm not finding anything...
More Keidran is the last thing we need.
Sigh...
I'm happy with Trace.
Why would I want to put that at risk?
Why do I want to go home?
Is it just because I'm a Keidran?
Meanwhile, in the trees...
<Flora... You've been a slave to the humans for too long, my dear.>
<Not used to these feelings, are you?>
<Without the power from those Templar buildings, your instincts are slowly becoming unsuppressed.>

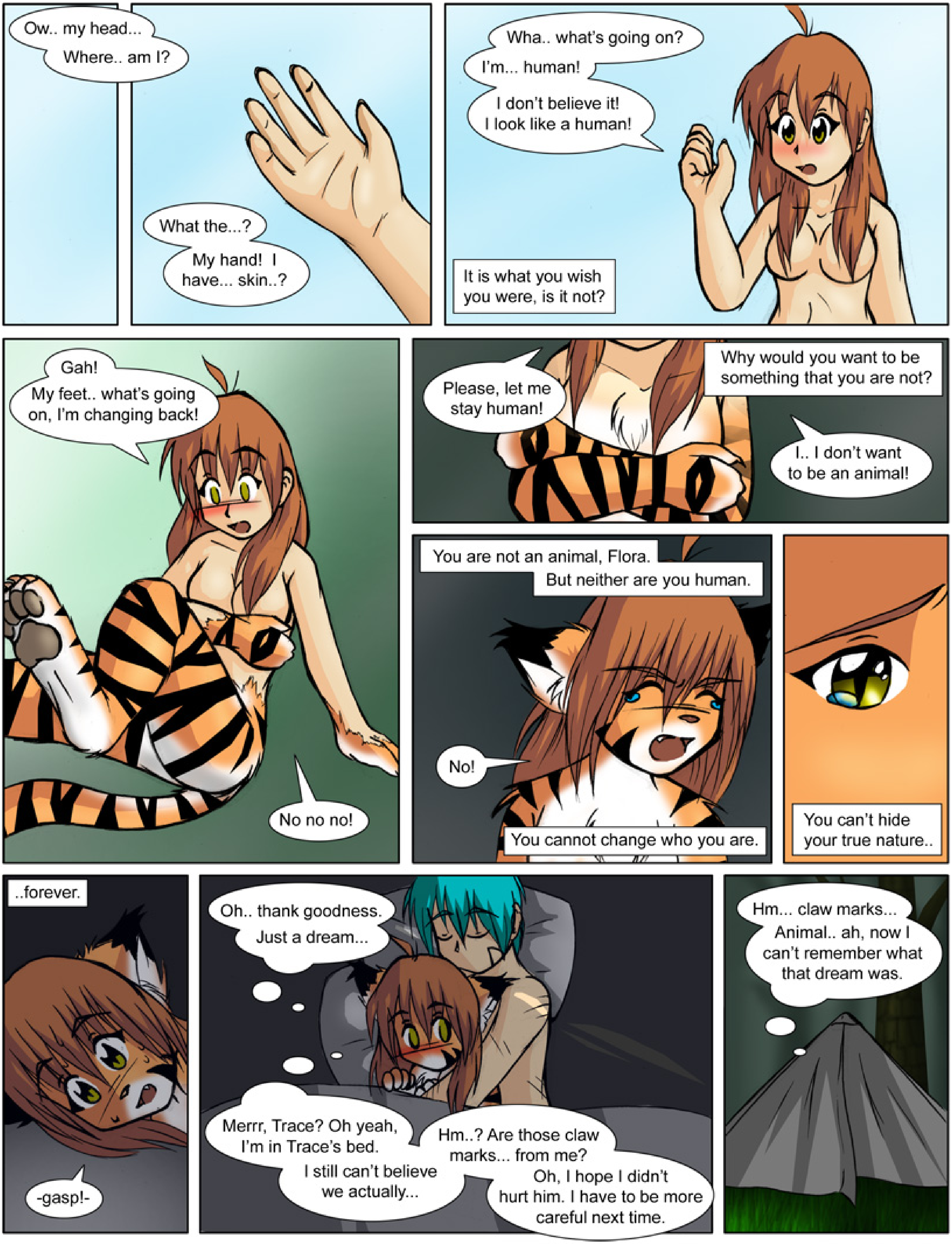

Get ahold of yourself, Flora.
Things have been tough, but you can do it!
As long as I have Trace, I'm fine.
Better get out of here before I run into a-
...a Keidran?
Mew!
Ow... Sythe?
Jeez, don't sneak up on me like that.
What are you doing out here anyway?
Isn't it obvious?
I've been looking for you, Flora.
I'm here to bring you back home.
Have you forgotten that we are engaged?
Come on, take my hand.
....
I'm not marrying you.
It's an arranged marriage.
Neither of us have a choice.

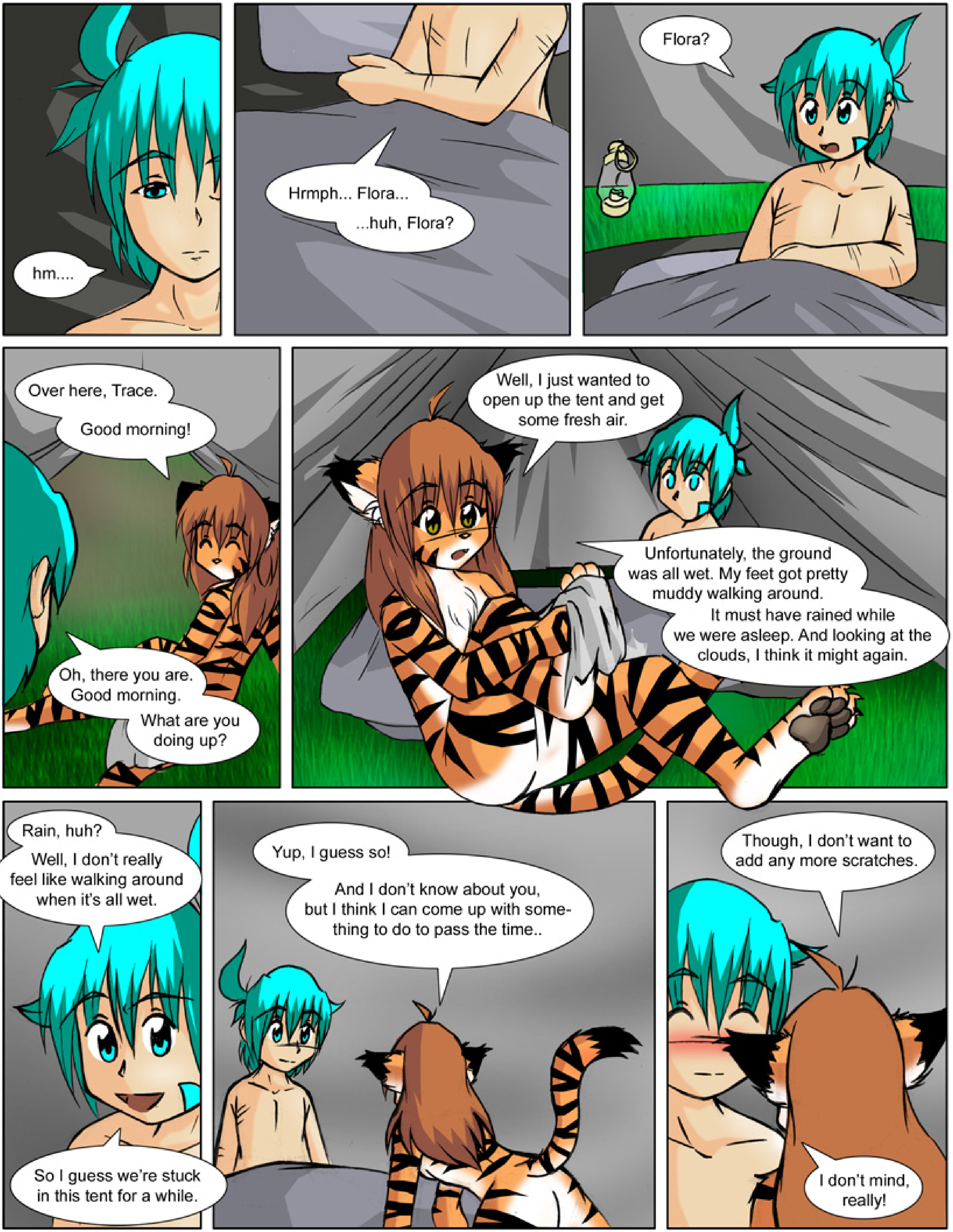

I don't care what all those old grey-furs arranged for us.
Neither of us really have feelings for each other.
I want to lead my own life. It might be foolish, but it's my own decision.
Sigh... fine, go then.
I'll tell them I... couldn't find you or something.
I didn't want to be your enemy, Flora. I still care about you...
But.. I can't risk my own life by coming back empty handed.
I will bring you back, as ordered, but I can't do it alone.
At the camp...
Trace, I'm back!
Huh, oh, hey Flora.
You're back sooner then I expected.
Yeah, I... got tired.
I saw some blue light while I was coming back... was that you, Trace?
Uh, blue light? No... I... um... I have no idea.
Ah, okay.
-SIGH- I'm just exhausted.
It seems like all we do is travel around.
After all this is over... I just want to go back home and settle down.
Yeah. I wouldn't mind doing that myself.
But we'll have to go our separate ways when that happens.
...Yeah... I know...
I think I'm going to go to bed. Is that my tent over there?
Actually, that's Keith's.
Oh.. but... then where am I supposed to sleep?
Well, I haven't actually set up your tent yet. And I'm kinda tired myself.
So, I was thinking...
If you wanted to... you could always...
Y-you mean.. you don't mind if I sleep in your tent with you...?

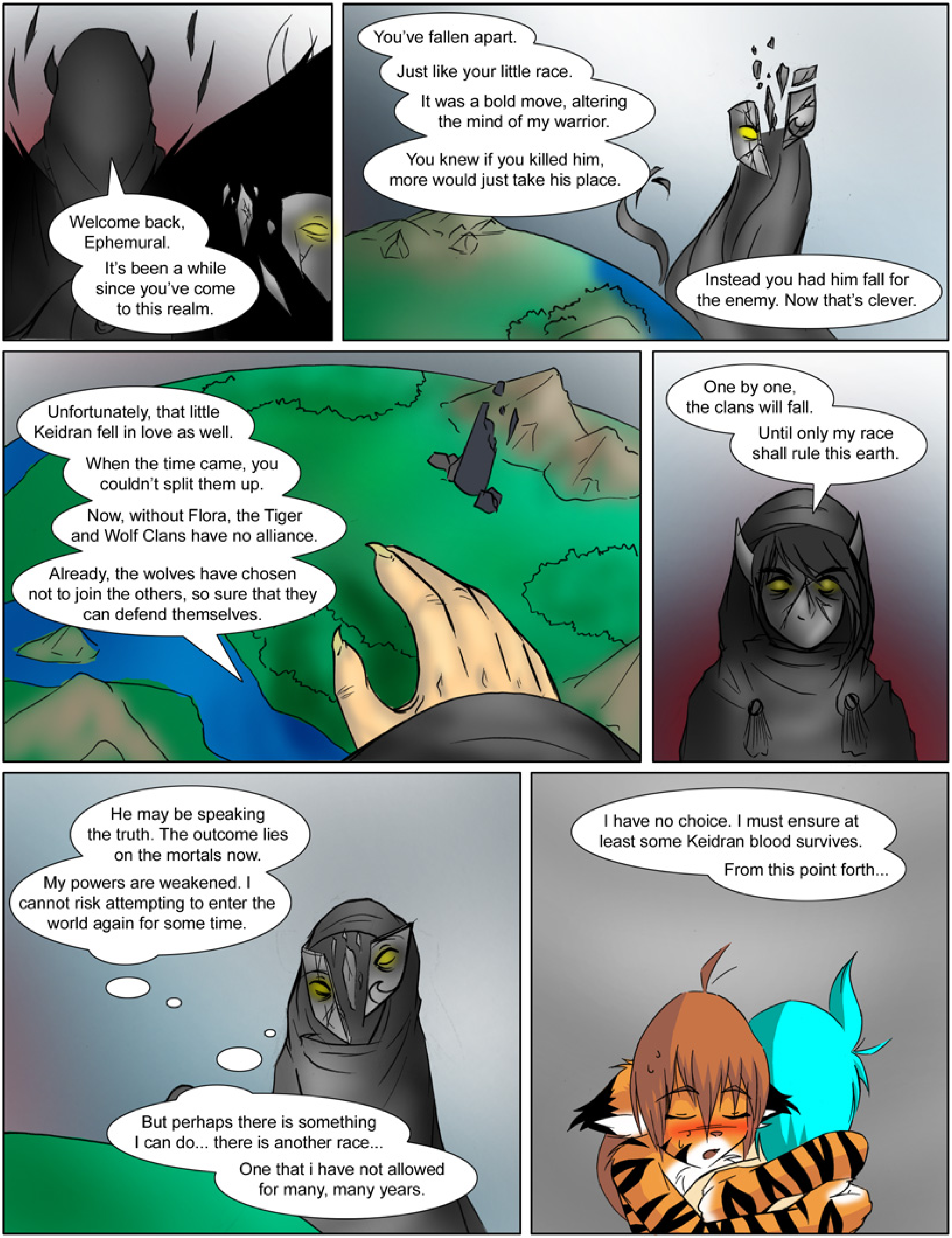

Flora, cut it out!
You're going to make
me fall over!
Happy Independence Day!

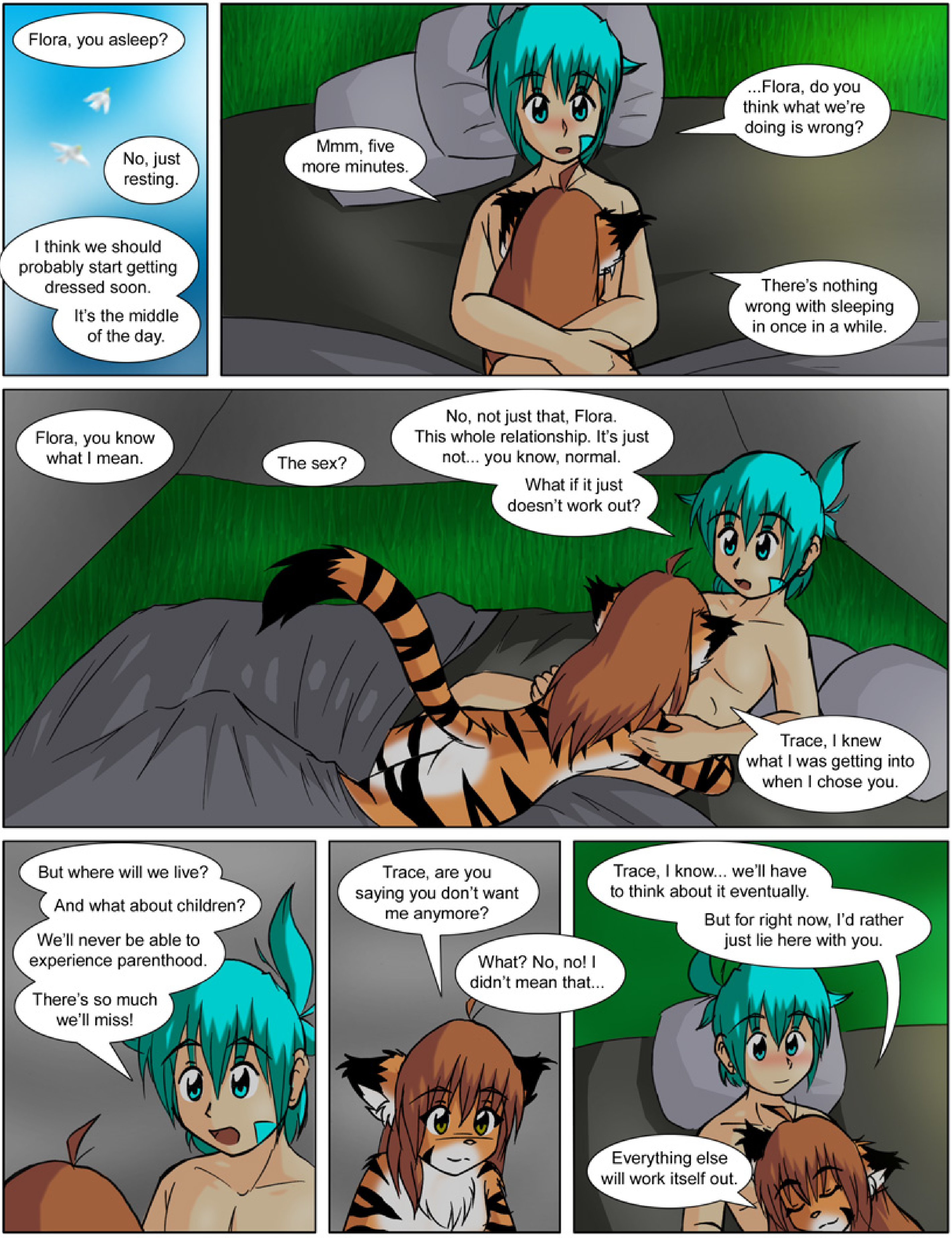

But... you always yell at me when I try to sleep in your bed...
Well, it was a little soon...
But we've known each other for a while.. and I think it's okay now.
Ah, okay...
It's about time, Trace!
Heh, I'm still not really sure what's going on.
I assume this goes against all the codes of the Templar.
But... I don't remember any of that life I once had. and I don't want to.
I know. I don't want to be involved in this war. I just want to be happy.
...hey, Trace?
Hm, what's up?
Are we gunna.. well... you know...?
Erm, well...

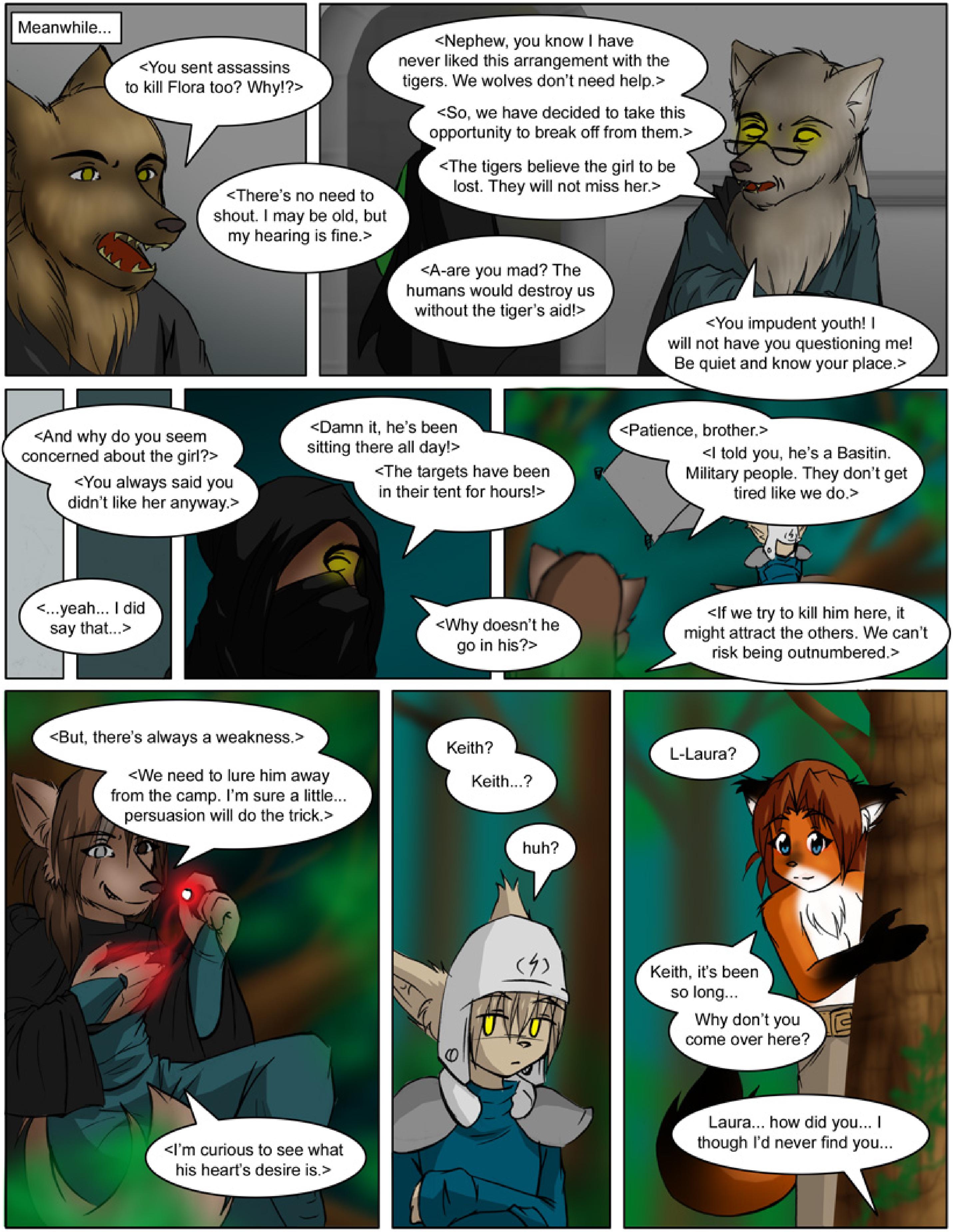

Ugh, finally. Trace, it's your turn to go on watch, I'm exhausted.
Huh, Trace?
Now where'd that stupid human go?
Hm?
Sorry, sorry.. never done this before.. how about now?
Ow, hey, that's my tail, Trace!
I know, me nei- eep! mm.. that's nice..
. . .
On second though, I think I'll go scouting for a while longer.
Meanwhile, near a Templar outpost
What is the meaning of this?
It's the middle of the night.
Master, I think you should see this. It's a Keidran.
Fine, show me.
A dead Keidran? What does this thing have to do with me? Get rid of it!
He's not dead, though I don't know how. He has a huge stab wound.
I still don't understand why you needed me.
He mentioned your name. Your... other name. Do you recognize him?
Ah! It's... it's Euchre!
You know him?
Yes.. he was a slave.. from long ago...
Quick, get him inside.
Yes, Master.
It's been a long time, old friend.


Ow.. my head...
Where.. am I?
What the...?
My hand! I have... skin..?
Wha.. what's going on?
I'm... human!
I don't believe it! I look like a human!
It is what you wish you were, is it not?
Gah!
My feet.. what's going on, I'm changing back!
No no no!
Please, let me stay human!
Why would you want to be something that you are not?
I.. I don't want to be an animal!
You are not an animal, Flora.
But neither are you human.
No!
You cannot change who you are.
You can't hide your true nature..
..forever.
-gasp!-
Oh.. thank goodness.
Just a dream...
Merrr, Trace? Oh yeah, I'm in Trace's bed.
I still can't believe we actually...
Hm..? Are those claw marks... from me?
Oh, I hope I didn't hurt him. I have to be more careful next time.
Hm... claw marks...
Animal.. ah, now I can't remember what that dream was.

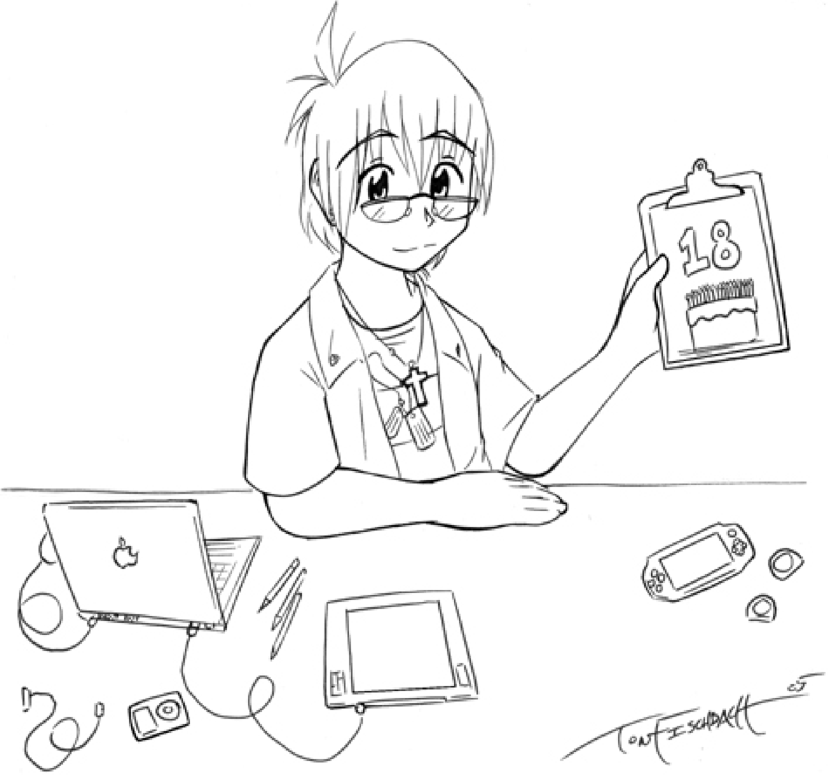

hm....
Hrmph... Flora...
...huh, Flora?
Flora?
Over here, Trace.
Good morning!
Oh, there you are. Good morning.
What are you doing up?
Well, I just wanted to open up the tent and get some fresh air.
Unfortunately, the ground was all wet. My feet got pretty muddy walking around.
It must have rained while we were asleep. And looking at the clouds, I think it might again.
Rain, huh?
Well, I don't really feel like walking around when it's all wet.
So I guess we're stuck in this tent for a while.
Yup, I guess so!
And I don't know about you, but I think I can come up with something to do to pass the time..
Though, I don't want to add any more scratches.
I don't mind, really!

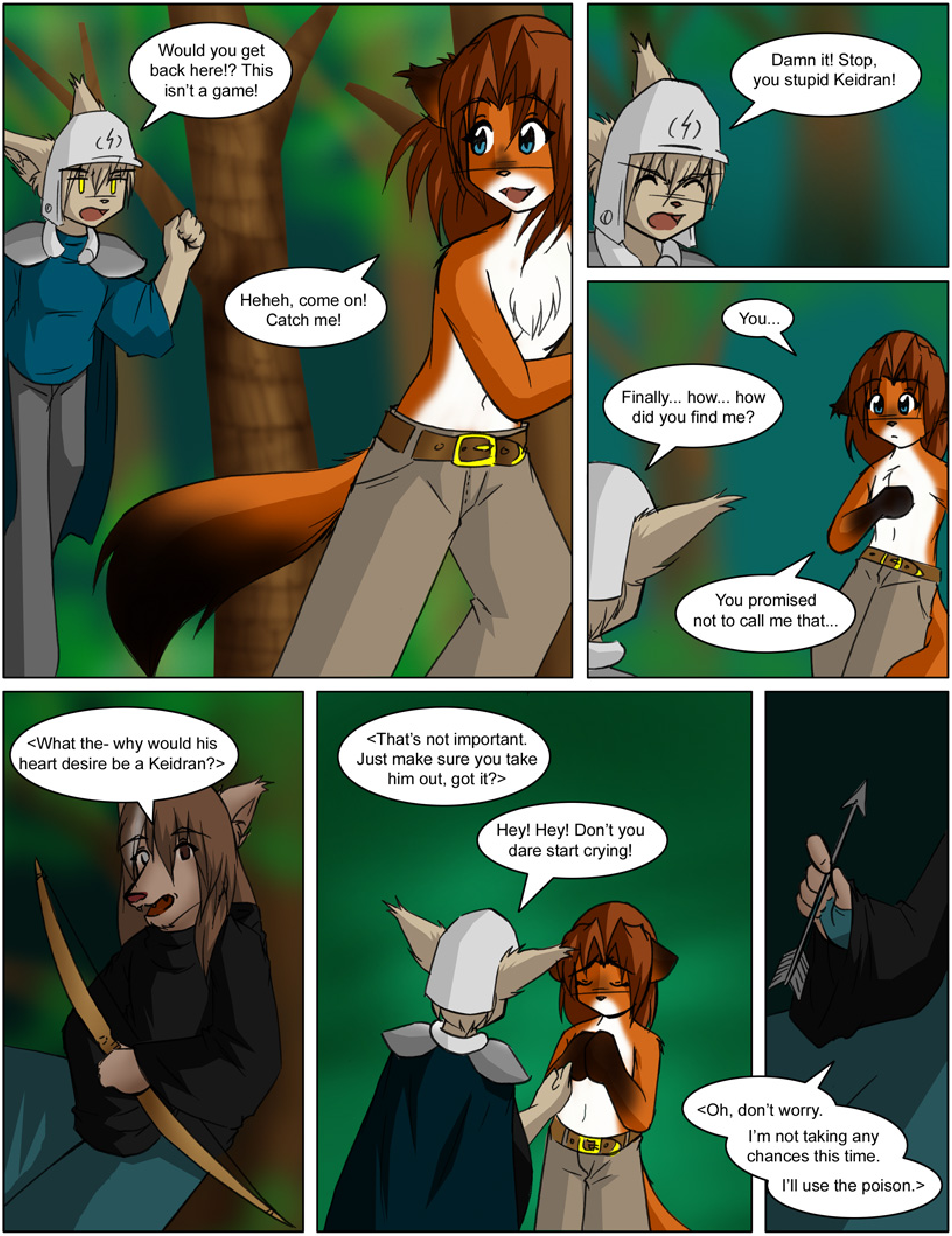

Welcome back, Ephemural.
It's been a while since you've come to this realm.
You've fallen apart.
Just like your little race.
It was a bold move, altering the mind of my warrior.
You knew if you killed him, more would just take his place.
Instead you had him fall for the enemy. Now that's clever.
Unfortunately, that little Keidran fell in love as well.
When the time came, you couldn't split them up.
Now, without Flora, the Tiger and Wolf Clans have no alliance.
Already, the wolves have chosen not to join the others, so sure that they can defend themselves.
One by one, the clans will fall.
Until only my race shall rule this earth.
He may be speaking the truth. The outcome lies on the mortals now.
My powers are weakened. I cannot risk attempting to enter the world again for some time.
But perhaps there is something I can do... there is another race...
One that i have not allowed for many, many years.
I have no choice. I must ensure at least some Keidran blood survives.
From this point forth...

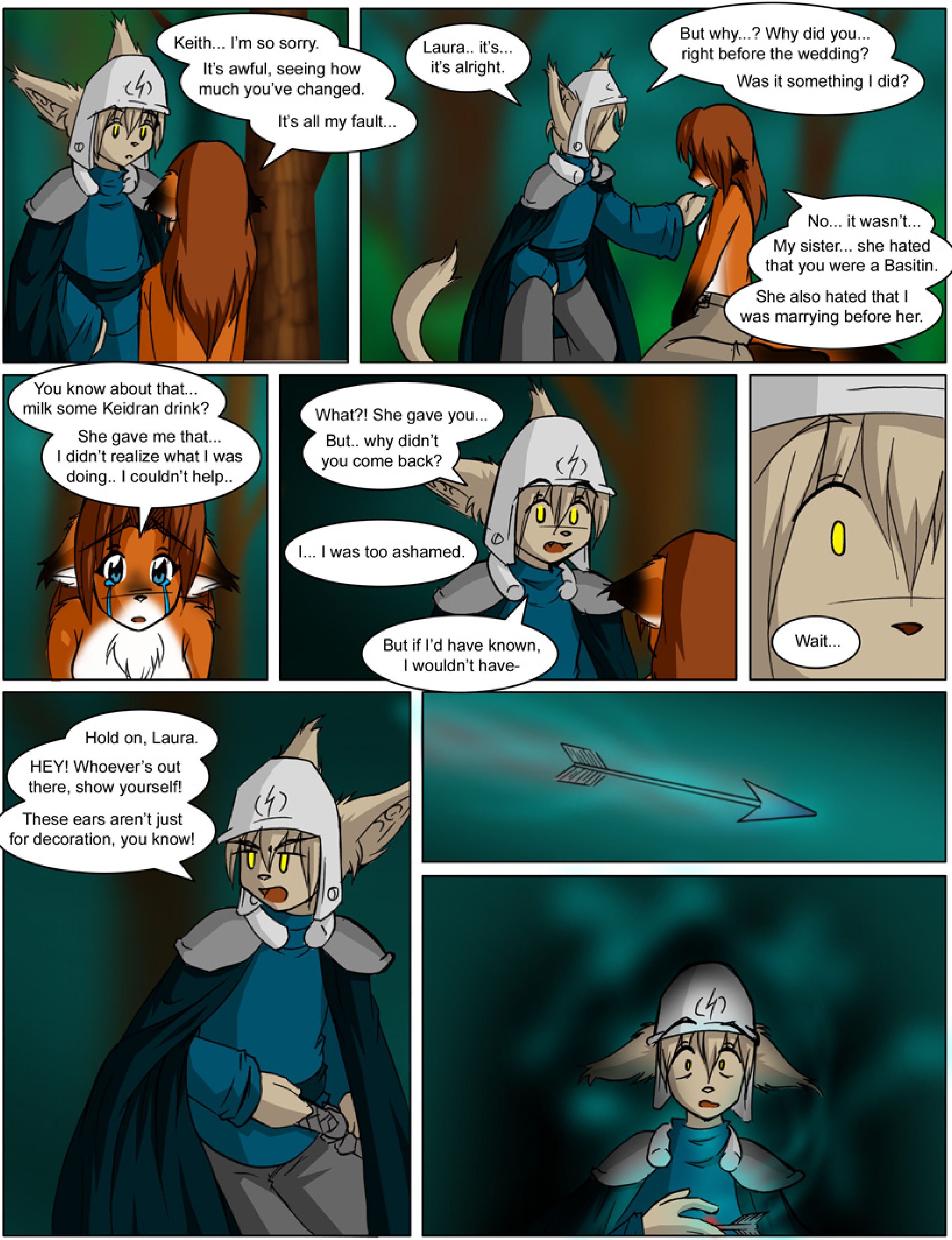

Flora, you asleep?
No, just resting.
I think we should probably start getting dressed soon.
It's the middle of the day.
Mmm, five more minutes.
...Flora, do you think what we're doing is wrong?
There's nothing wrong with sleeping in once in a while.
Flora, you know what I mean.
The sex?
No, not just that, Flora. This whole relationship. It's just not... you know, normal.
What if it just doesn't work out?
Trace, I knew what I was getting into when I chose you.
But where will we live?
And what about children?
We'll never be able to experience parenthood.
There's so much we'll miss!
Trace, are you saying you don't want me anymore?
What? No, no! I didn't mean that...
Trace, I know... we'll have to think about it eventually.
But for right now, I'd rather just lie here with you.
Everything else will work itself out.

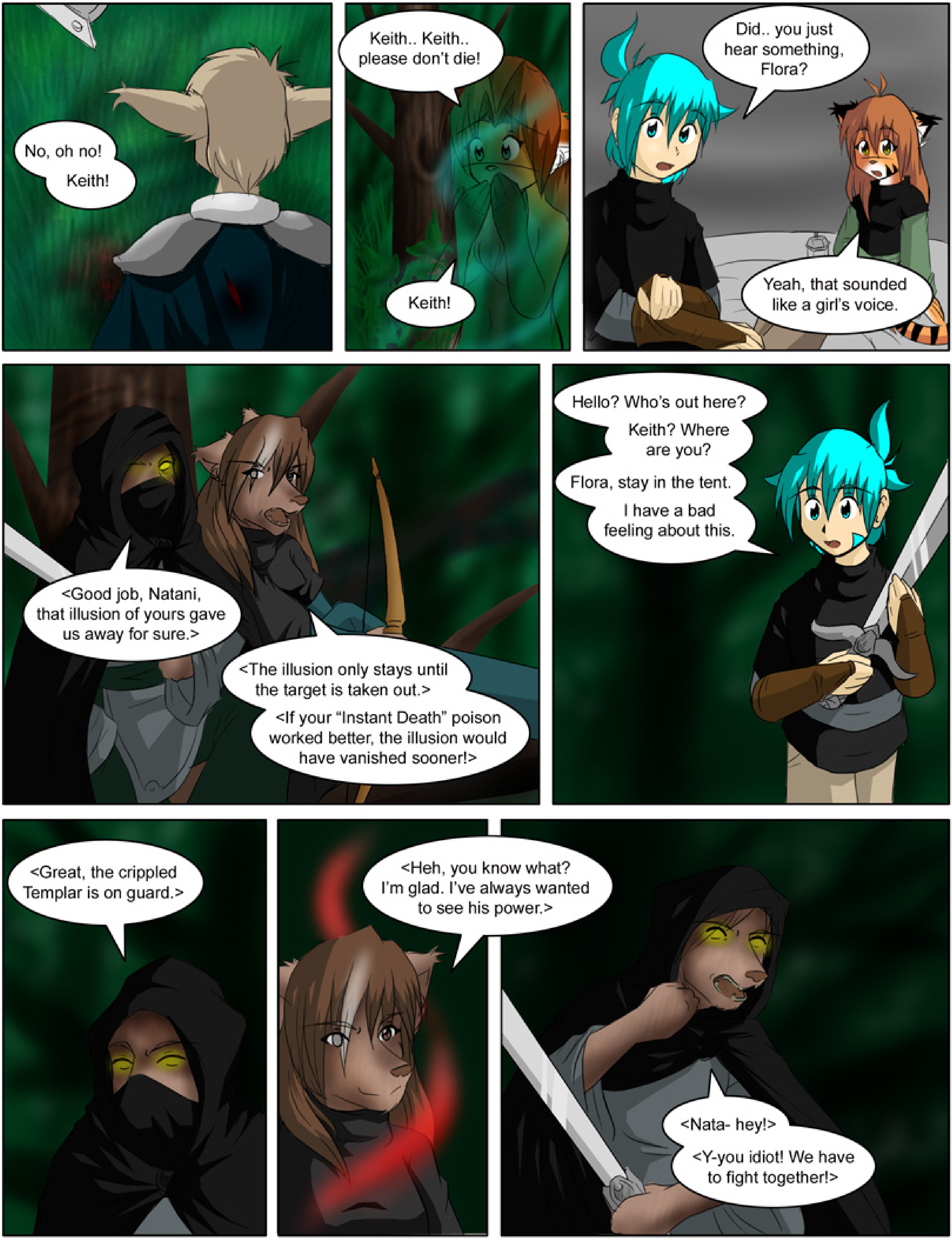

Meanwhile...
<You sent assassins to kill Flora too? Why!?>
<There's no need to shout. I may be old, but my hearing is fine.>
<Nephew, you know I have never liked this arrangement with the tigers. We wolves don't need help.>
<So, we have decided to take this opportunity to break off from them.>
<The tigers believe the girl to be lost. They will not miss her.>
<A-are you mad? The humans would destroy us without the tiger's aid!>
<You impudent youth! I will not have you questioning me! Be quiet and know your place.>
<And why do you seem concerned about the girl?>
<You always said you didn't like her anyway.>
<...yeah... I did say that...>
<Damn it, he's been sitting there all day!>
<The targets have been in their tent for hours!>
<Why doesn't he go in his?>
<Patience, brother.>
<I told you, he's a Basitin. Military people. They don't get tired like we do.>
<If we try to kill him here, it might attract the others. We can't risk being outnumbered.>
<But, there's always a weakness.>
<We need to lure him away from the camp. I'm sure a little... persuasion will do the trick.>
<I'm curious to see what his heart's desire is.>
Keith?
Keith...?
huh?
L-Laura?
Keith, it's been so long...
Why don't you come over here?
Laura... how did you... I though I'd never find you...

▸ Level up!


18
TONI FISCHBACH 05

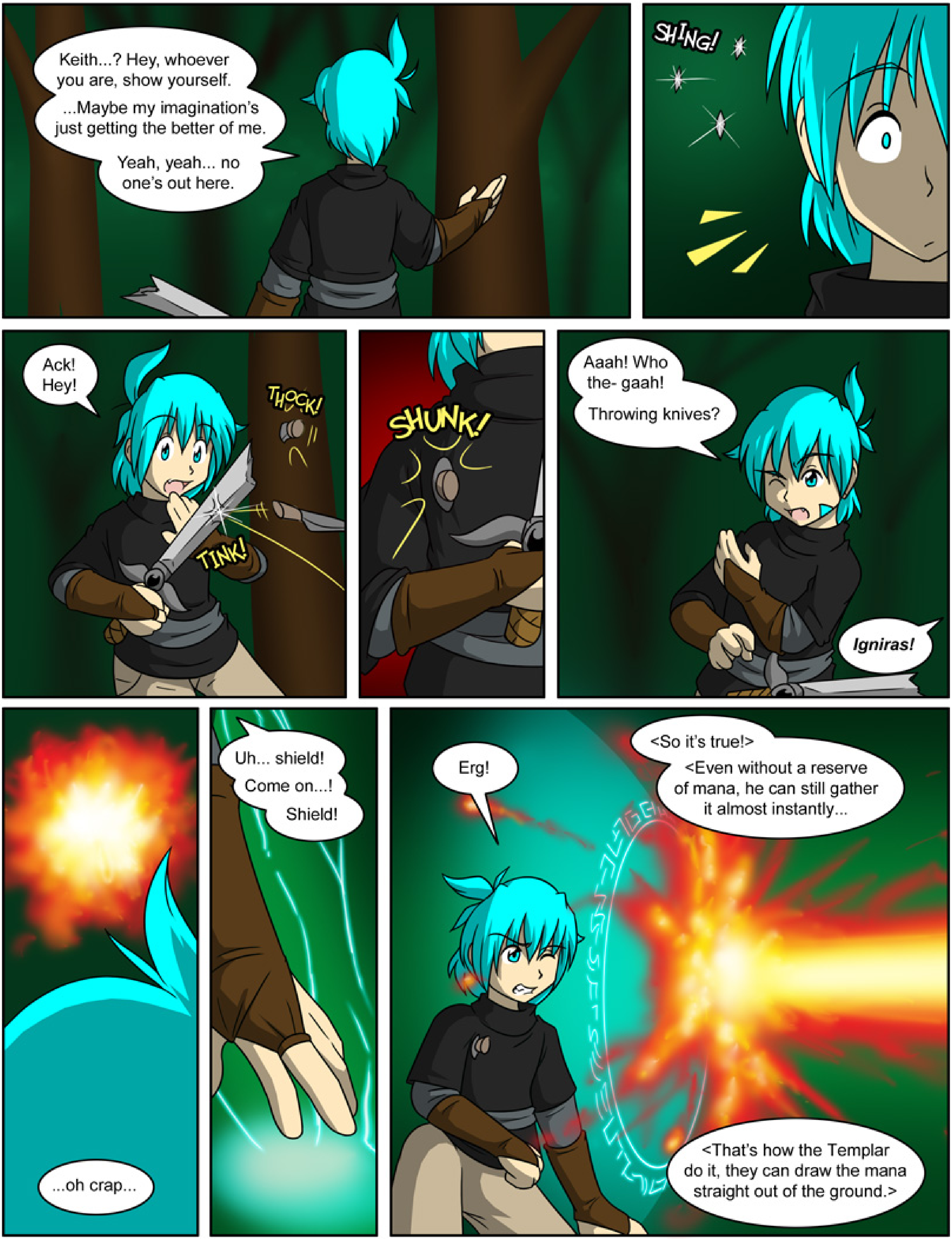

Would you get back here!? This isn't a game!
Heheh, come on! Catch me!
Damn it! Stop, you stupid Keidran!
You...
Finally... how... how did you find me?
You promised not to call me that...
<What the- why would his heart desire be a Keidran?>
<That's not important. Just make sure you take him out, got it?>
Hey! Hey! Don't you dare start crying!
<Oh, don't worry.
I'm not taking any chances this time.
I'll use the poison.>

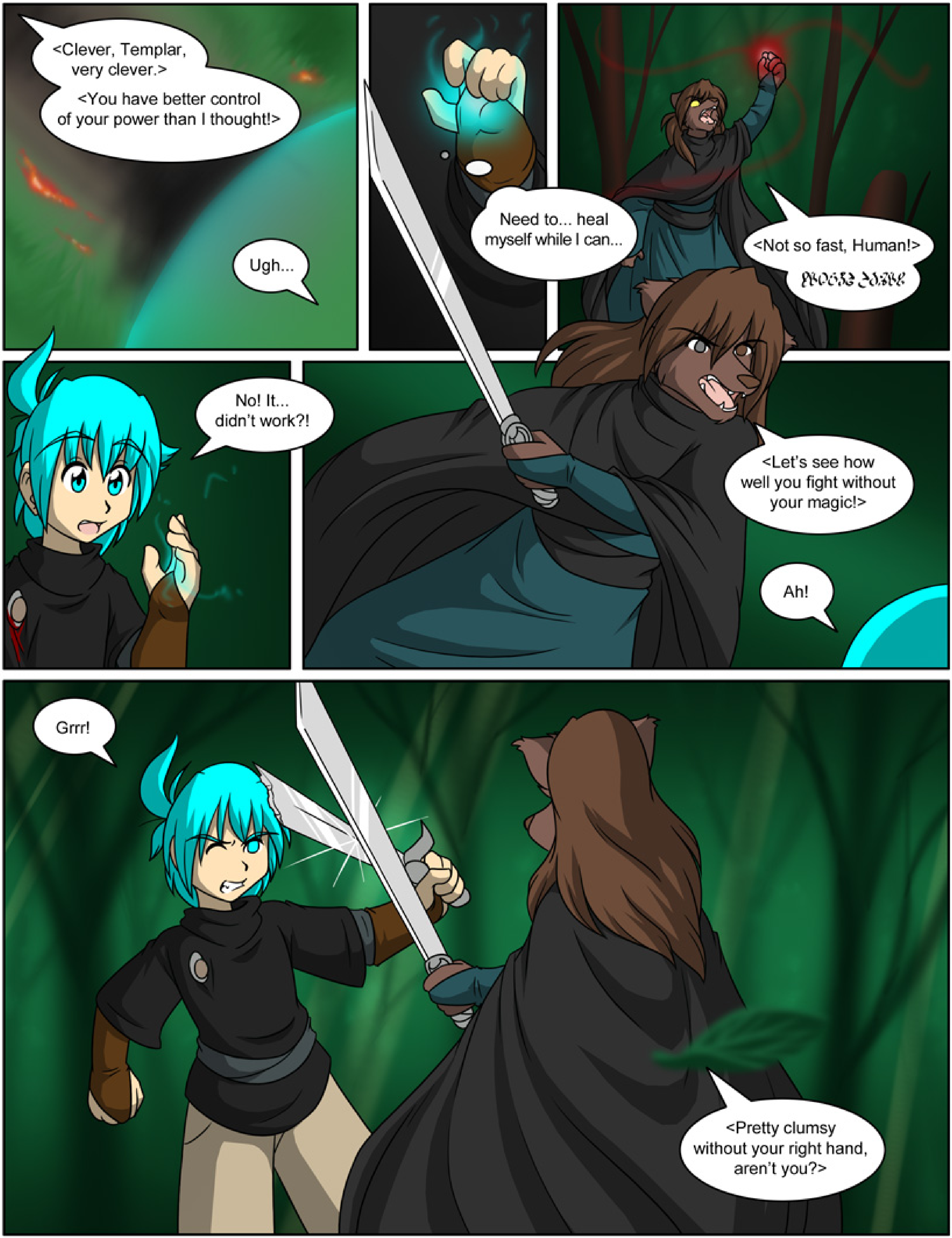

Keith... I'm so sorry.
It's awful, seeing how much you've changed.
It's all my fault...
Laura.. it's... it's alright.
But why...? Why did you... right before the wedding?
Was it something I did?
No... it wasn't...
My sister... she hated that you were a Basitin.
She also hated that I was marrying before her.
You know about that... milk some Keidran drink?
She gave me that... I didn't realize what I was doing.. I couldn't help..
What?! She gave you...
But.. why didn't you come back?
I... I was too ashamed.
But if I'd have known, I wouldn't have-
Wait...
Hold on, Laura.
HEY! Whoever's out there, show yourself!
These ears aren't just for decoration, you know!

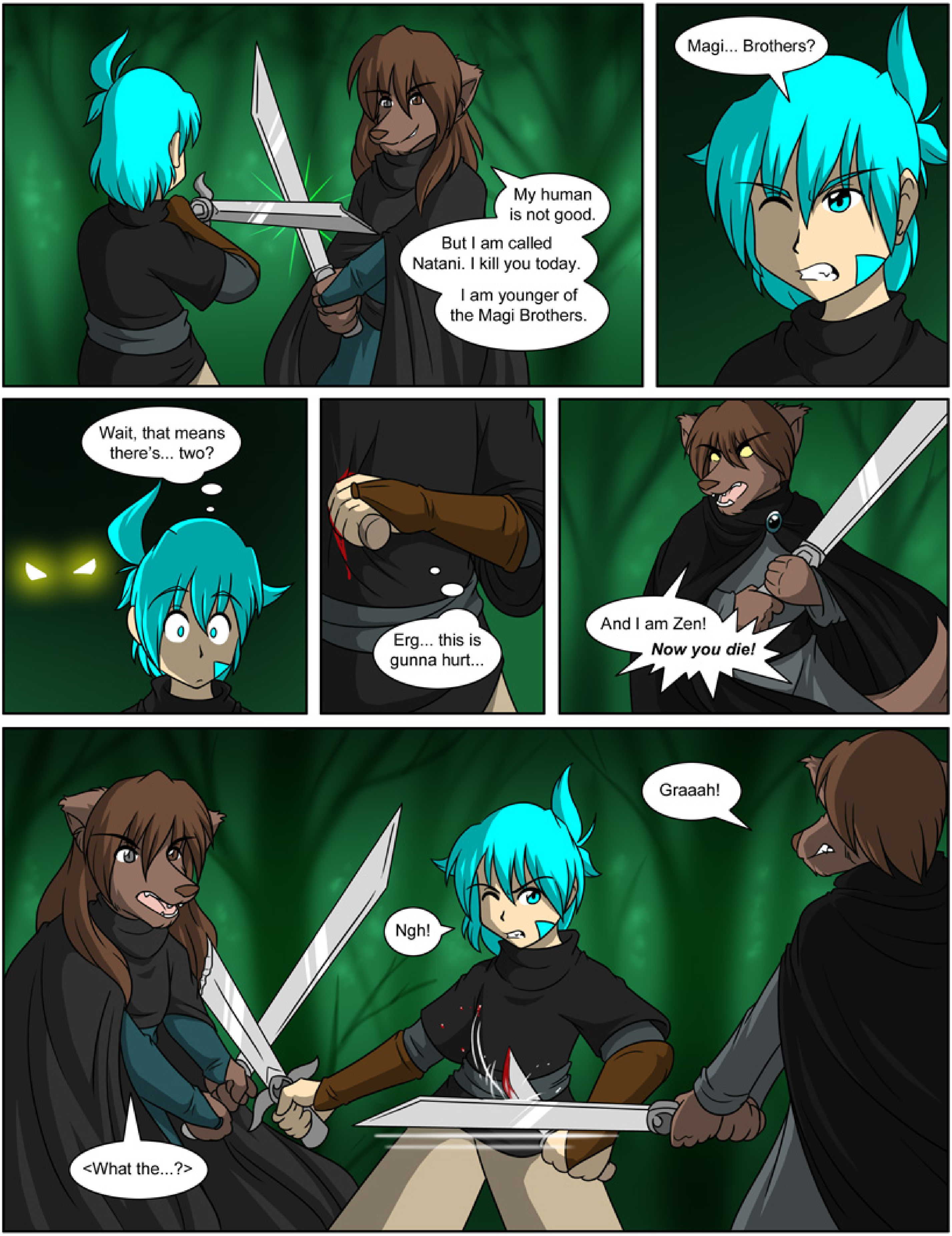

No, oh no!
Keith!
Keith.. Keith.. please don't die!
Keith!
Did.. you just hear something, Flora?
Yeah, that sounded like a girl's voice.
<Good job, Natani, that illusion of yours gave us away for sure.>
<The illusion only stays until the target is taken out.>
<If your "Instant Death" poison worked better, the illusion would have vanished sooner!>
Hello? Who's out here?
Keith? Where are you?
Flora, stay in the tent.
I have a bad feeling about this.
<Great, the crippled Templar is on guard.>
<Heh, you know what? I'm glad. I've always wanted to see his power.>
<Nata- hey!>
<Y-you idiot! We have to fight together!>

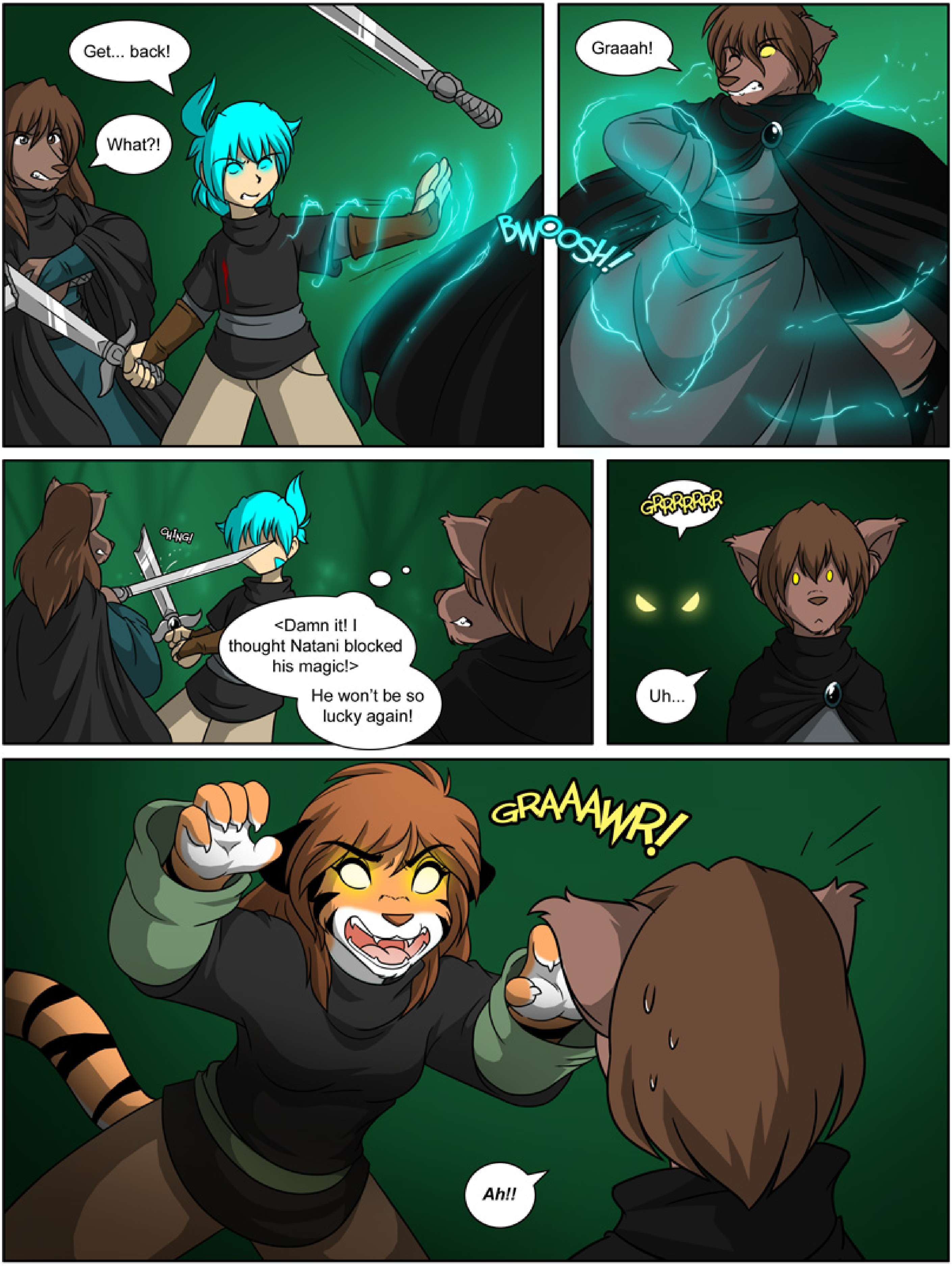
Be right back (really)

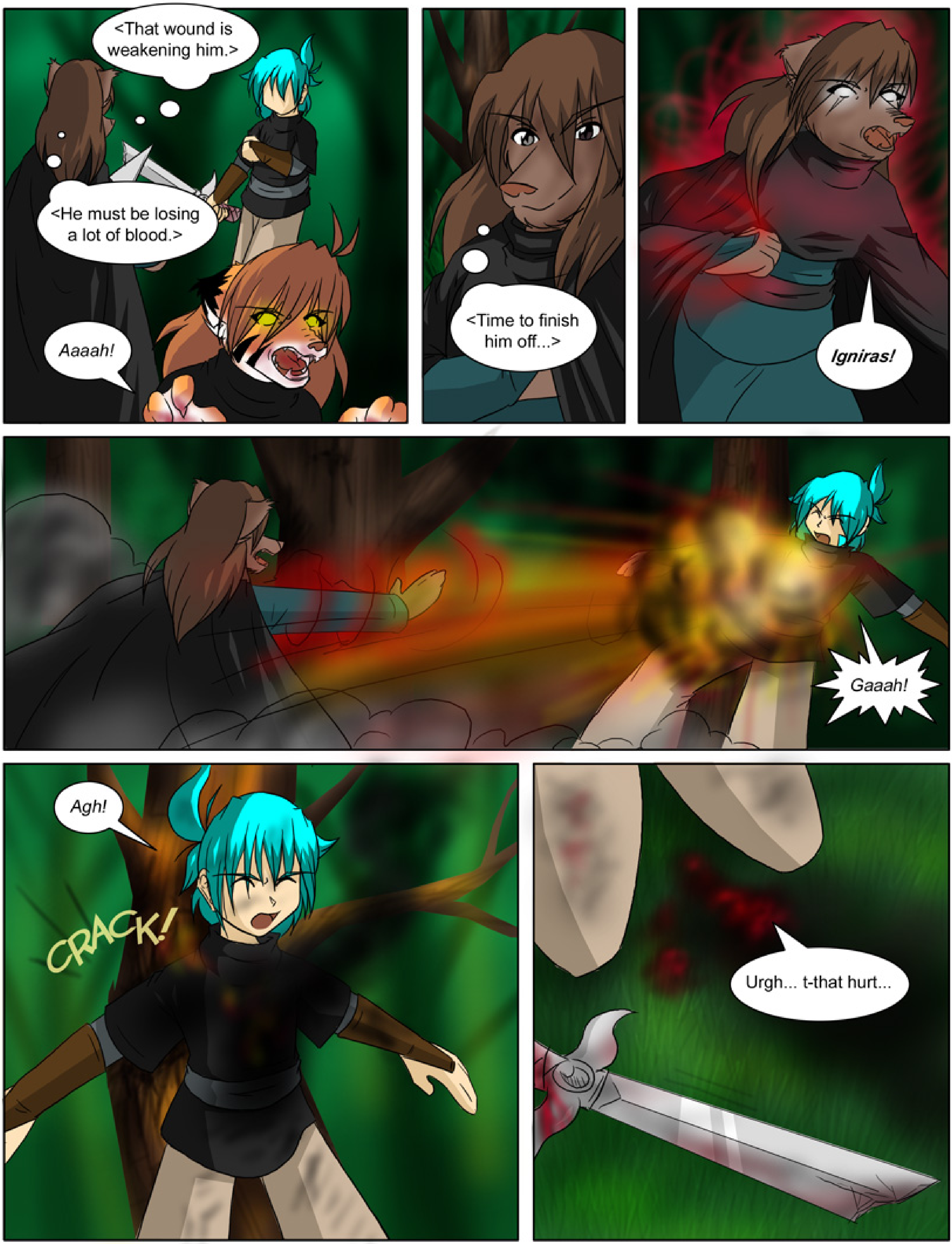
I fell asleep making the comic.
It's almost done. Check later today.

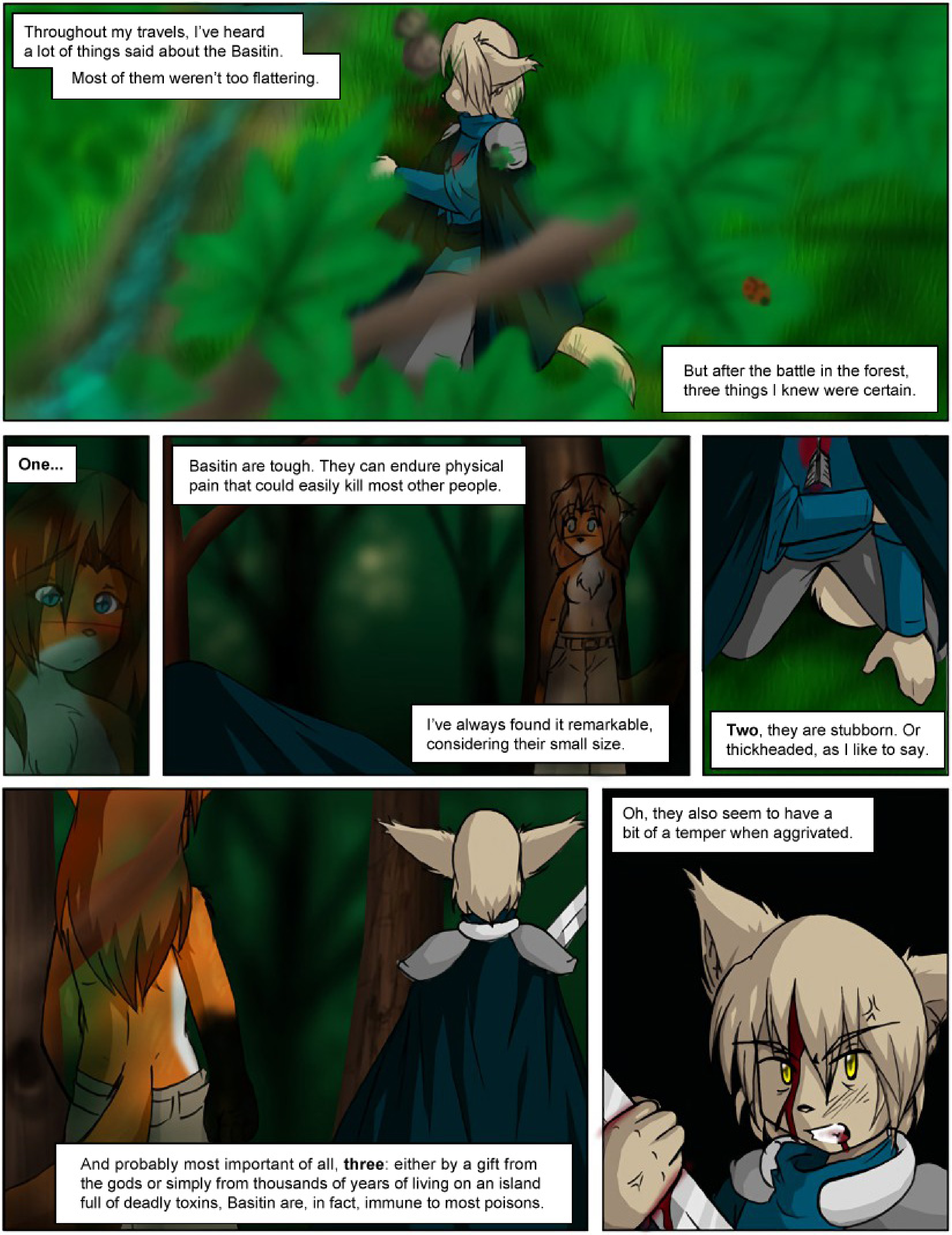

Keith...? Hey, whoever you are, show yourself.
...Maybe my imagination's just getting the better of me.
Yeah, yeah... no one's out here.
SHING!
Ack! Hey!
THOCK!
TINK!
SHUNK!
Aaah! Who the- gaah!
Throwing knives?
Igniras!
...oh crap...
Uh... shield!
Come on...!
Shield!
Erg!
<So it's true!>
<Even without a reserve of mana, he can still gather it almost instantly...
<That's how the Templar do it, they can draw the mana straight out of the ground.>

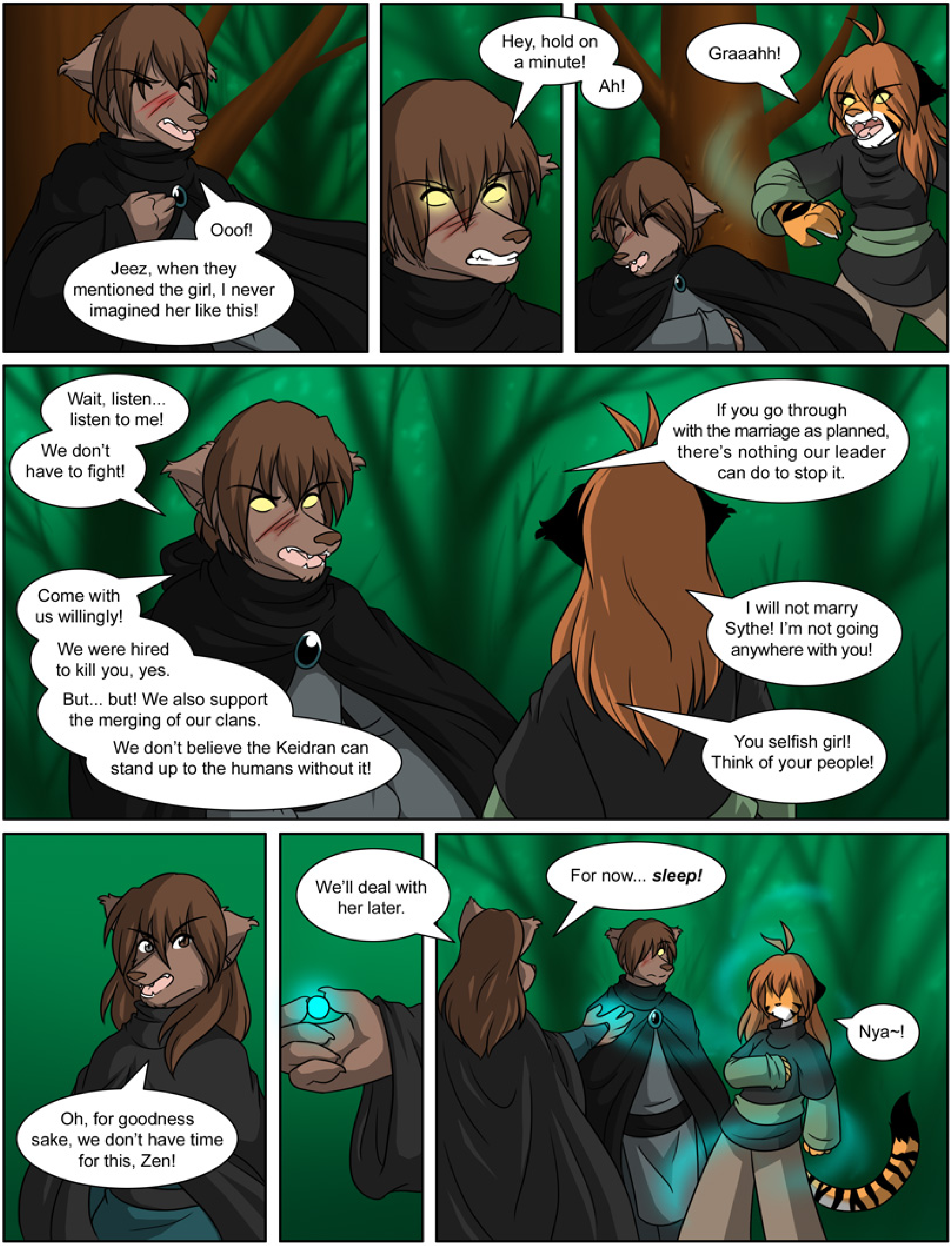

<Clever, Templar, very clever.>
<You have better control of your power than I thought!>
Ugh...
Need to... heal myself while I can...
<Not so fast, Human!>
No! It... didn't work?!
<Let's see how well you fight without your magic!>
Ah!
Grrr!
<Pretty clumsy without your right hand, aren't you?>

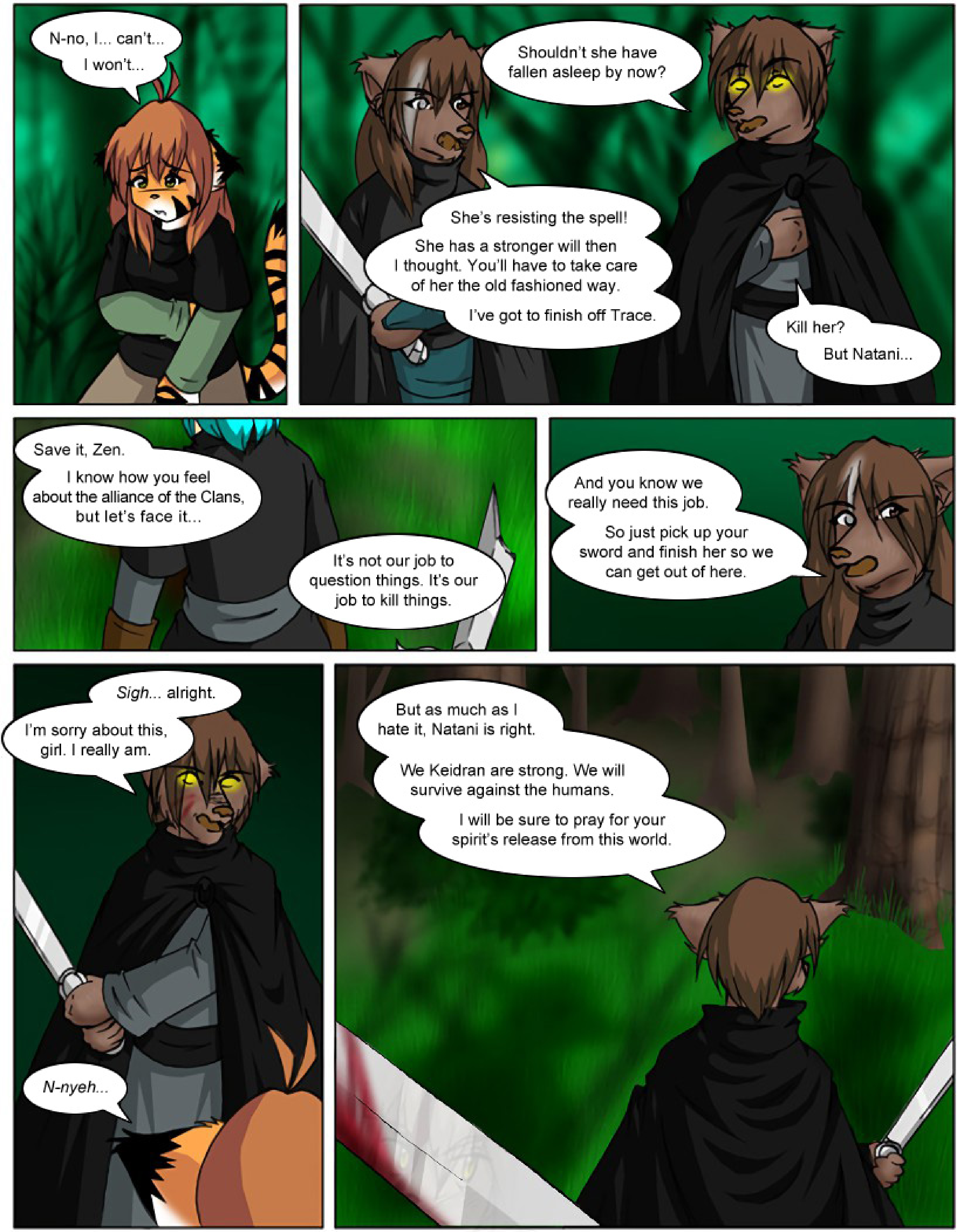

My human is not good.
But I am called Natani. I kill you today.
I am younger of the Magi Brothers.
Magi... Brothers?
Wait, that means there's... two?
Erg... this is gunna hurt...
And I am Zen!
Now you die!
Graaah!
Ngh!
<What the...?>

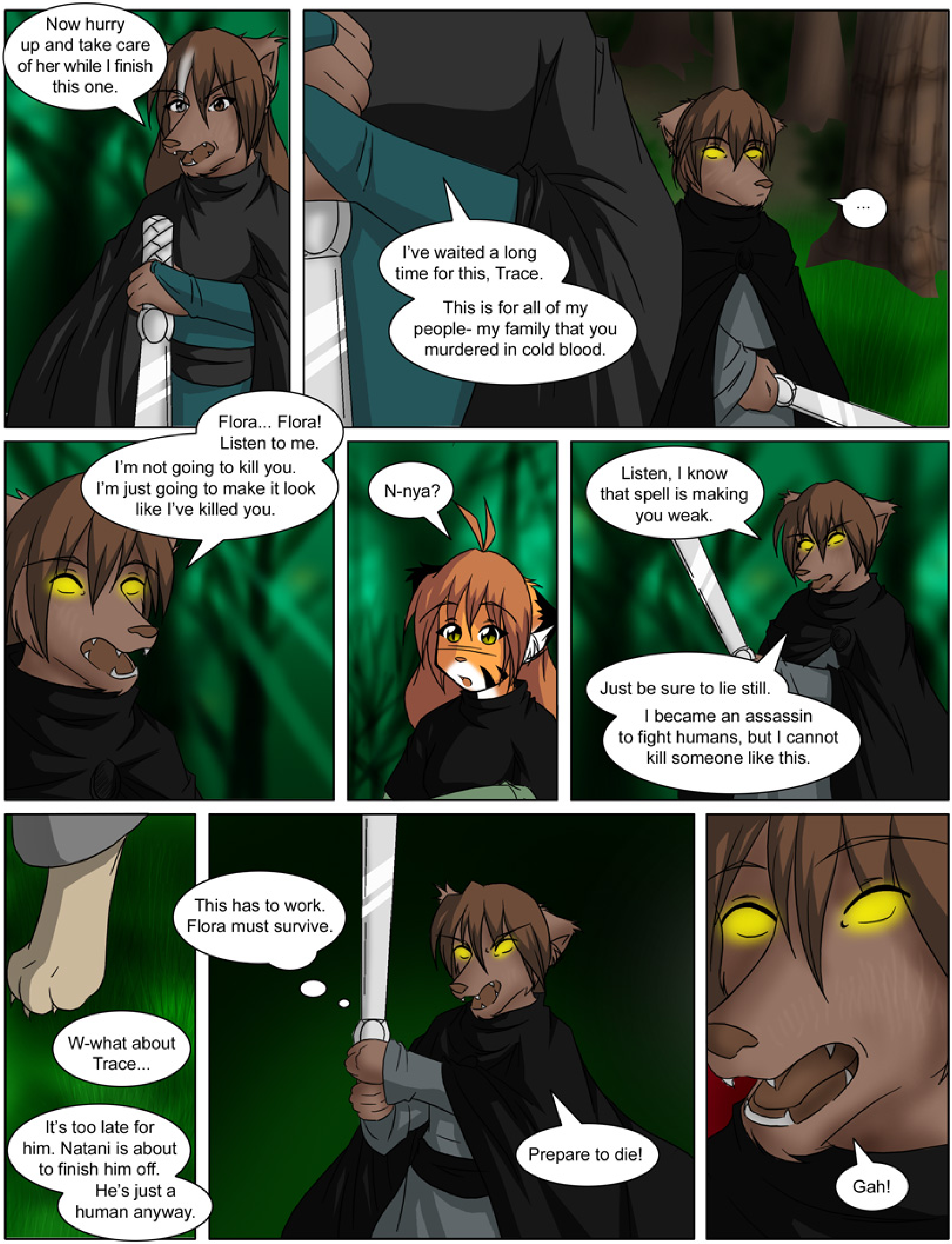

Get... back!
What?!
BWOOSH!
Graaah!
CHING!
<Damn it! I thought Natani blocked his magic!>
He won't be so lucky again!
GRRRRRRR
Uh...
GRAAAWR!
Ah!!

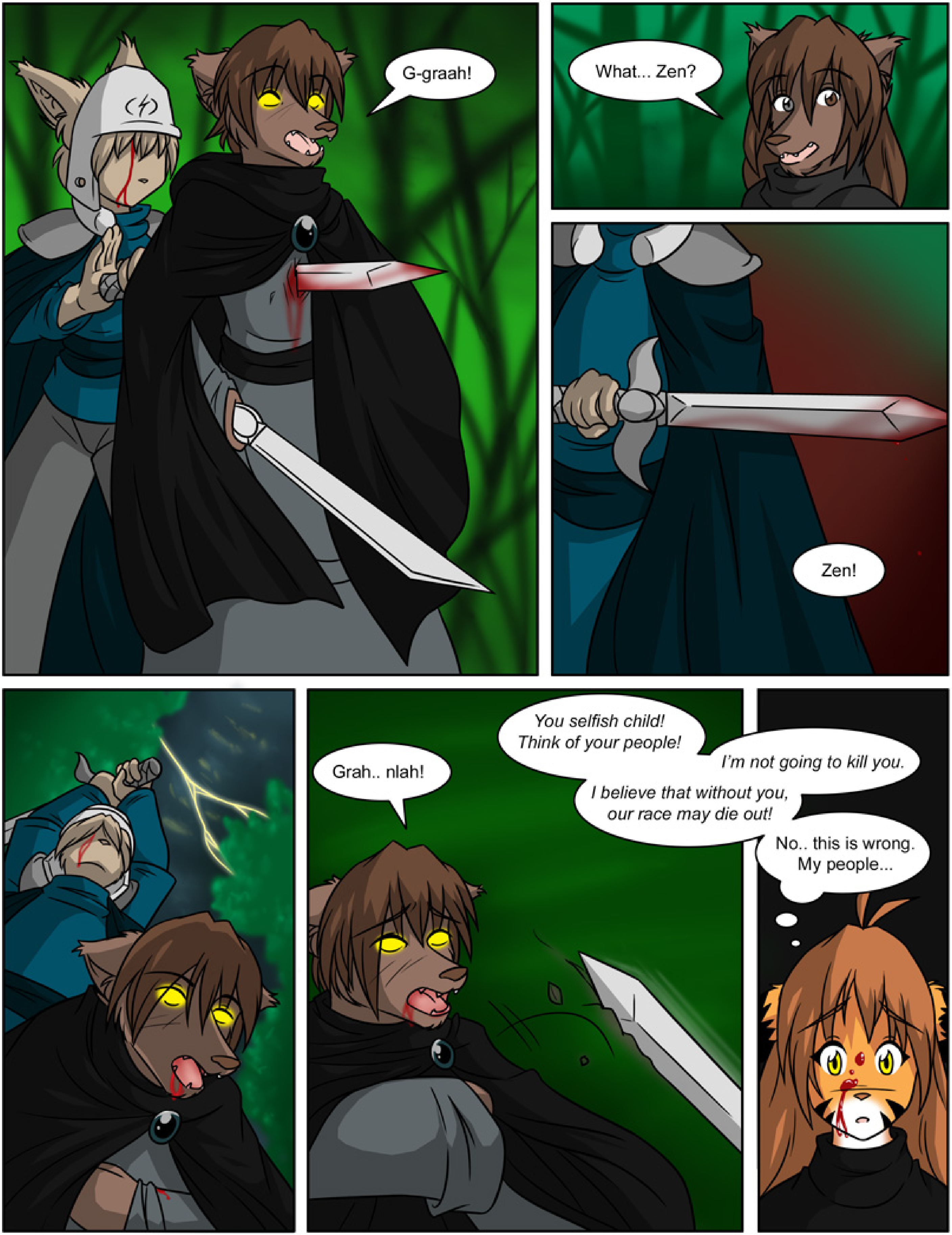

<That wound is weakening him.>
<He must be losing a lot of blood.>
Aaaah!
<Time to finish him off...>
Igniras!
Gaaah!
Agh!
CRACK!
Urgh... t-that hurt...

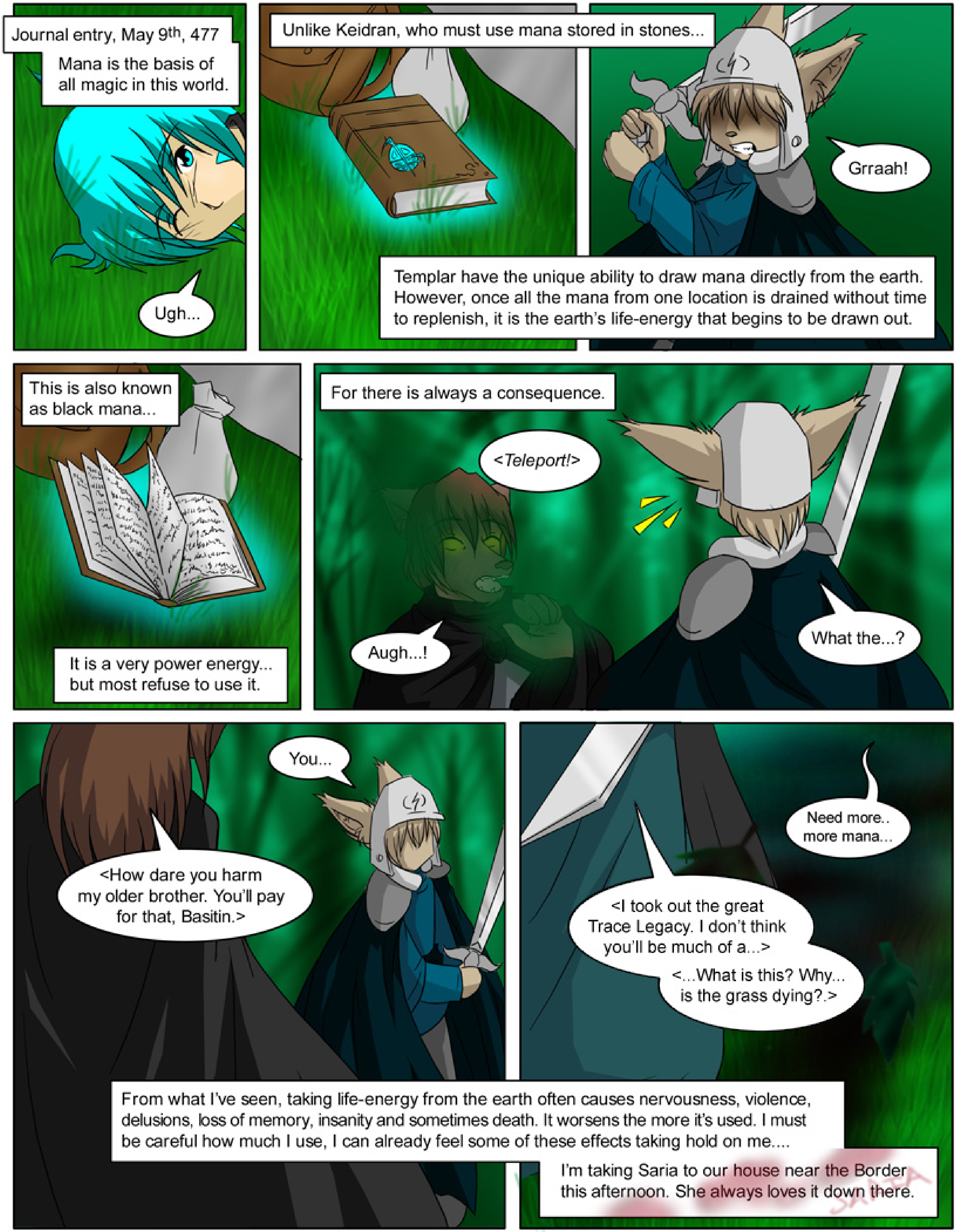

Throughout my travels, I've heard a lot of things said about the Basitin.
Most of them weren't too flattering.
But after the battle in the forest, three things I knew were certain.
One...
Basitin are tough. They can endure physical pain that could easily kill most other people.
I've always found it remarkable, considering their small size.
Two, they are stubborn. Or thickheaded, as I like to say.
And probably most important of all, **three**: either by a gift from the gods or simply from thousands of years of living on an island full of deadly toxins, Basitin are, in fact, immune to most poisons.
Oh, they also seem to have a bit of a temper when aggrivated.

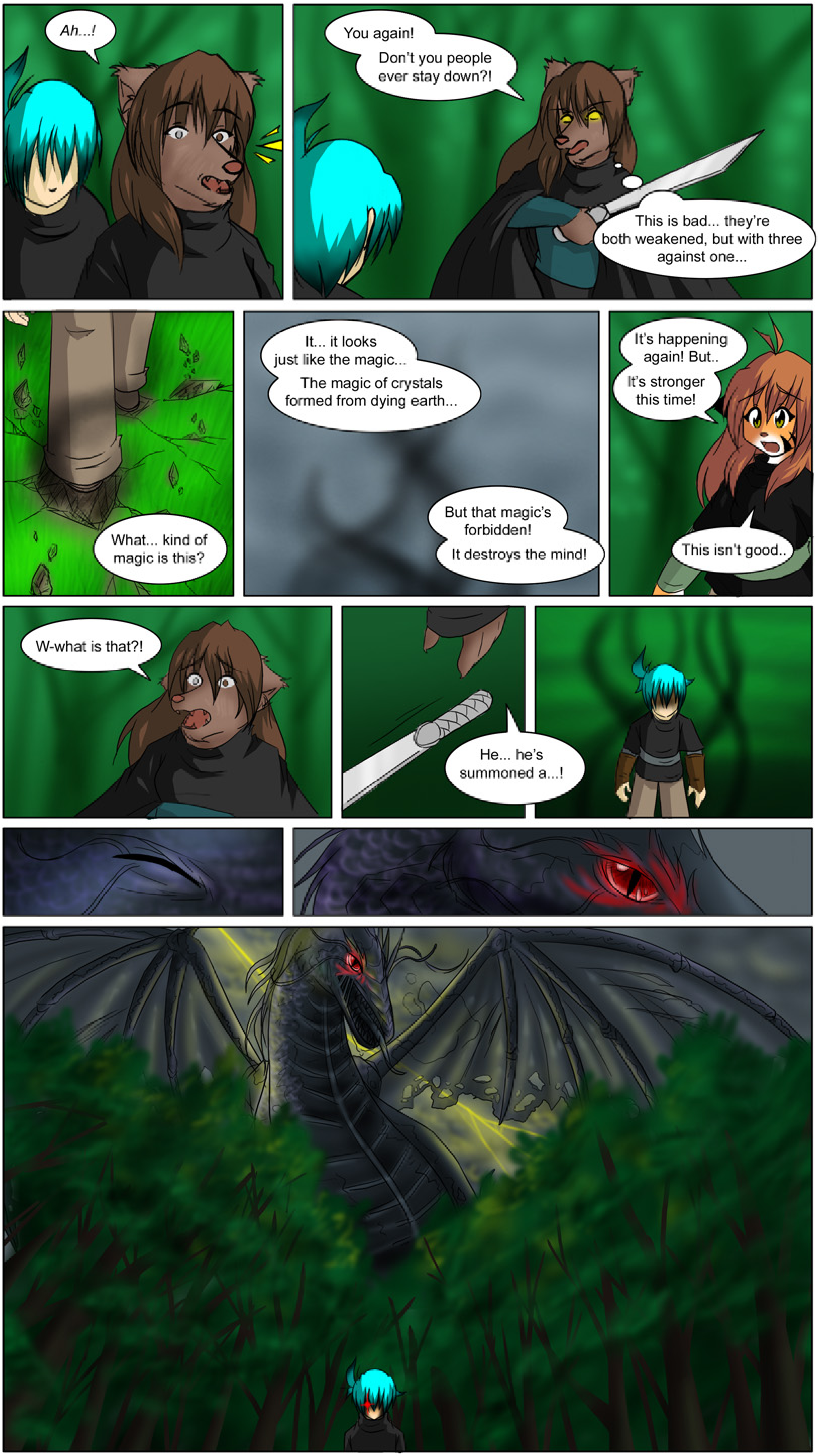

Ooof!
Jeez, when they mentioned the girl, I never imagined her like this!
Hey, hold on a minute!
Ah!
Graaahh!
Wait, listen... listen to me!
We don't have to fight!
If you go through with the marriage as planned, there's nothing our leader can do to stop it.
Come with us willingly!
We were hired to kill you, yes.
But... but! We also support the merging of our clans.
We don't believe the Keidran can stand up to the humans without it!
I will not marry Sythe! I'm not going anywhere with you!
You selfish girl! Think of your people!
Oh, for goodness sake, we don't have time for this, Zen!
We'll deal with her later.
For now... ***sleep!***
Nya~!

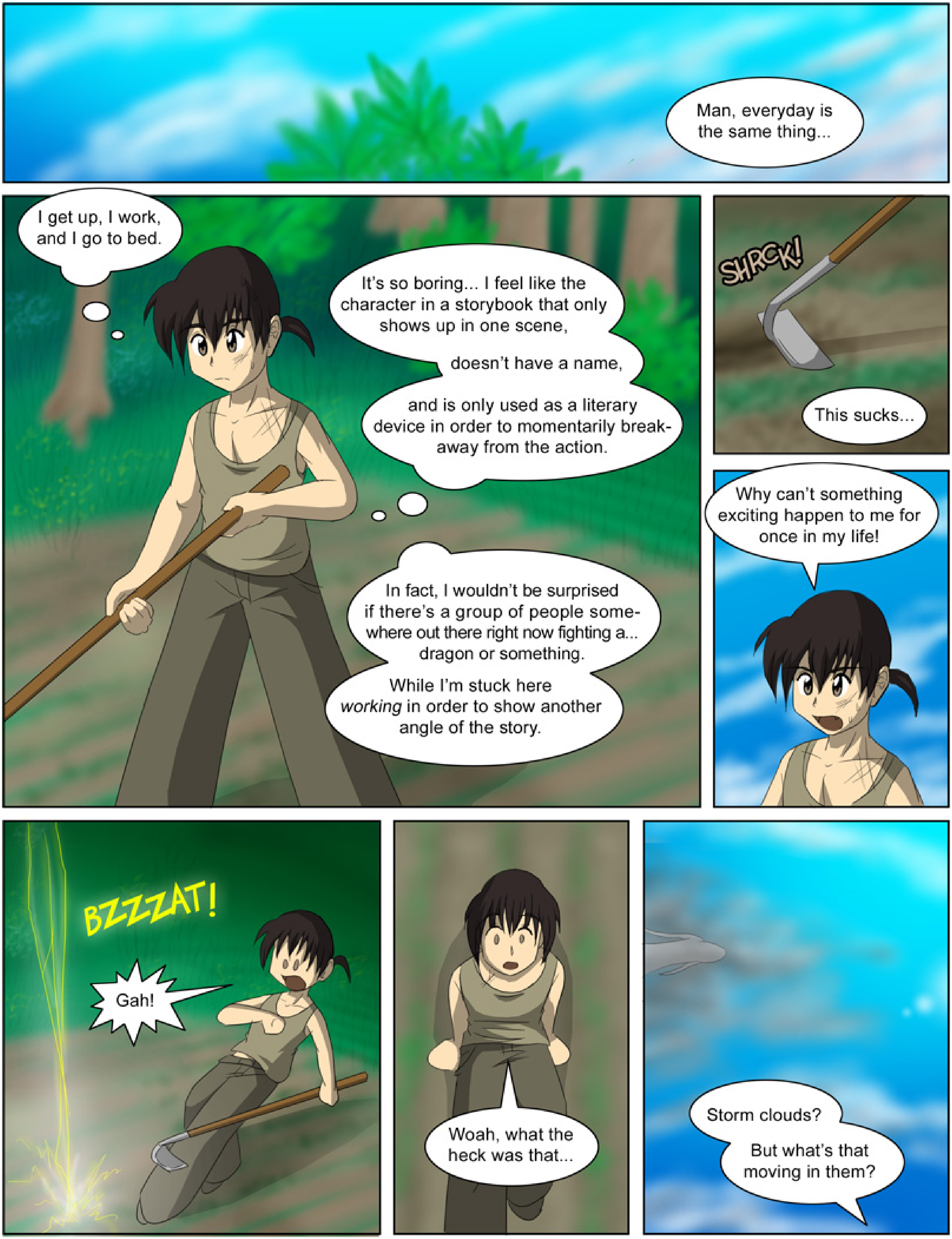

N-no, I... can't... I won't...
Shouldn't she have fallen asleep by now?
She's resisting the spell!
She has a stronger will then I thought. You'll have to take care of her the old fashioned way.
I've got to finish off Trace.
Kill her? But Natani...
Save it, Zen.
I know how you feel about the alliance of the Clans, but let's face it...
It's not our job to question things. It's our job to kill things.
And you know we really need this job.
So just pick up your sword and finish her so we can get out of here.
Sigh... alright.
I'm sorry about this, girl. I really am.
N-nyeh...
But as much as I hate it, Natani is right.
We Keidran are strong. We will survive against the humans.
I will be sure to pray for your spirit's release from this world.

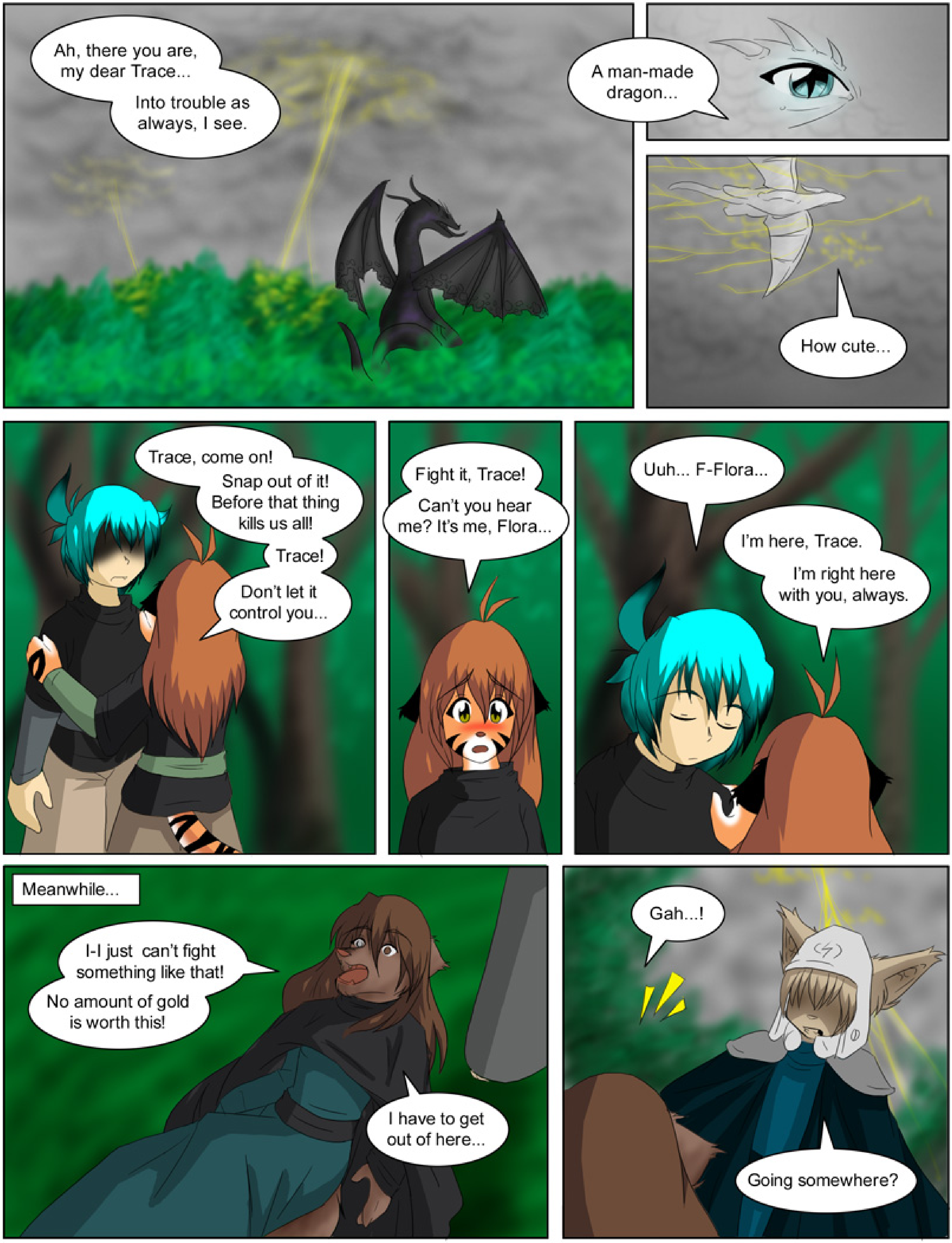

Now hurry up and take care of her while I finish this one.
I've waited a long time for this, Trace.
This is for all of my people- my family that you murdered in cold blood.
...
Flora... Flora! Listen to me.
I'm not going to kill you. I'm just going to make it look like I've killed you.
N-nya?
Listen, I know that spell is making you weak.
Just be sure to lie still.
I became an assassin to fight humans, but I cannot kill someone like this.
W-what about Trace...
It's too late for him. Natani is about to finish him off.
He's just a human anyway.
This has to work. Flora must survive.
Prepare to die!
Gah!

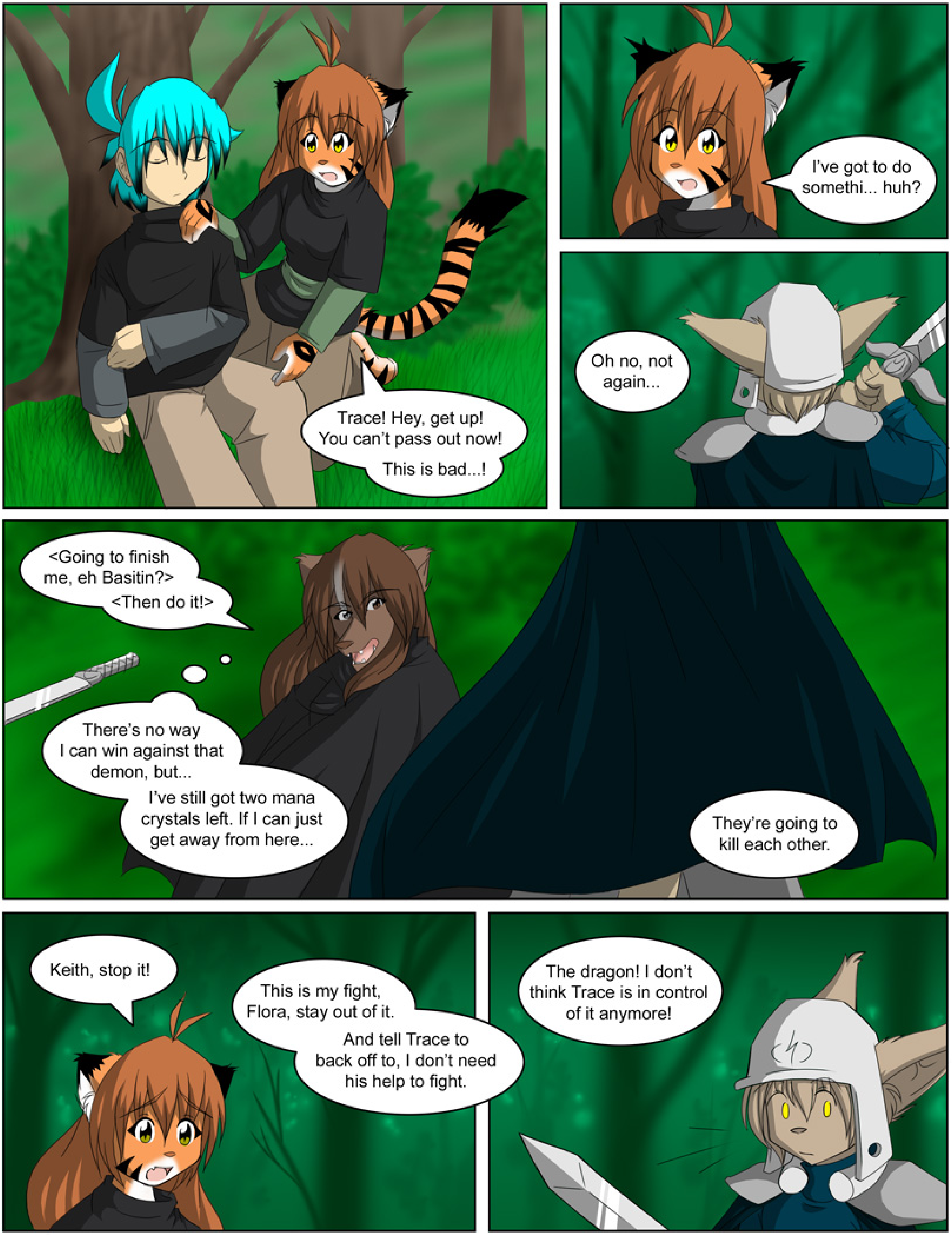

G-graah!
What... Zen?
Zen!
Grah.. nlah!
You selfish child! Think of your people!
I'm not going to kill you.
I believe that without you, our race may die out!
No.. this is wrong. My people...

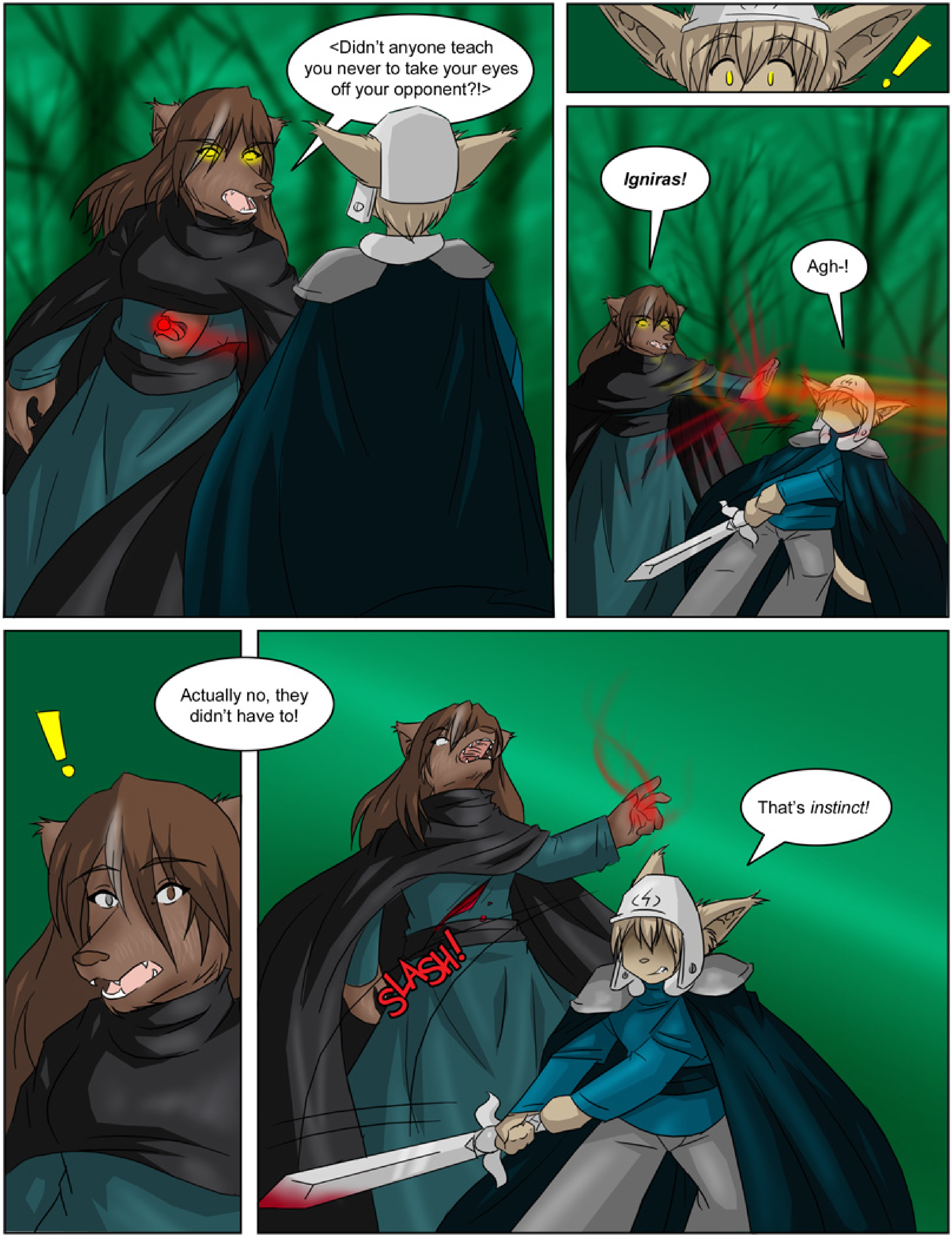

Journal entry, May 9th, 477
Mana is the basis of all magic in this world.
Ugh...
Unlike Keidran, who must use mana stored in stones...
Grraah!
Templar have the unique ability to draw mana directly from the earth. However, once all the mana from one location is drained without time to replenish, it is the earth's life-energy that begins to be drawn out.
This is also known as black mana...
It is a very power energy... but most refuse to use it.
For there is always a consequence.
<Teleport!>
Augh...!
What the...?
You...
<How dare you harm my older brother. You'll pay for that, Basitin.>
Need more.. more mana...
<I took out the great Trace Legacy. I don't think you'll be much of a...>
<...What is this? Why... is the grass dying?.>
From what I've seen, taking life-energy from the earth often causes nervousness, violence, delusions, loss of memory, insanity and sometimes death. It worsens the more it's used. I must be careful how much I use, I can already feel some of these effects taking hold on me....
I'm taking Saria to our house near the Border this afternoon. She always loves it down there.

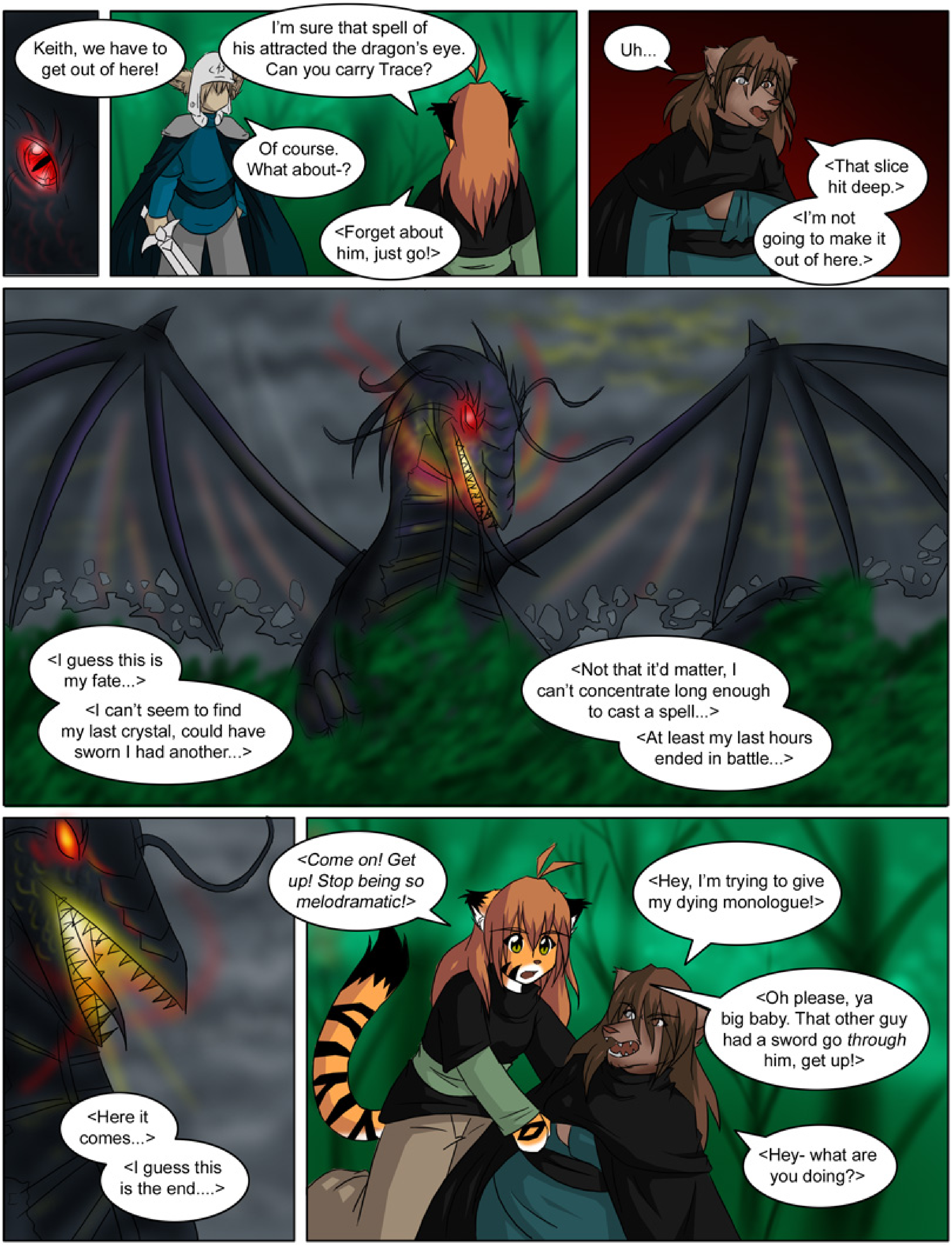

Ah...!
You again!
Don't you people ever stay down?!
This is bad... they're both weakened, but with three against one...
What... kind of magic is this?
It... it looks just like the magic...
The magic of crystals formed from dying earth...
But that magic's forbidden!
It destroys the mind!
It's happening again! But..
It's stronger this time!
This isn't good..
W-what is that?!
He... he's summoned a...!

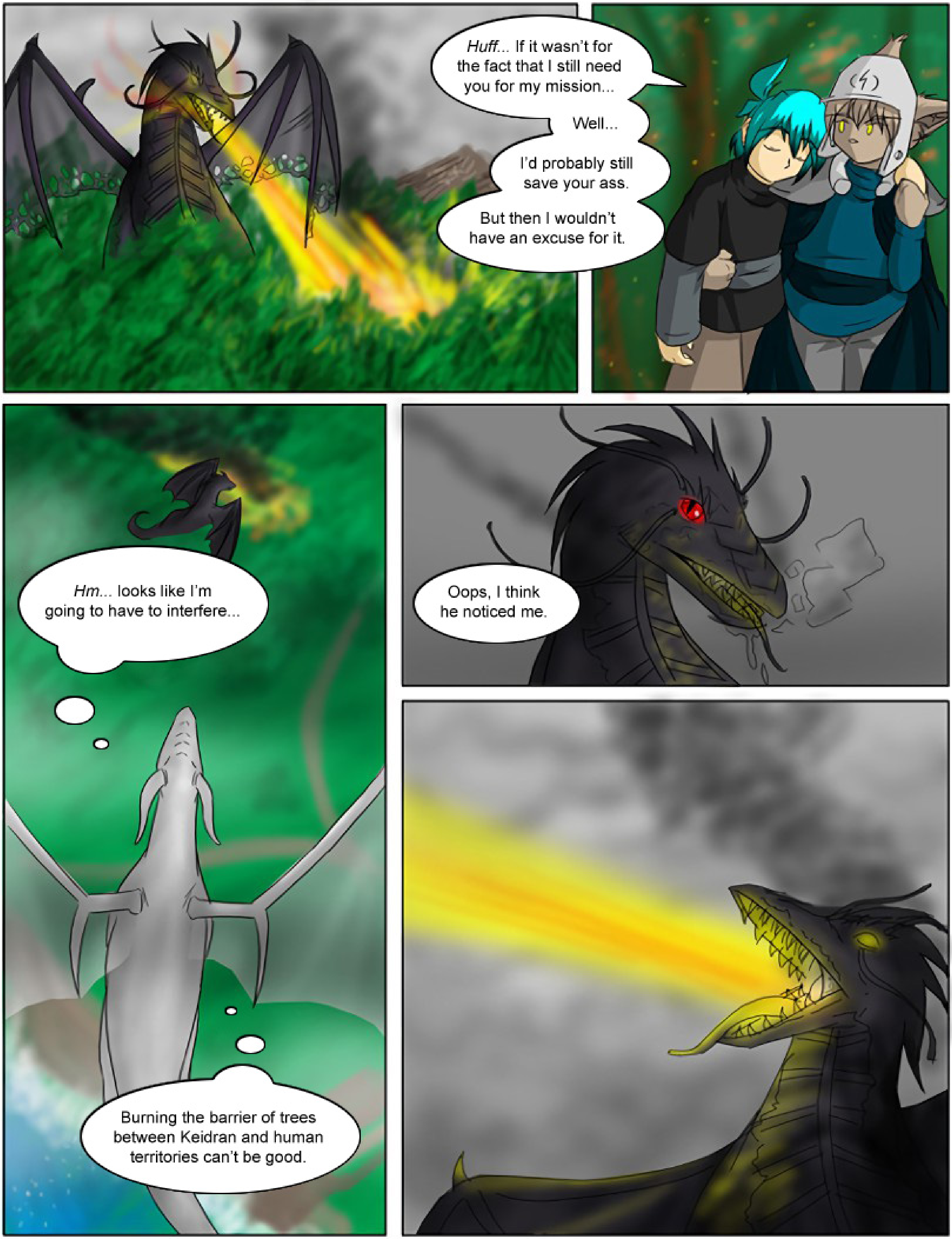

Man, everyday is the same thing...
I get up, I work, and I go to bed.
It's so boring... I feel like the character in a storybook that only shows up in one scene,
doesn't have a name,
and is only used as a literary device in order to momentarily break-away from the action.
In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if there's a group of people somewhere out there right now fighting a... dragon or something.
While I'm stuck here *working* in order to show another angle of the story.
SHRCK!
This sucks...
Why can't something exciting happen to me for once in my life!
BZZZAT!
Gah!
Woah, what the heck was that...
Storm clouds?
But what's that moving in them?

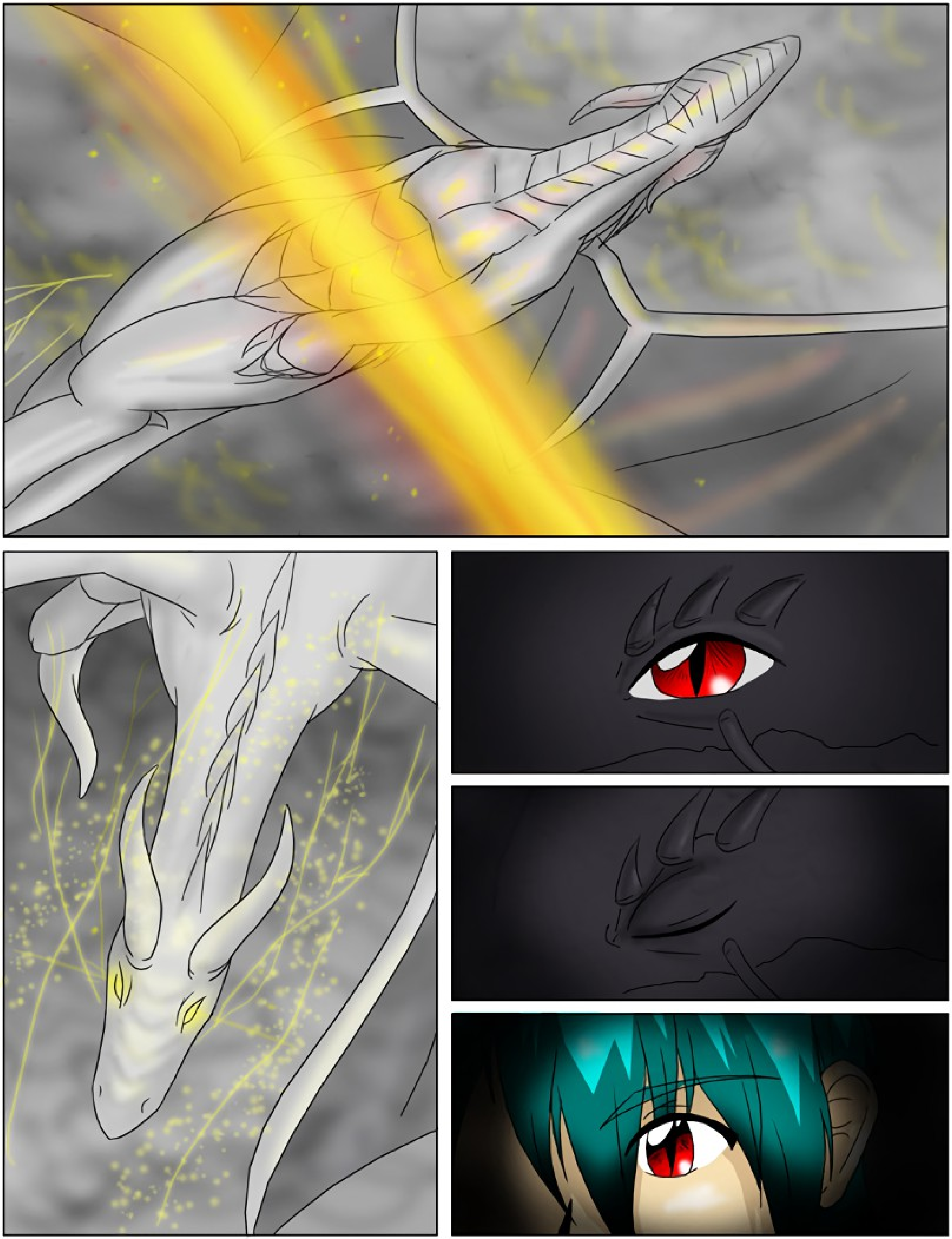

Ah, there you are, my dear Trace...
Into trouble as always, I see.
A man-made dragon...
How cute...
Trace, come on!
Snap out of it! Before that thing kills us all!
Trace!
Don't let it control you...
Fight it, Trace!
Can't you hear me? It's me, Flora...
Uuh... F-Flora...
I'm here, Trace.
I'm right here with you, always.
Meanwhile...
I-I just can't fight something like that!
No amount of gold is worth this!
I have to get out of here...
Gah...!
Going somewhere?

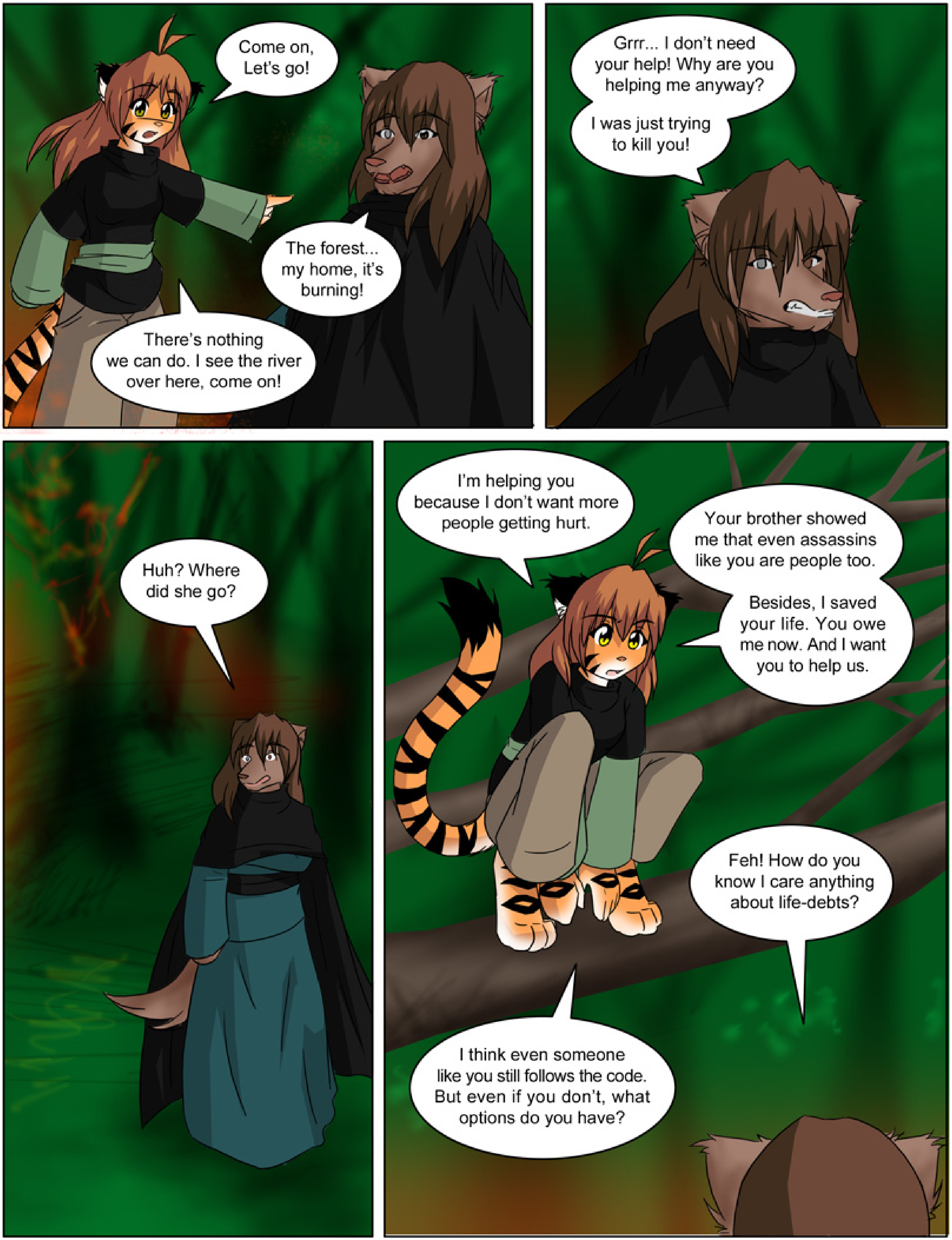

Trace! Hey, get up! You can't pass out now!
This is bad...!
I've got to do somethi... huh?
Oh no, not again...
<Going to finish me, eh Basitin?>
<Then do it!>
There's no way I can win against that demon, but...
I've still got two mana crystals left. If I can just get away from here...
They're going to kill each other.
Keith, stop it!
This is my fight, Flora, stay out of it.
And tell Trace to back off to, I don't need his help to fight.
The dragon! I don't think Trace is in control of it anymore!


<Didn't anyone teach you never to take your eyes off your opponent?!>
!
Igniras!
Agh-!
!
Actually no, they didn't have to!
SLASH!
That's instinct!

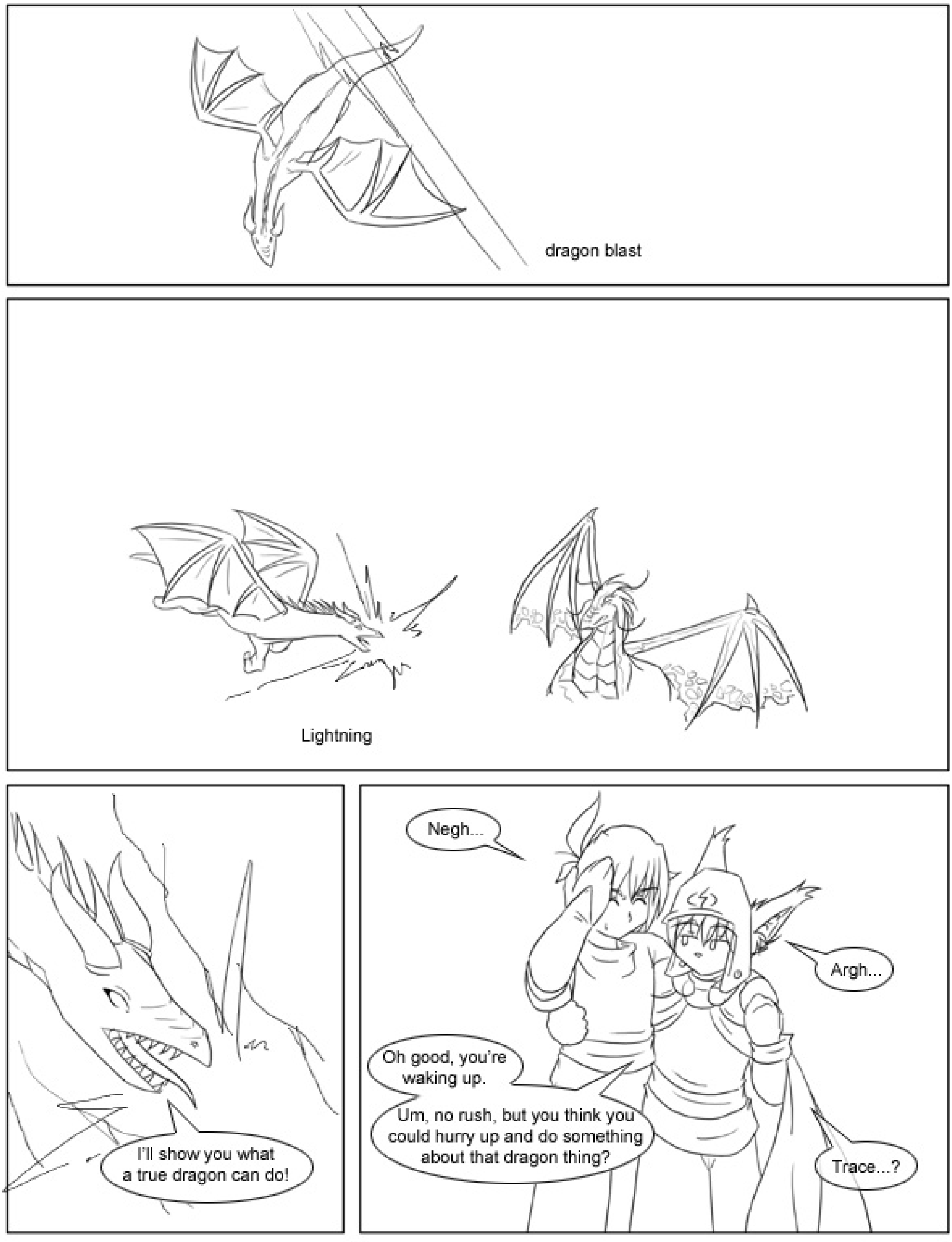

Keith, we have to get out of here!
I'm sure that spell of his attracted the dragon's eye. Can you carry Trace?
Of course. What about-?
<Forget about him, just go!>
Uh...
<That slice hit deep.>
<I'm not going to make it out of here.>
<I guess this is my fate...>
<I can't seem to find my last crystal, could have sworn I had another...>
<Not that it'd matter, I can't concentrate long enough to cast a spell...>
<At least my last hours ended in battle...>
<Here it comes...>
<I guess this is the end....>
<*Come on! Get up! Stop being so melodramatic!*>
<Hey, I'm trying to give my dying monologue!>
<Oh please, ya big baby. That other guy had a sword go *through* him, get up!>
<Hey- what are you doing?>

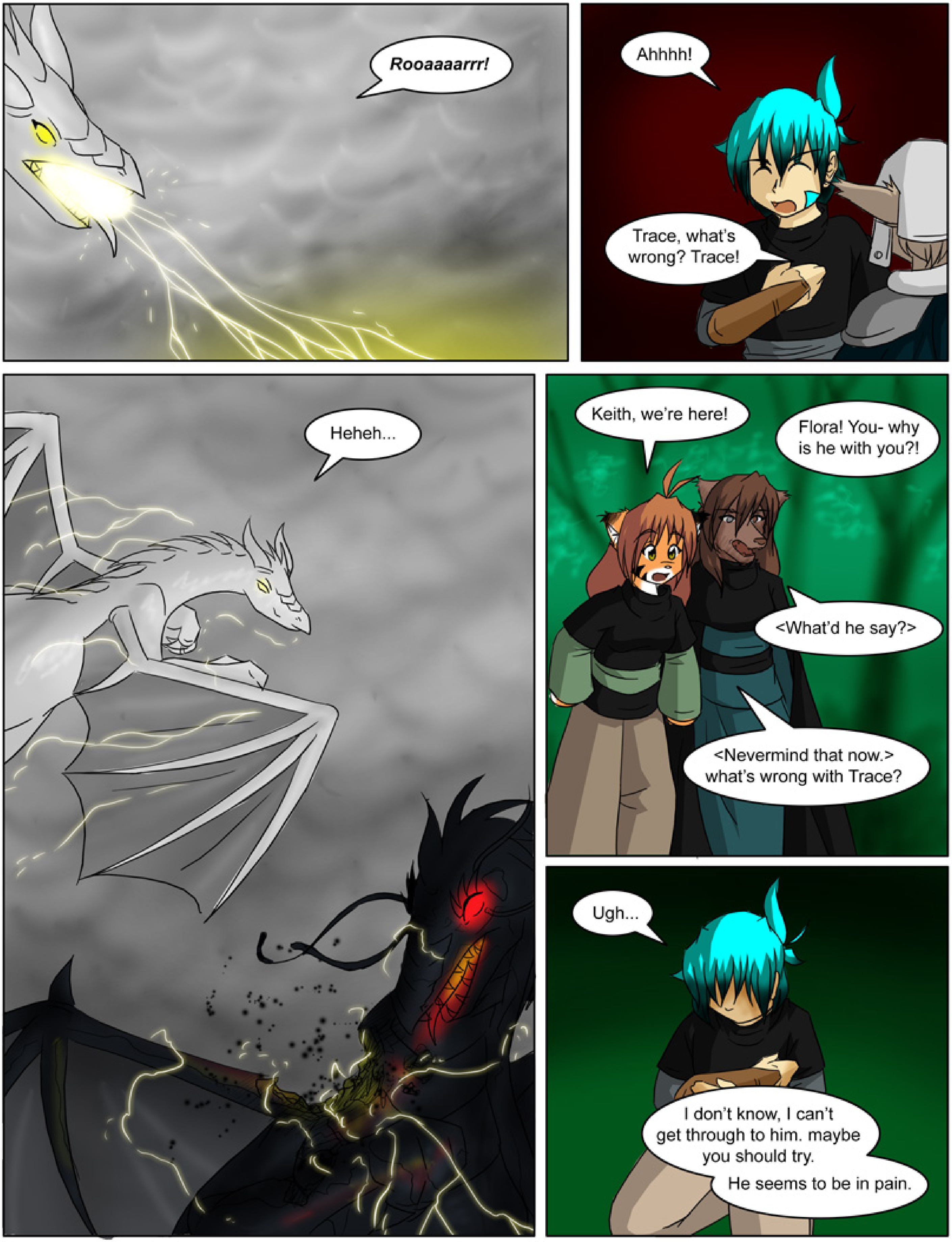

Huff... If it wasn't for the fact that I still need you for my mission...
Well...
I'd probably still save your ass.
But then I wouldn't have an excuse for it.
Hm... looks like I'm going to have to interfere...
Burning the barrier of trees between Keidran and human territories can't be good.
Oops, I think he noticed me.

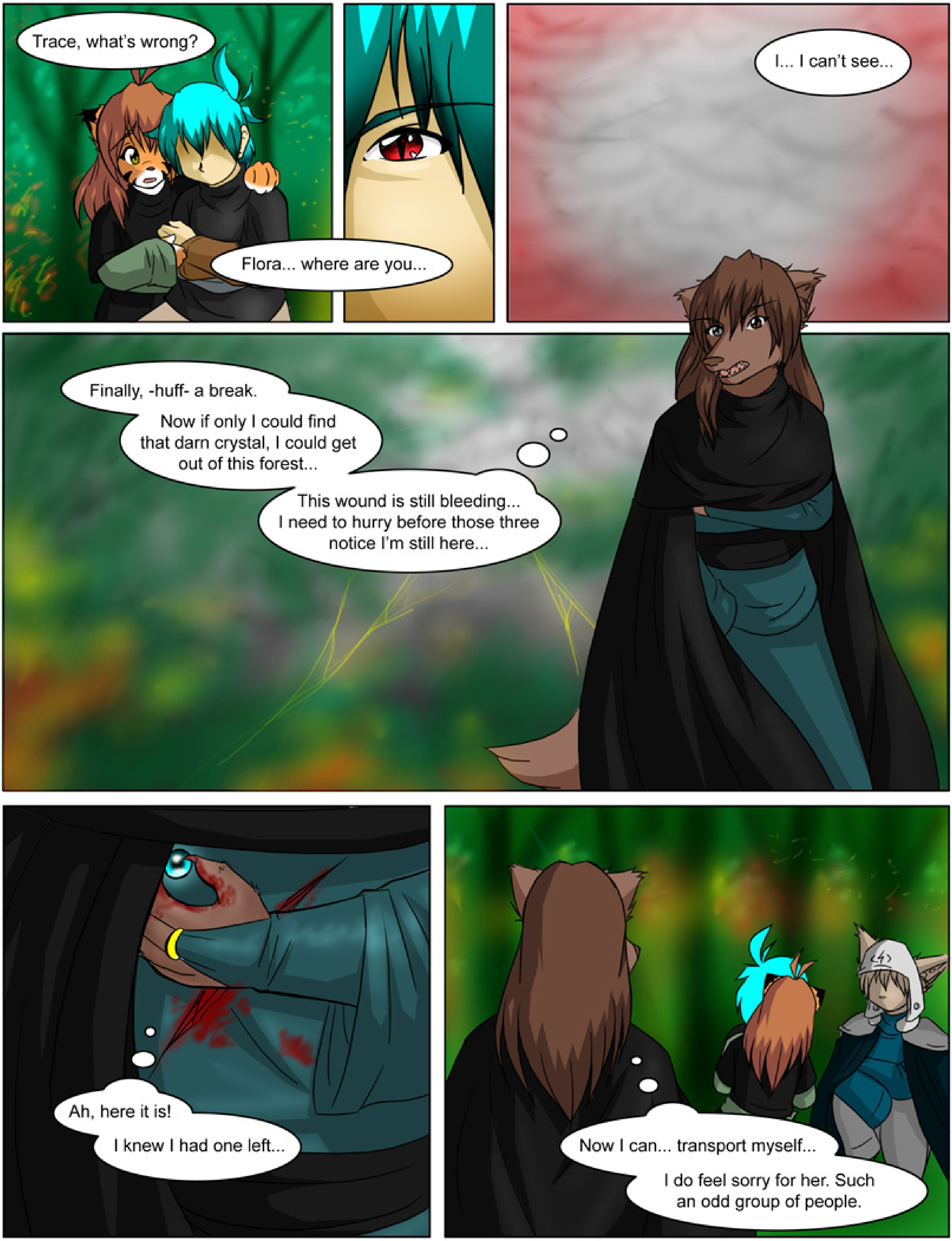


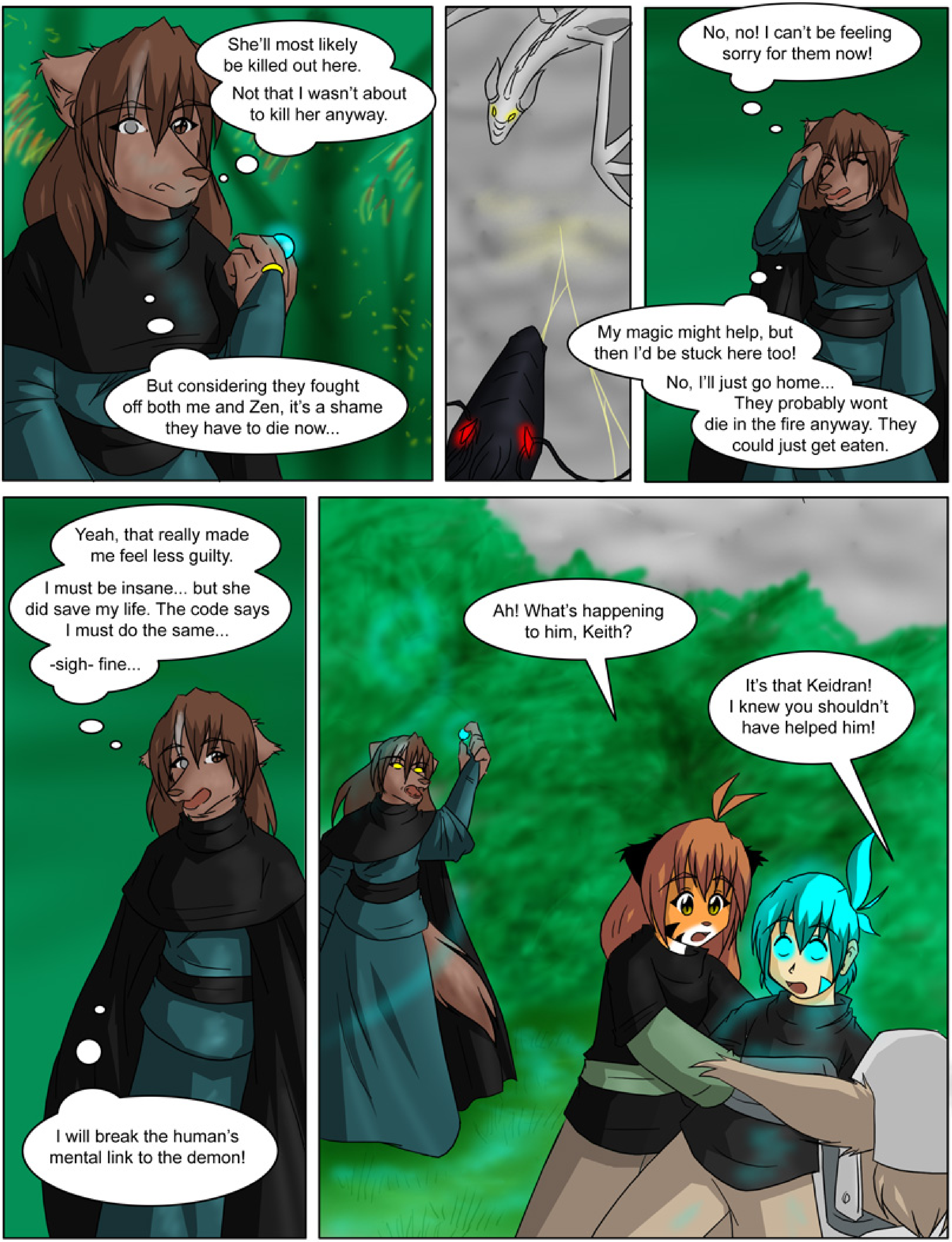

Come on, Let's go!
The forest... my home, it's burning!
There's nothing we can do. I see the river over here, come on!
Grrr... I don't need your help! Why are you helping me anyway?
I was just trying to kill you!
Huh? Where did she go?
I'm helping you because I don't want more people getting hurt.
Your brother showed me that even assassins like you are people too.
Besides, I saved your life. You owe me now. And I want you to help us.
Feh! How do you know I care anything about life-debts?
I think even someone like you still follows the code. But even if you don't, what options do you have?

This is what the comic looks like before I color it. Pretty rediculous without any of the backgrounds or special effects, huh?

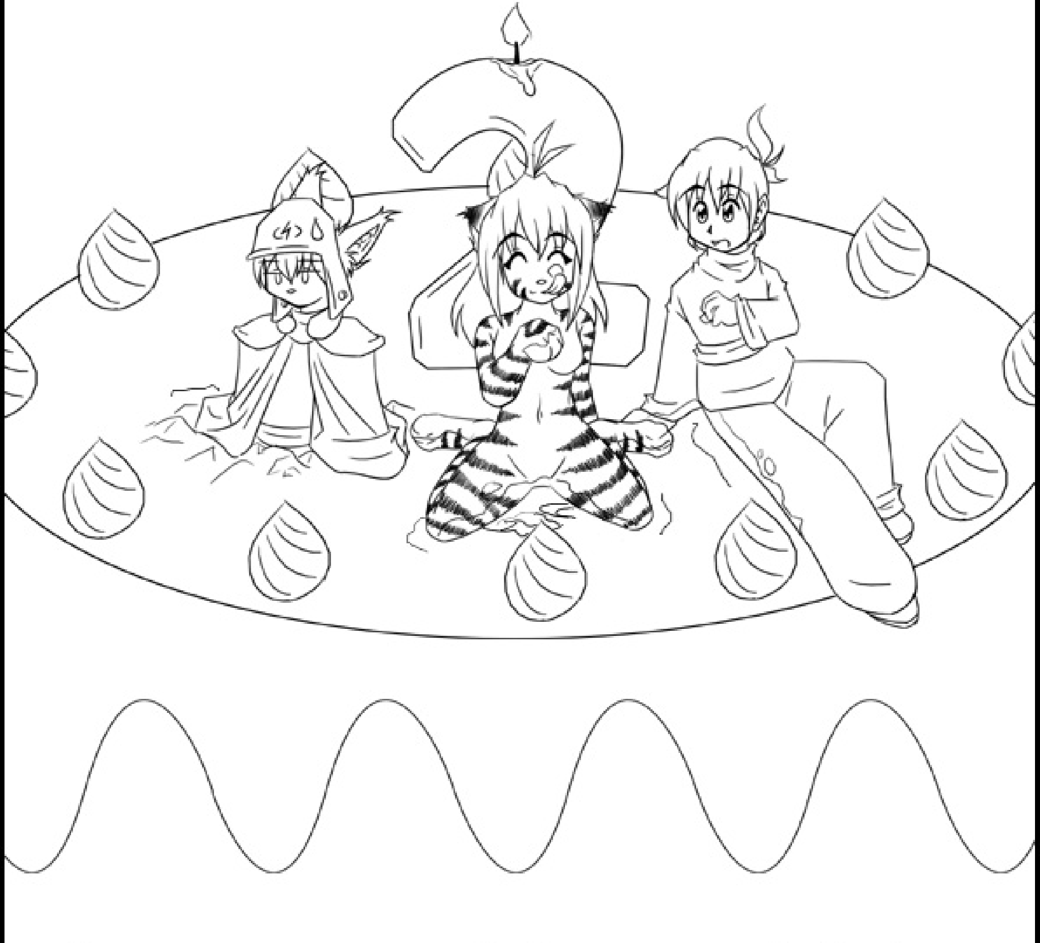

dragon blast
Lightning
I'll show you what a true dragon can do!
Negh...
Argh...
Oh good, you're waking up.
Um, no rush, but you think you could hurry up and do something about that dragon thing?
Trace...?


Rooaaaarrr!
Ahhhh!
Trace, what's wrong? Trace!
Heheh...
Keith, we're here!
Flora! You- why is he with you?!
<What'd he say?>
<Nevermind that now.> what's wrong with Trace?
Ugh...
I don't know, I can't get through to him. maybe you should try.
He seems to be in pain.


Trace, what's wrong?
Flora... where are you...
I... I can't see...
Finally, -huff- a break.
Now if only I could find that darn crystal, I could get out of this forest...
This wound is still bleeding... I need to hurry before those three notice I'm still here...
Ah, here it is!
I knew I had one left...
Now I can... transport myself...
I do feel sorry for her. Such an odd group of people.

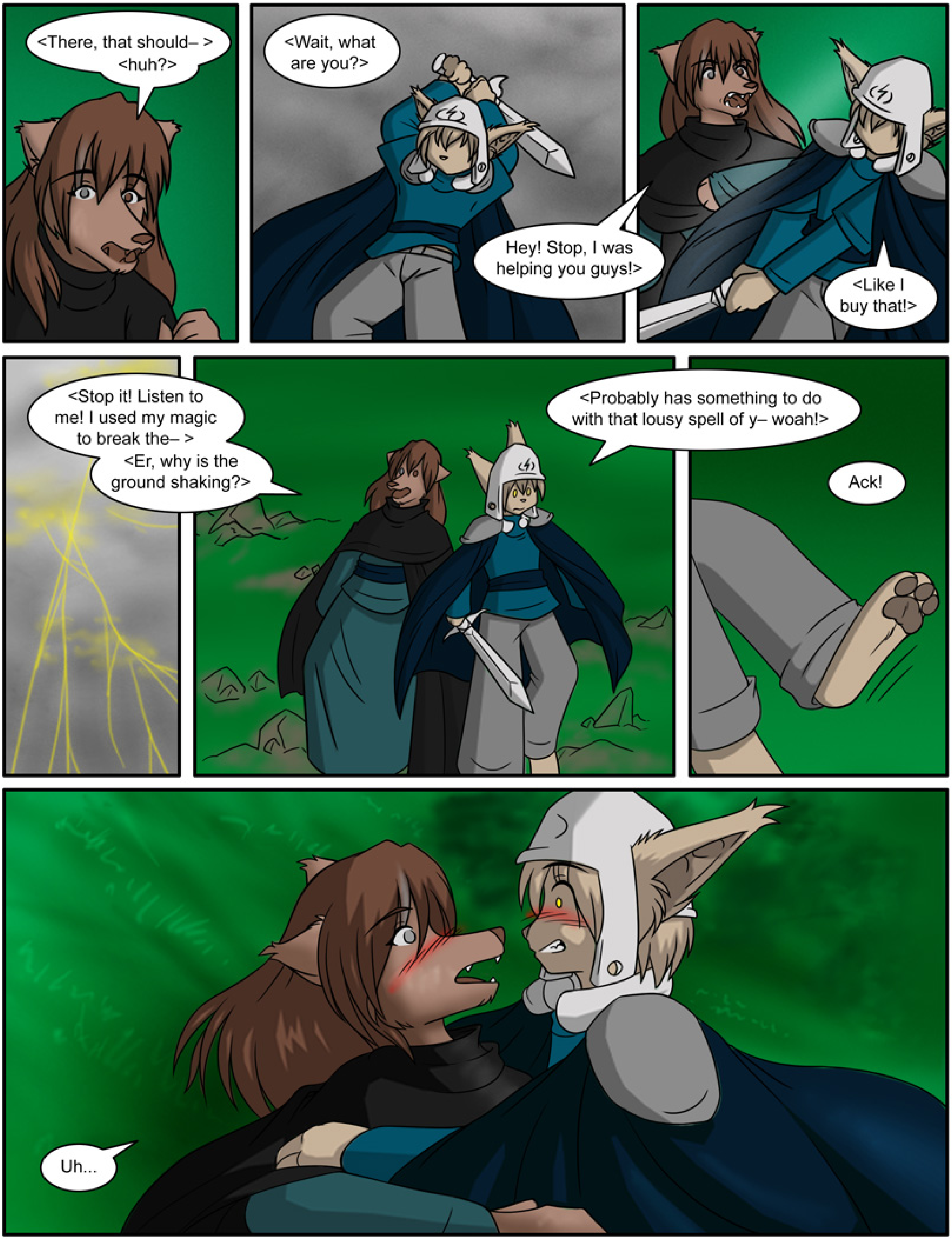

She'll most likely be killed out here.
Not that I wasn't about to kill her anyway.
But considering they fought off both me and Zen, it's a shame they have to die now...
No, no! I can't be feeling sorry for them now!
My magic might help, but then I'd be stuck here too!
No, I'll just go home...
They probably wont die in the fire anyway. They could just get eaten.
Yeah, that really made me feel less guilty.
I must be insane... but she did save my life. The code says I must do the same...
-sigh- fine...
I will break the human's mental link to the demon!
Ah! What's happening to him, Keith?
It's that Keidran! I knew you shouldn't have helped him!

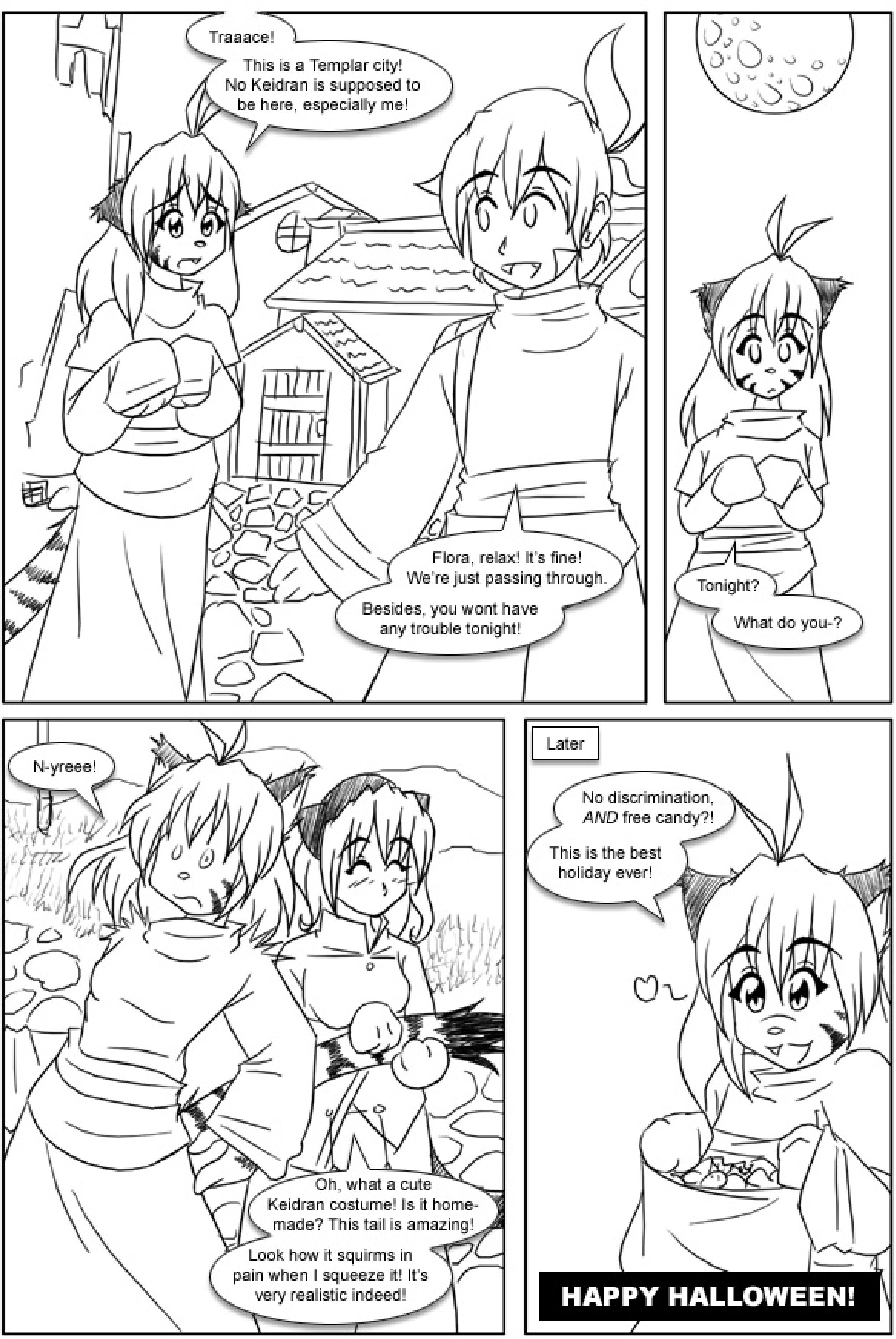
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TWOKINDS!

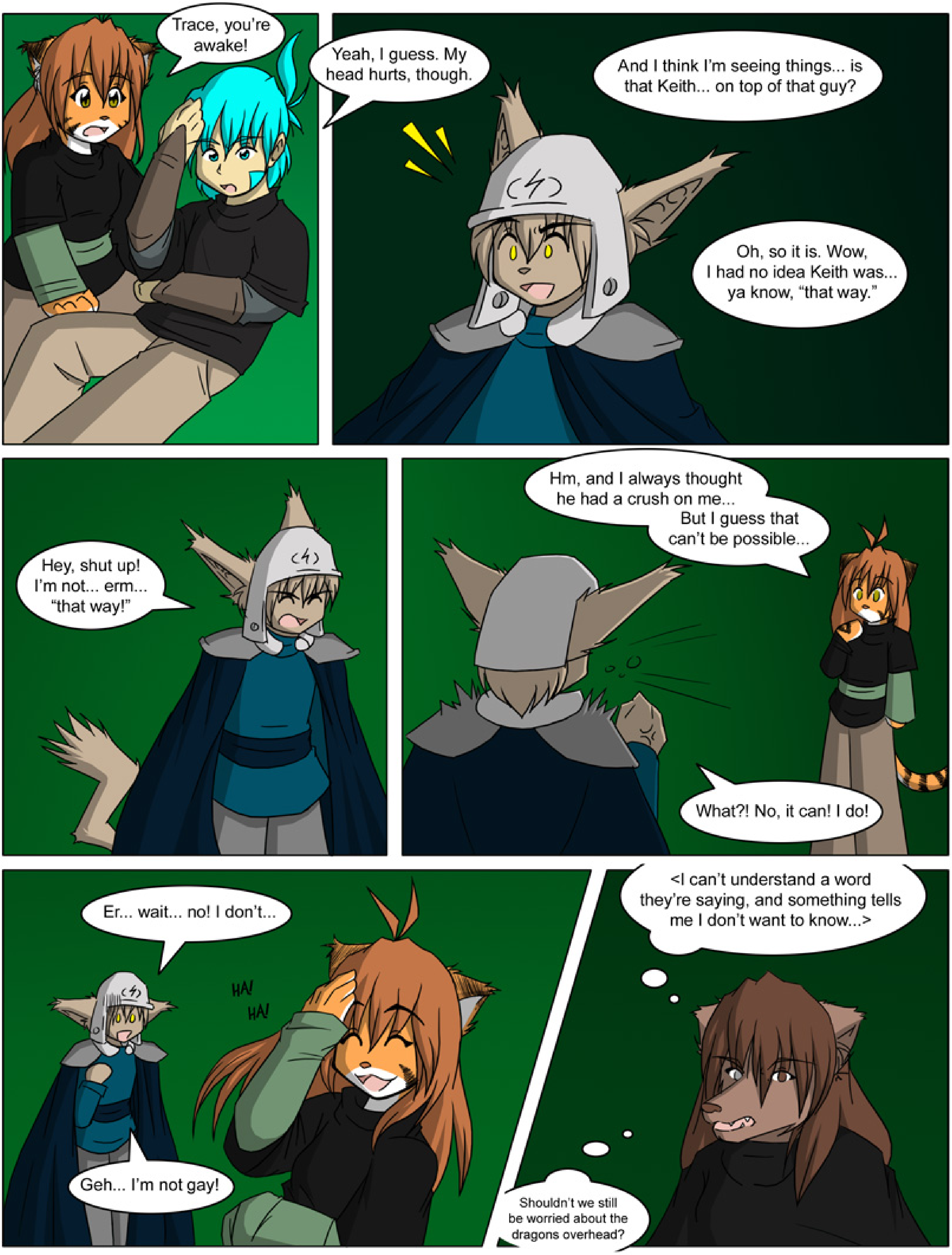


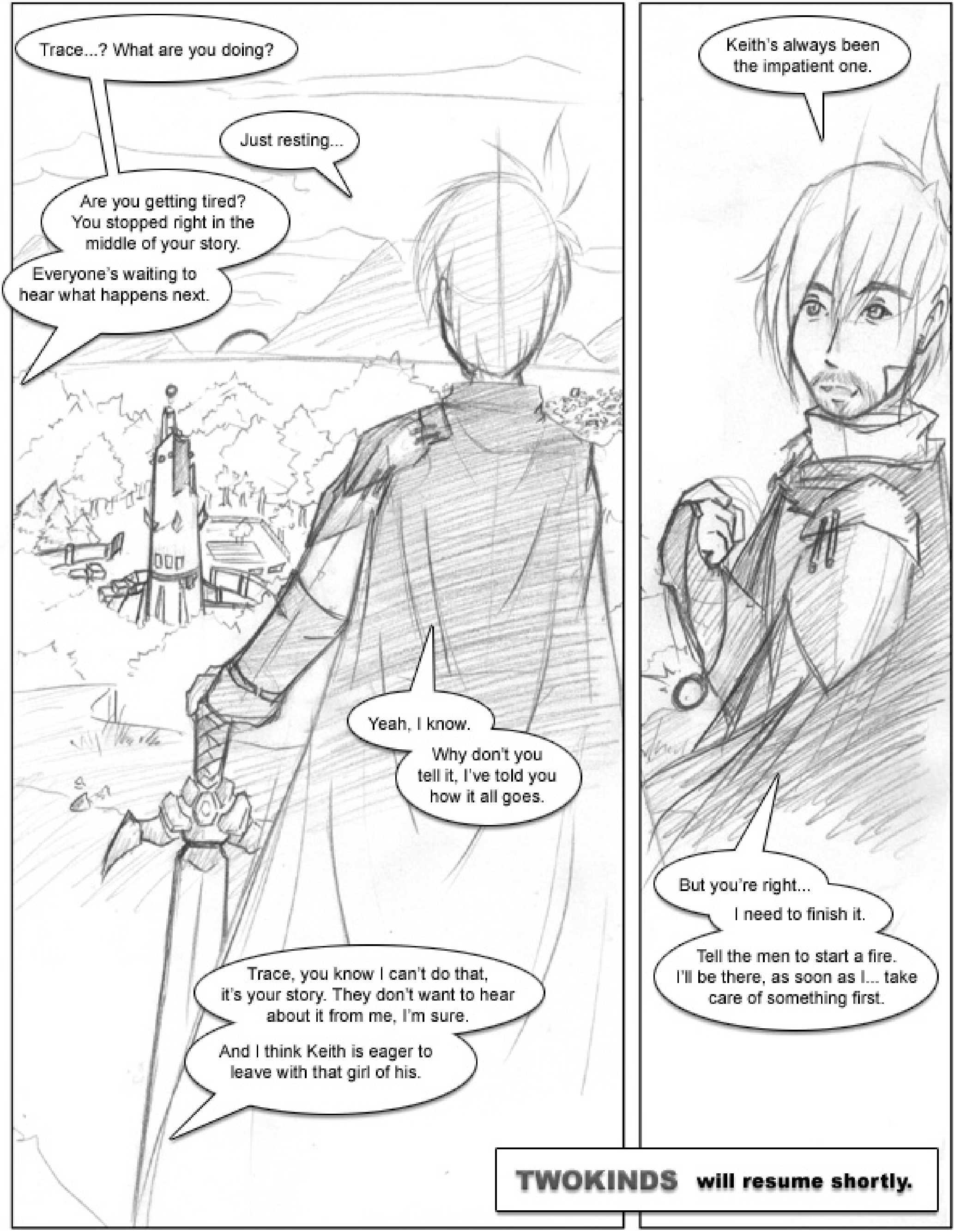
October 22nd, 2005

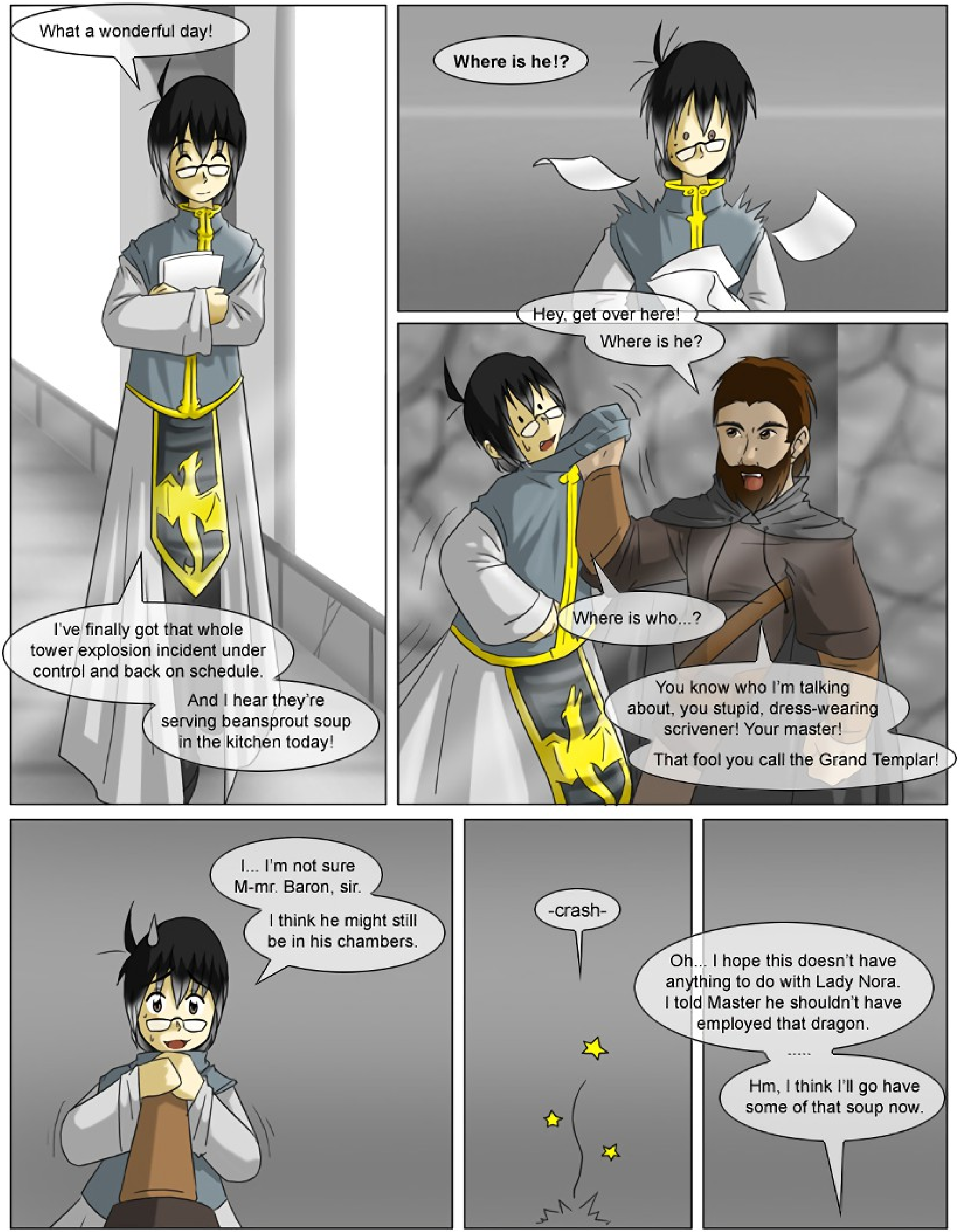
A little late, but better then never.

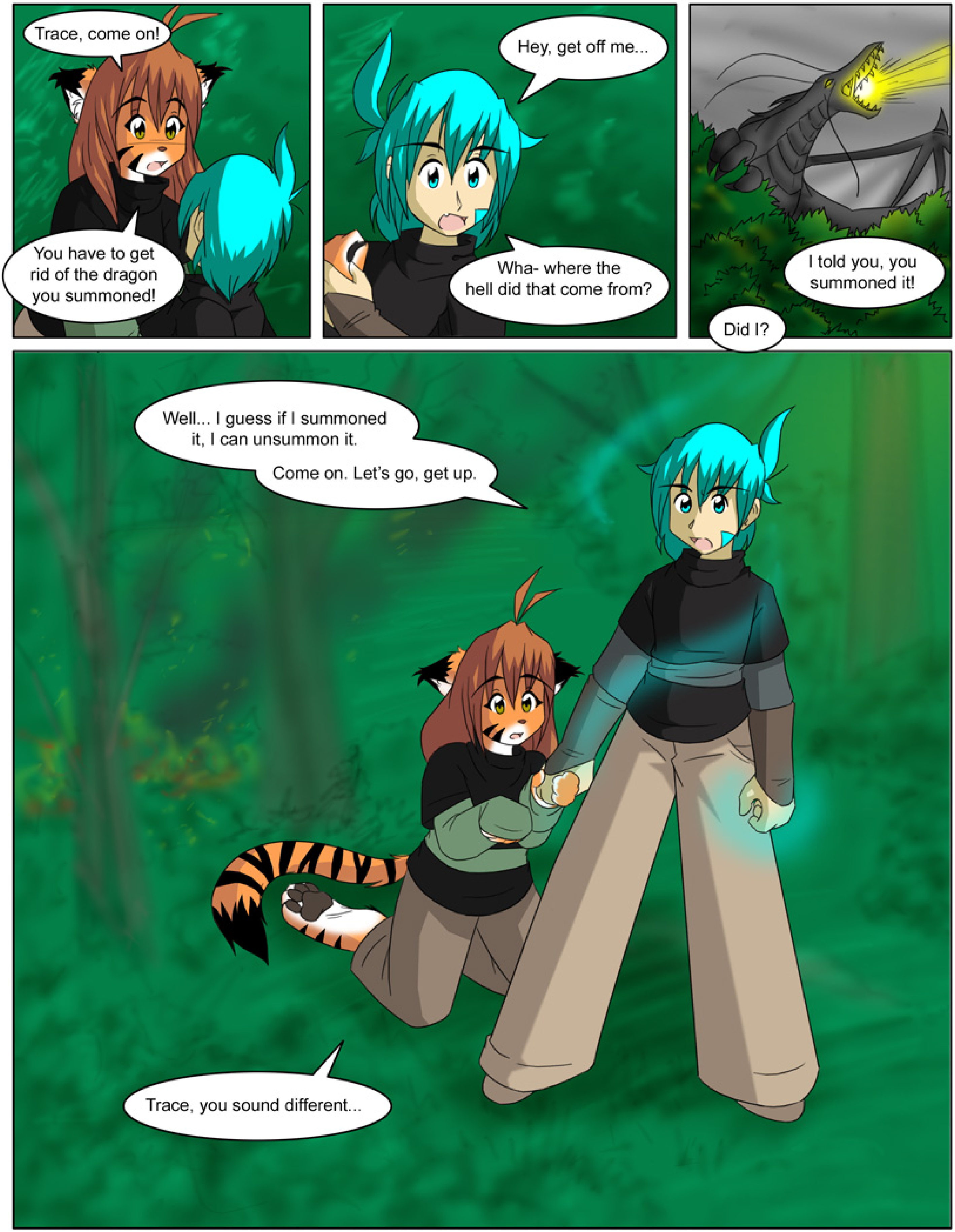

<There, that should– >
<huh?>
<Wait, what are you?>
Hey! Stop, I was helping you guys!>
<Like I buy that!>
<Stop it! Listen to me! I used my magic to break the– >
<Er, why is the ground shaking?>
<Probably has something to do with that lousy spell of y– woah!>
Ack!
Uh...


Traaace!
This is a Templar city! No Keidran is supposed to be here, especially me!
Flora, relax! It's fine! We're just passing through.
Besides, you wont have any trouble tonight!
Tonight?
What do you-?
N-yreee!
Oh, what a cute Keidran costume! Is it home-made? This tail is amazing!
Look how it squirms in pain when I squeeze it! It's very realistic indeed!
Later
No discrimination, *AND* free candy?!
This is the best holiday ever!
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

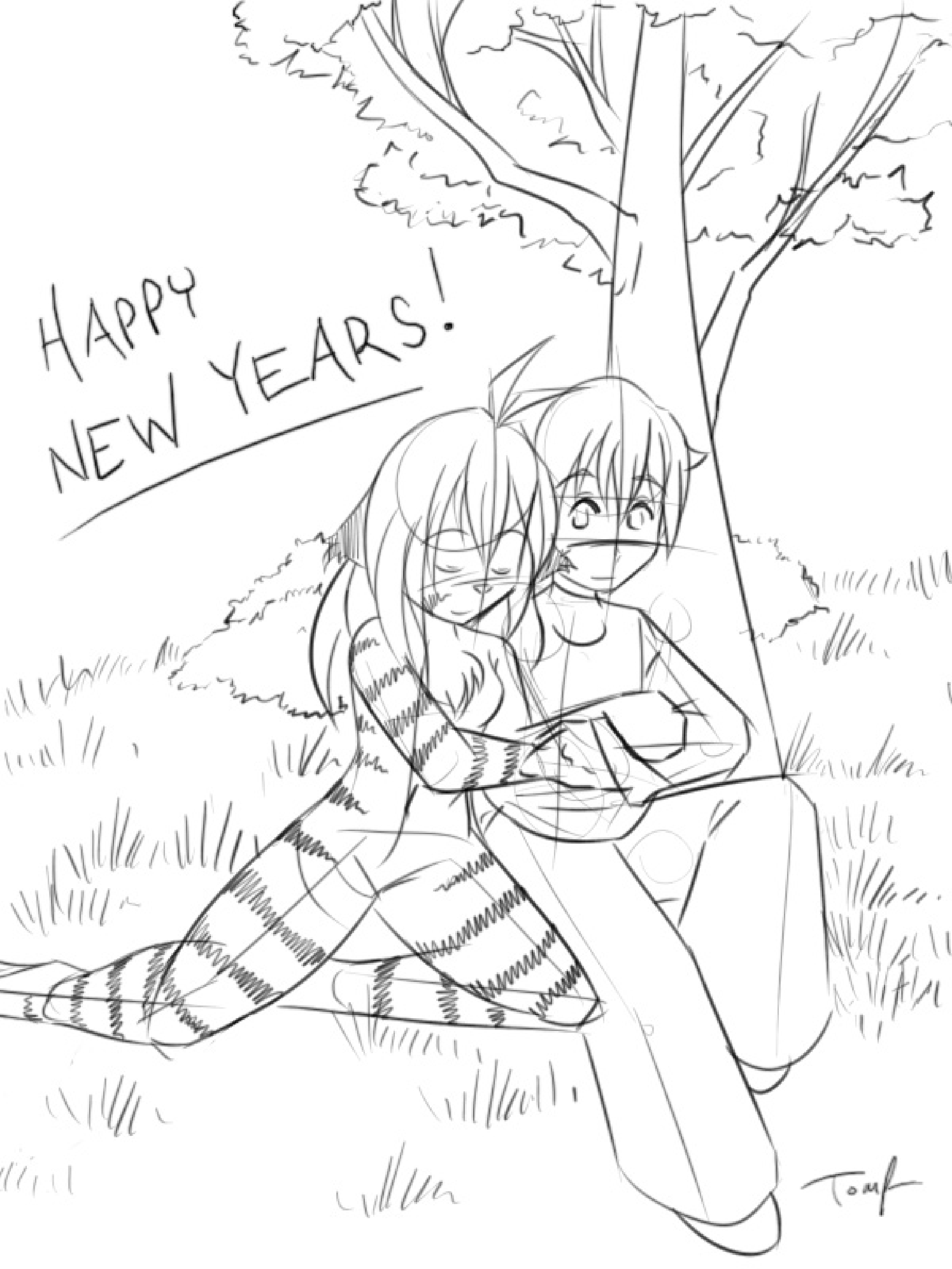

Trace, you're awake!
Yeah, I guess. My head hurts, though.
And I think I'm seeing things... is that Keith... on top of that guy?
Oh, so it is. Wow, I had no idea Keith was... ya know, "that way."
Hey, shut up! I'm not... erm... "that way!"
Hm, and I always thought he had a crush on me...
But I guess that can't be possible...
What?! No, it can! I do!
Er... wait... no! I don't...
HA! HA!
Geh... I'm not gay!
<I can't understand a word they're saying, and something tells me I don't want to know...>
Shouldn't we still be worried about the dragons overhead?


Trace...? What are you doing?
Just resting...
Are you getting tired? You stopped right in the middle of your story.
Everyone's waiting to hear what happens next.
Yeah, I know.
Why don't you tell it, I've told you how it all goes.
Trace, you know I can't do that, it's your story. They don't want to hear about it from me, I'm sure.
And I think Keith is eager to leave with that girl of his.
Keith's always been the impatient one.
But you're right...
I need to finish it.
Tell the men to start a fire. I'll be there, as soon as I... take care of something first.
TWOKINDS will resume shortly.


What a wonderful day!
I've finally got that whole tower explosion incident under control and back on schedule.
And I hear they're serving beansprout soup in the kitchen today!
Where is he!?
Hey, get over here!
Where is he?
Where is who...?
You know who I'm talking about, you stupid, dress-wearing scrivener! Your master!
That fool you call the Grand Templar!
I... I'm not sure M-mr. Baron, sir.
I think he might still be in his chambers.
-crash-
Oh... I hope this doesn't have anything to do with Lady Nora. I told Master he shouldn't have employed that dragon.
.....
Hm, I think I'll go have some of that soup now.


Trace, come on!
You have to get rid of the dragon you summoned!
Hey, get off me...
Wha- where the hell did that come from?
I told you, you summoned it!
Did I?
Well... I guess if I summoned it, I can unsummon it.
Come on. Let's go, get up.
Trace, you sound different...

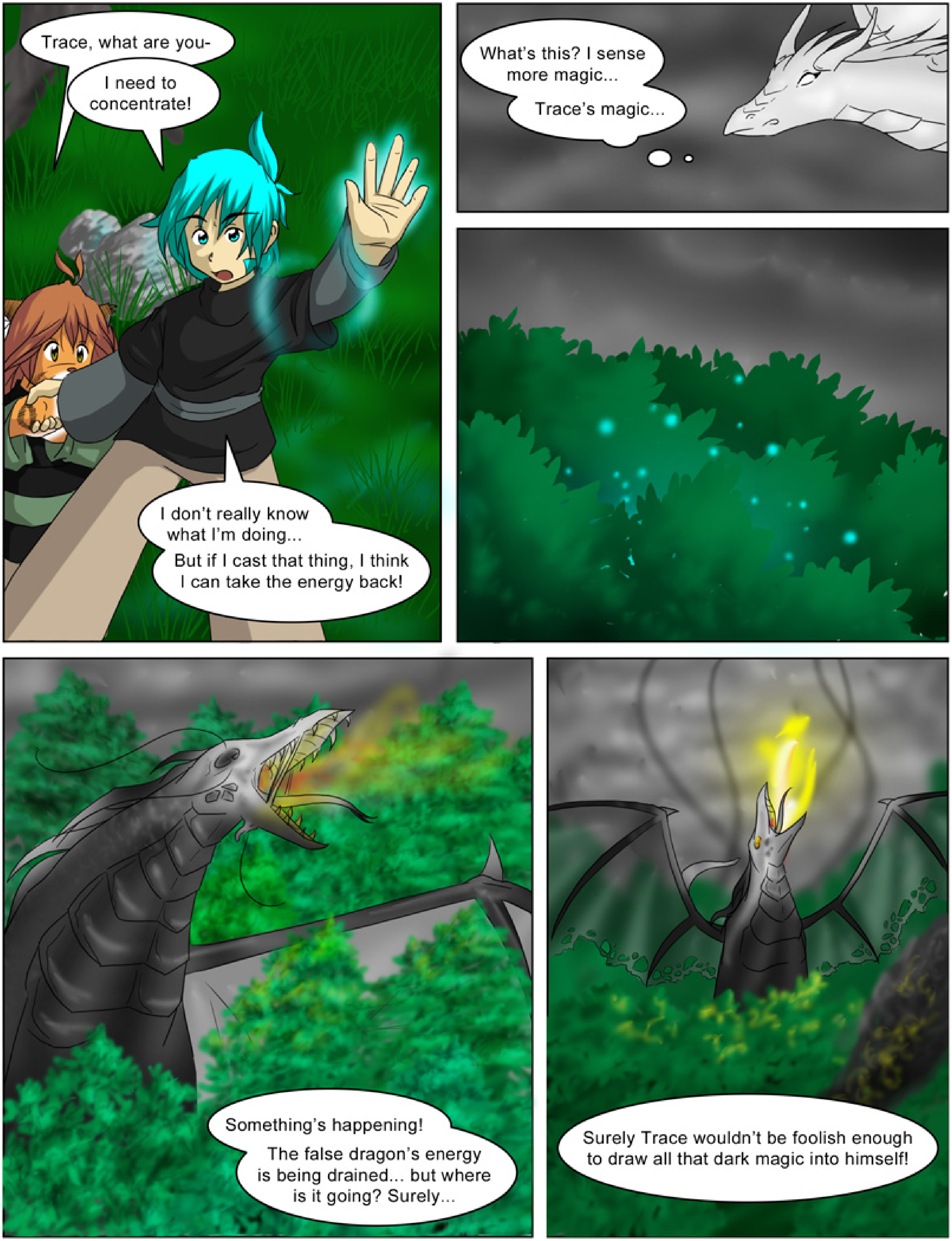
Merry Christmas!
Tony

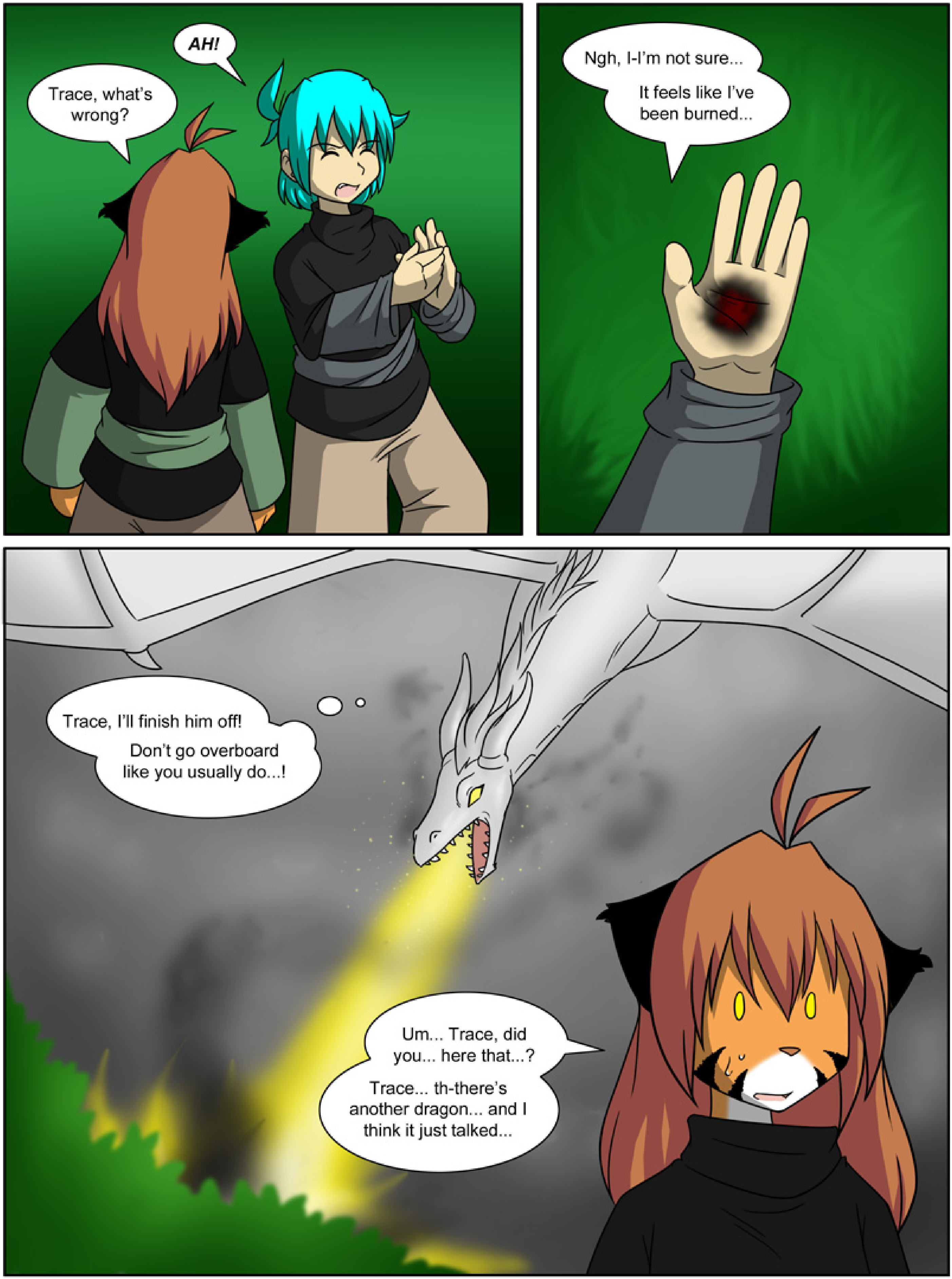


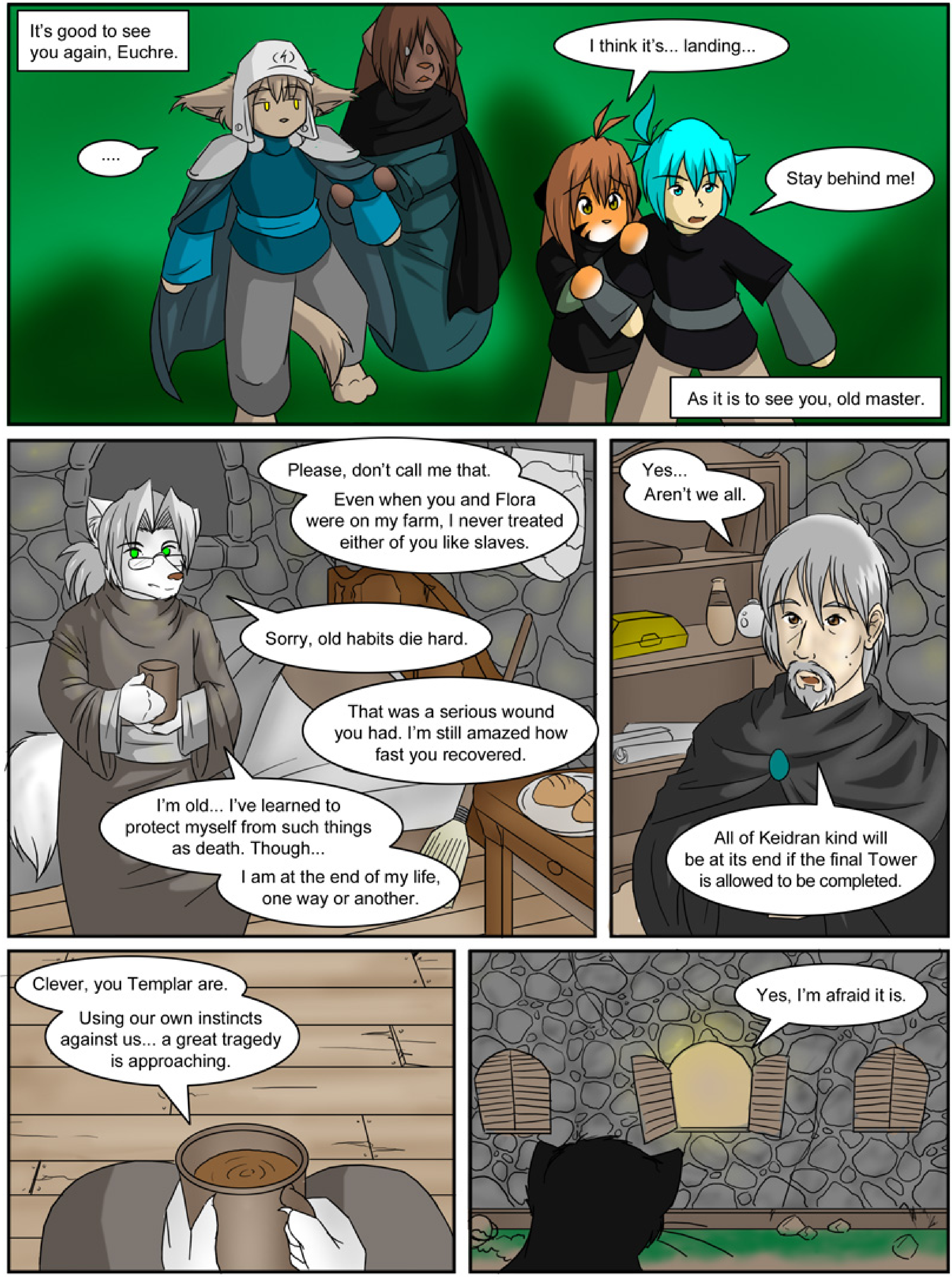
HAPPY
NEW YEARS!

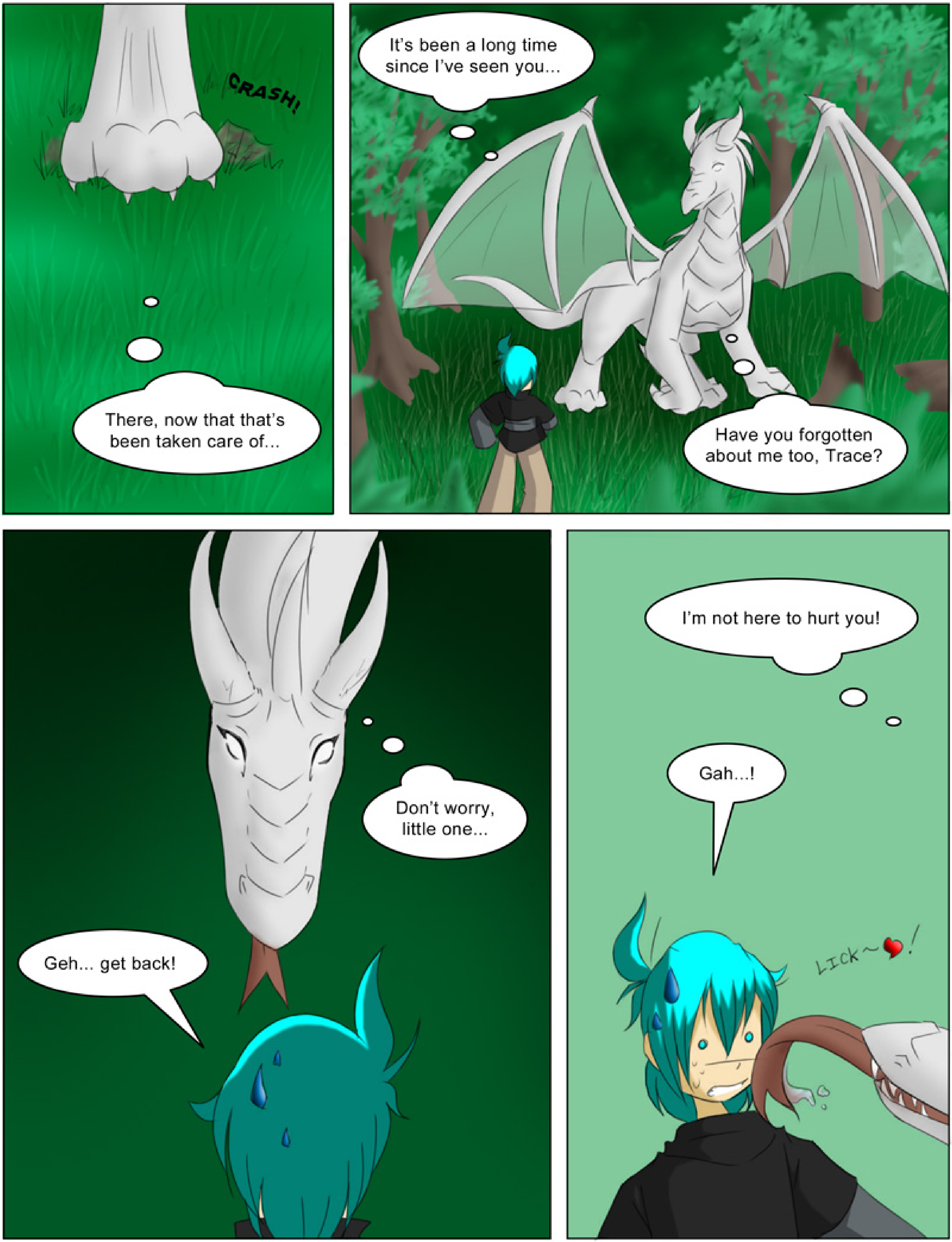
New Twokinds Wallpaper

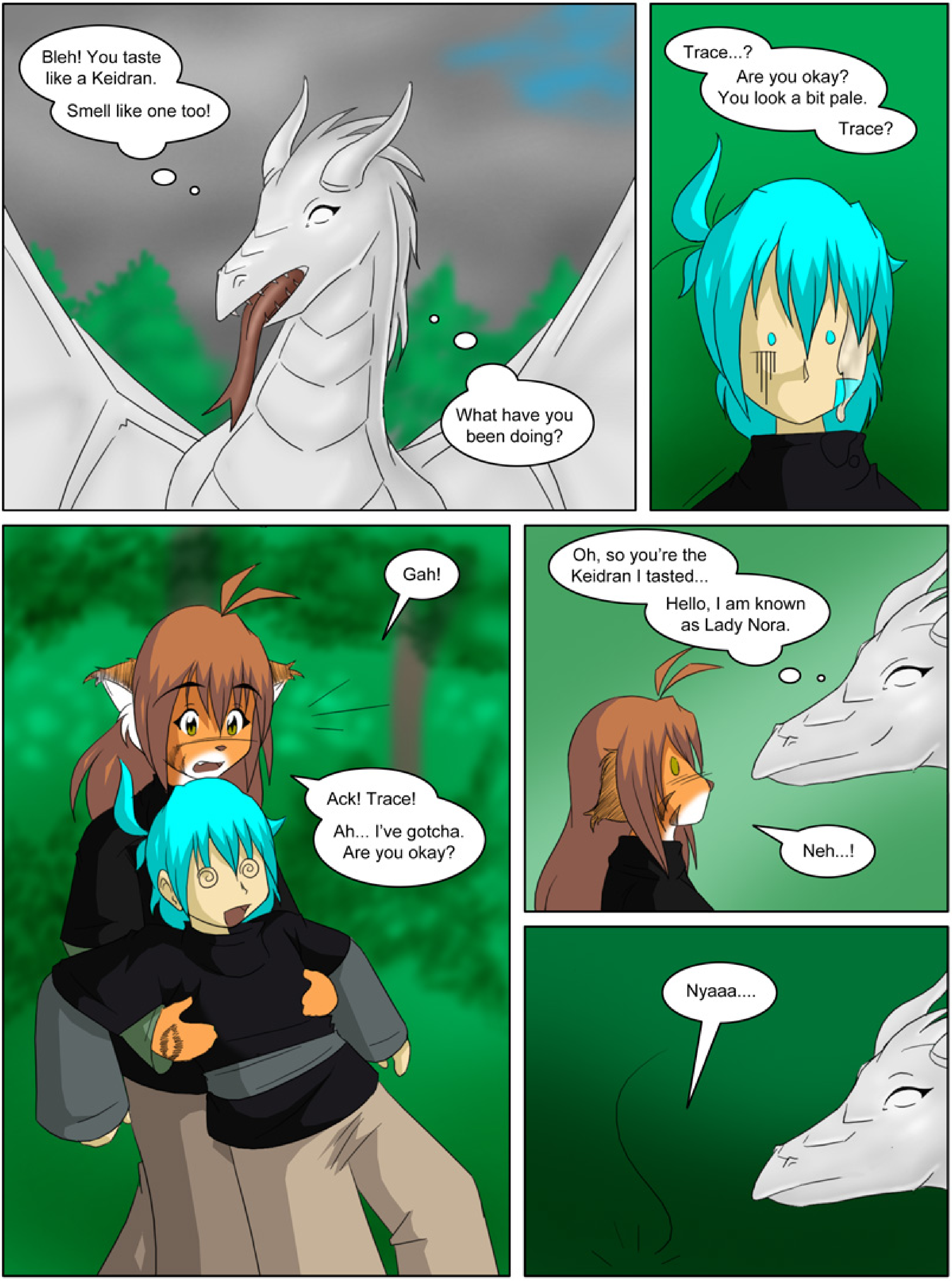
>> Click here <<

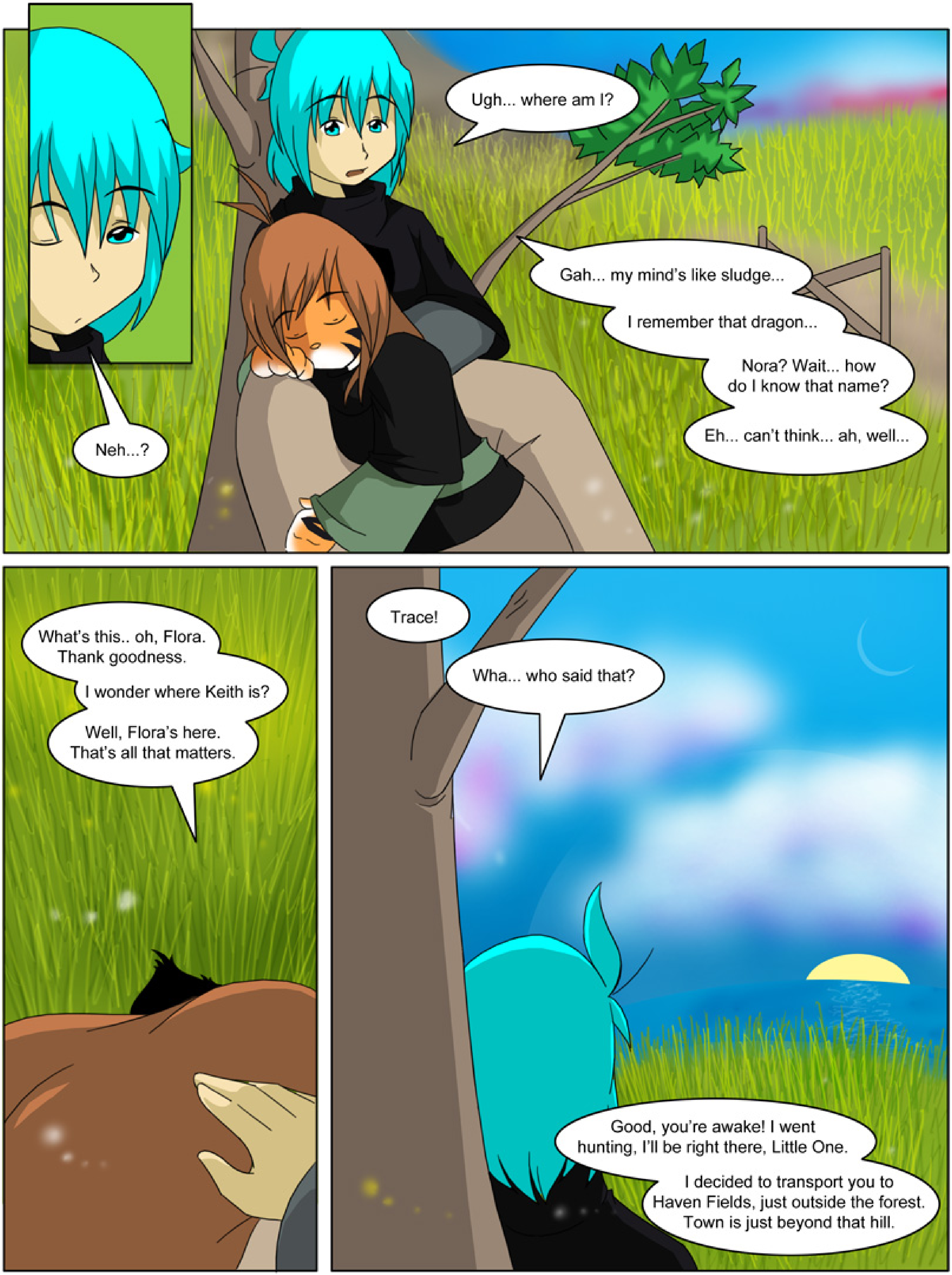

Trace, what are you-
I need to concentrate!
I don't really know what I'm doing...
But if I cast that thing, I think I can take the energy back!
What's this? I sense more magic...
Trace's magic...
Something's happening!
The false dragon's energy is being drained... but where is it going? Surely...
Surely Trace wouldn't be foolish enough to draw all that dark magic into himself!

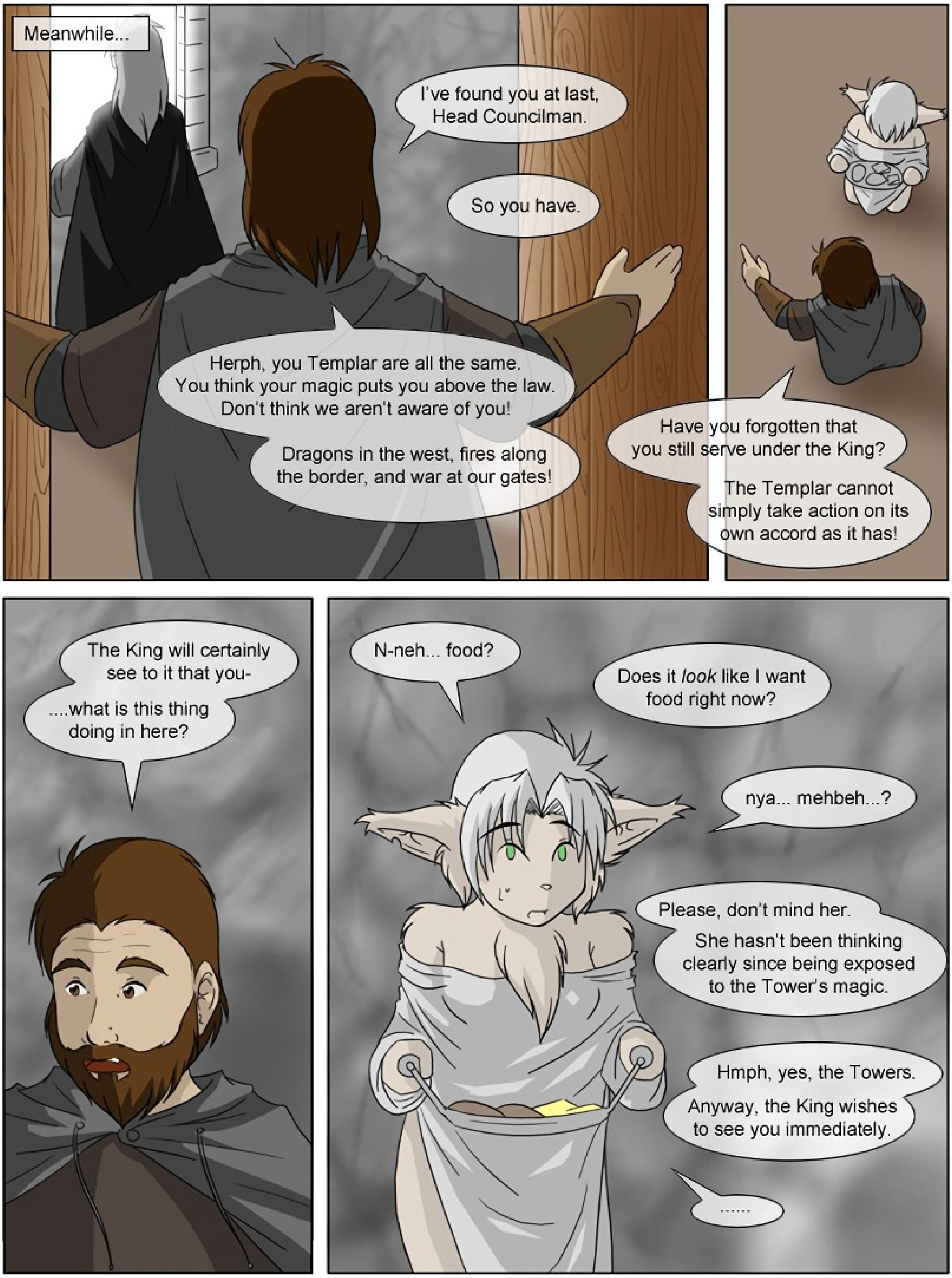

Trace, what's wrong?
AH!
Ngh, I-I'm not sure...
It feels like I've been burned...
Trace, I'll finish him off!
Don't go overboard like you usually do...!
Um... Trace, did you... here that...?
Trace... th-there's another dragon... and I think it just talked...


It's good to see you again, Euchre.
....
I think it's... landing...
Stay behind me!
As it is to see you, old master.
Please, don't call me that.
Even when you and Flora were on my farm, I never treated either of you like slaves.
Sorry, old habits die hard.
That was a serious wound you had. I'm still amazed how fast you recovered.
I'm old... I've learned to protect myself from such things as death. Though...
I am at the end of my life, one way or another.
Yes... Aren't we all.
All of Keidran kind will be at its end if the final Tower is allowed to be completed.
Clever, you Templar are.
Using our own instincts against us... a great tragedy is approaching.
Yes, I'm afraid it is.


CRASH!
There, now that that's been taken care of...
It's been a long time since I've seen you...
Have you forgotten about me too, Trace?
Don't worry, little one...
Geh... get back!
I'm not here to hurt you!
Gah...!
LICK~♥!

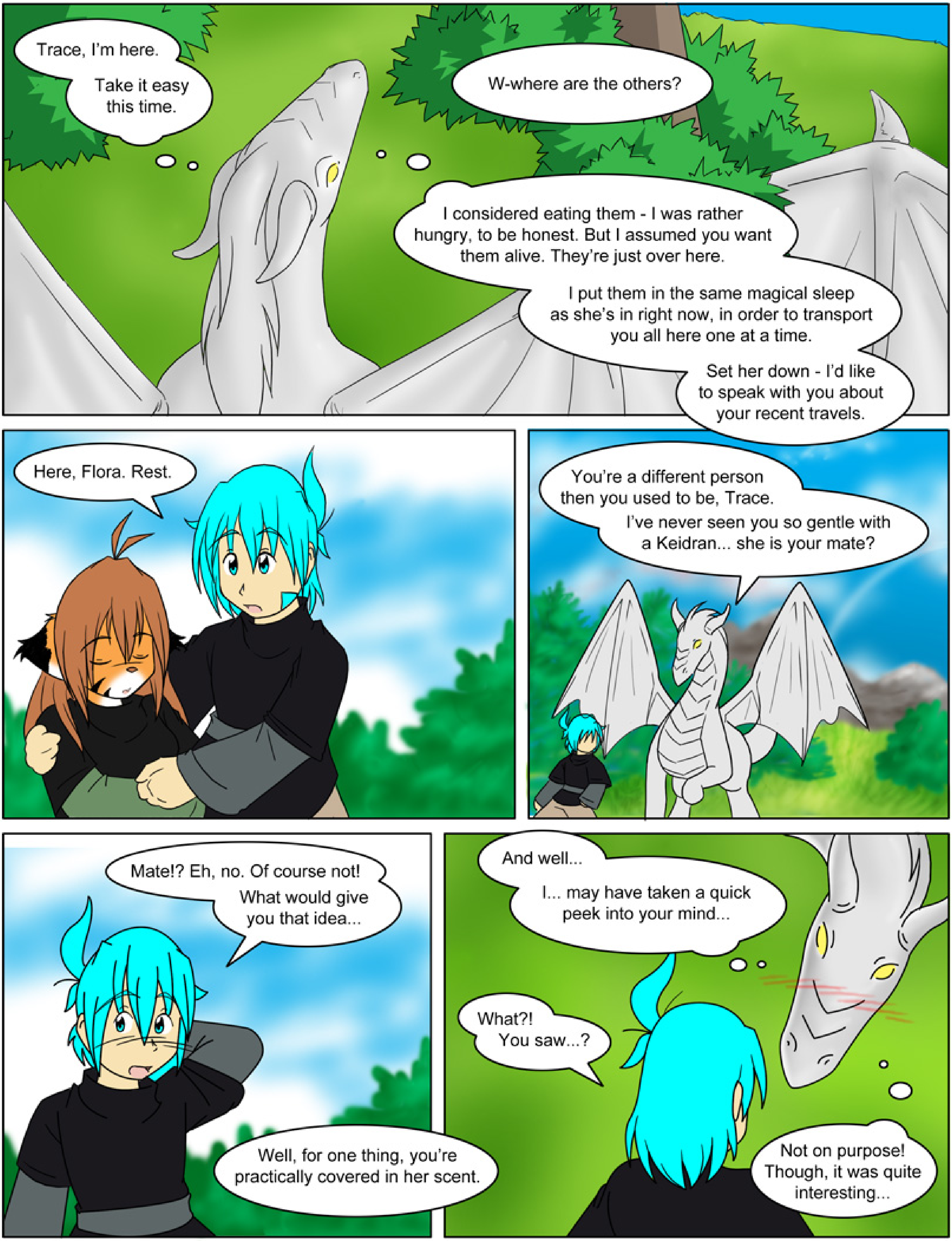

Bleh! You taste like a Keidran.
Smell like one too!
What have you been doing?
Trace...?
Are you okay? You look a bit pale.
Trace?
Gah!
Ack! Trace!
Ah... I've gotcha. Are you okay?
Oh, so you're the Keidran I tasted...
Hello, I am known as Lady Nora.
Neh...!
Nyaaa....

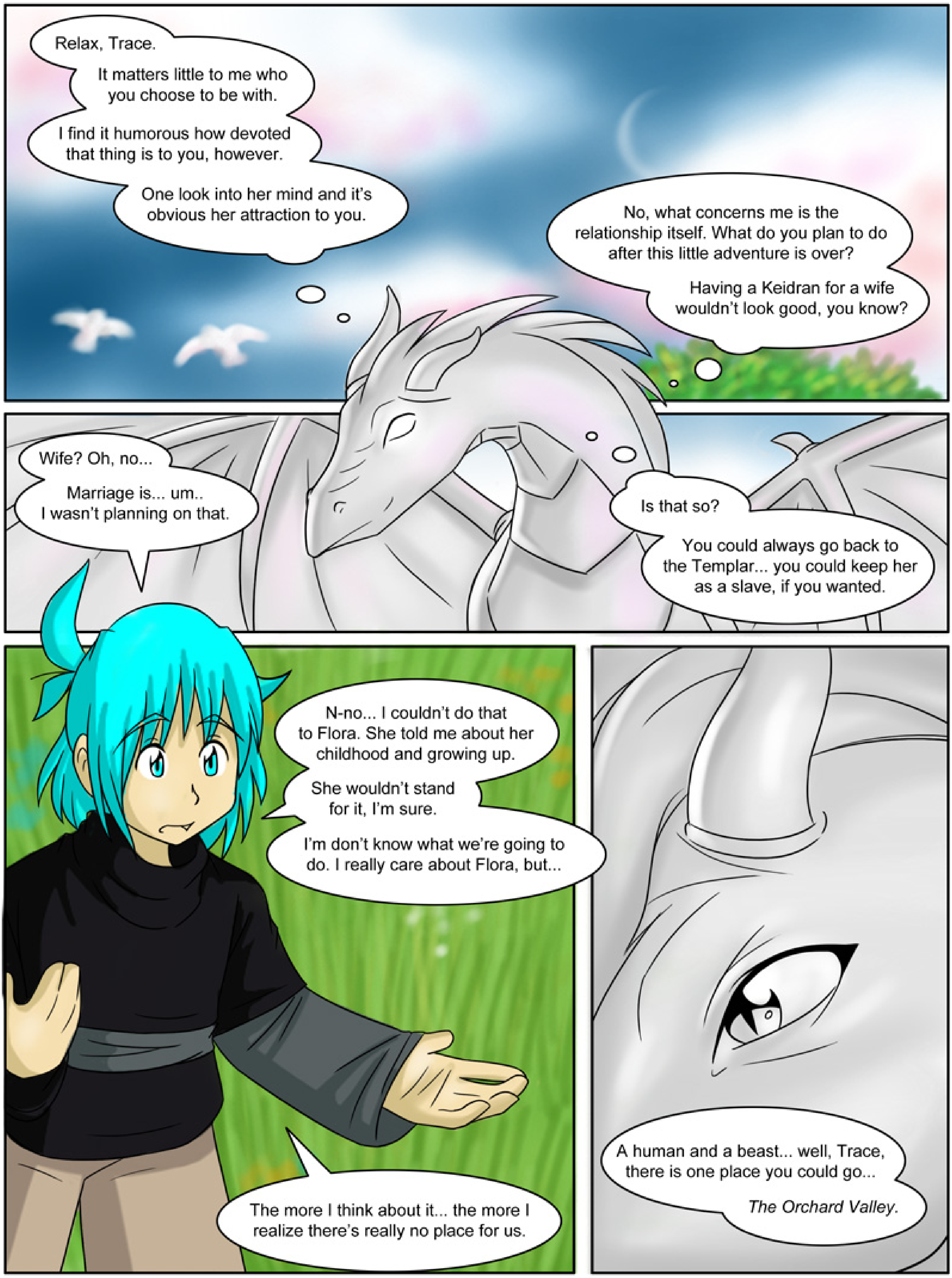

Ugh... where am I?
Gah... my mind's like sludge...
I remember that dragon...
Nora? Wait... how do I know that name?
Eh... can't think... ah, well...
Neh...?
What's this.. oh, Flora. Thank goodness.
I wonder where Keith is?
Well, Flora's here. That's all that matters.
Trace!
Wha... who said that?
Good, you're awake! I went hunting, I'll be right there, Little One.
I decided to transport you to Haven Fields, just outside the forest. Town is just beyond that hill.

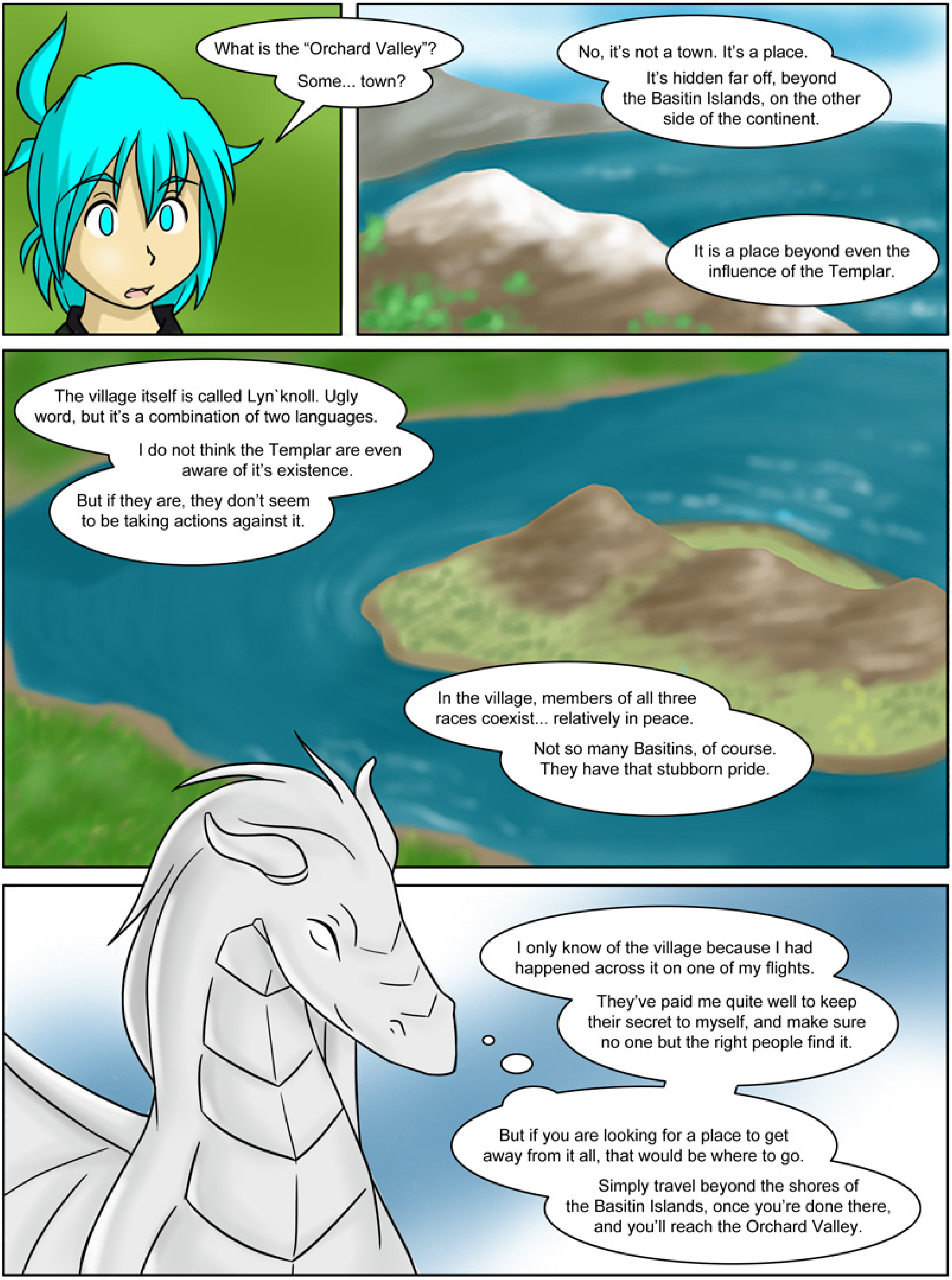

Meanwhile...
I've found you at last, Head Councilman.
So you have.
Herph, you Templar are all the same. You think your magic puts you above the law. Don't think we aren't aware of you!
Dragons in the west, fires along the border, and war at our gates!
Have you forgotten that you still serve under the King?
The Templar cannot simply take action on its own accord as it has!
The King will certainly see to it that you-
....what is this thing doing in here?
N-neh... food?
Does it *look* like I want food right now?
nya... mehbeh...?
Please, don't mind her.
She hasn't been thinking clearly since being exposed to the Tower's magic.
Hmph, yes, the Towers.
Anyway, the King wishes to see you immediately.
......

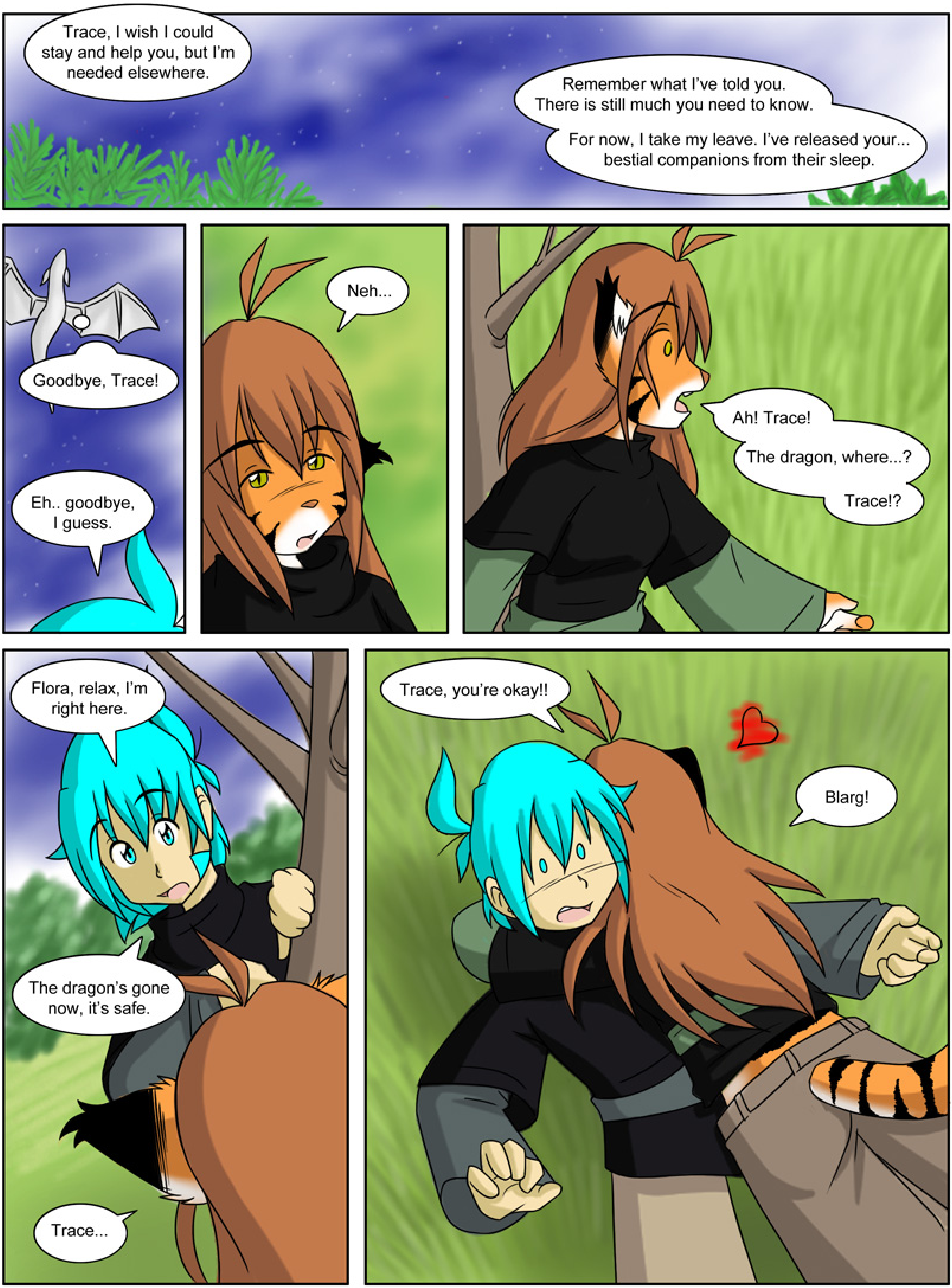
Chapter 8

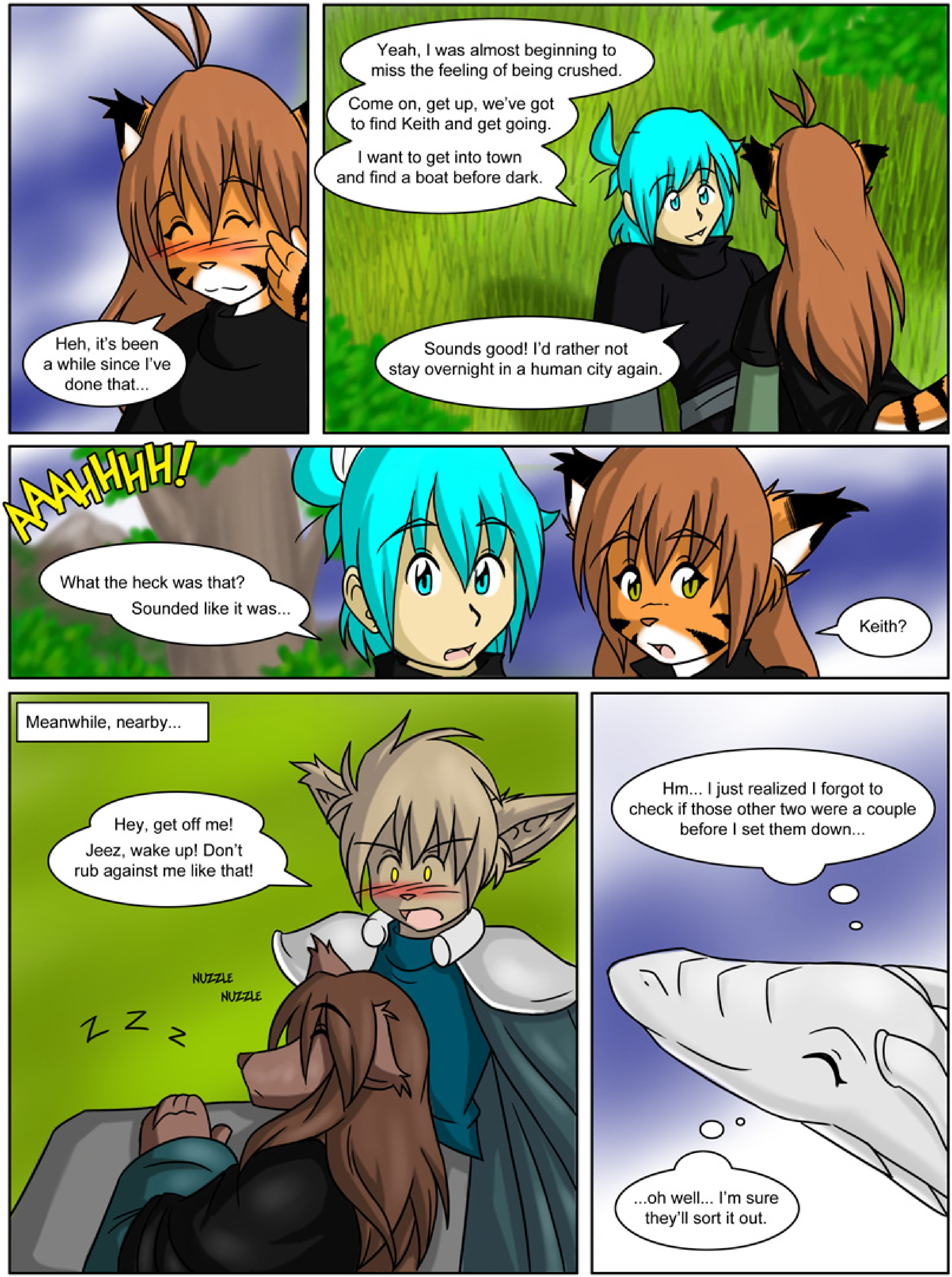
A Peaceful Retreat

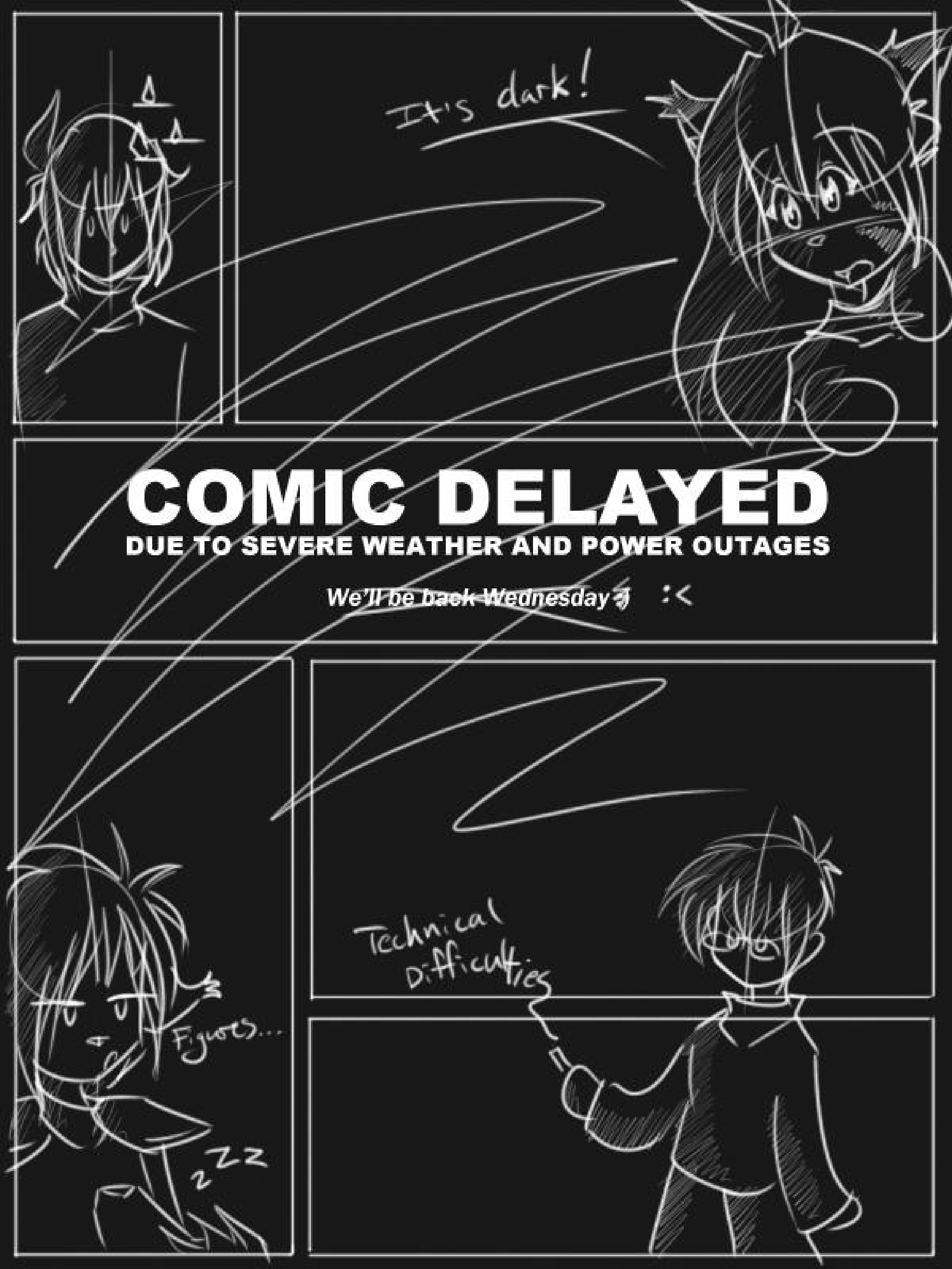

Trace, I'm here.
Take it easy this time.
W-where are the others?
I considered eating them - I was rather hungry, to be honest. But I assumed you want them alive. They're just over here.
I put them in the same magical sleep as she's in right now, in order to transport you all here one at a time.
Set her down - I'd like to speak with you about your recent travels.
Here, Flora. Rest.
You're a different person then you used to be, Trace.
I've never seen you so gentle with a Keidran... she is your mate?
Mate!? Eh, no. Of course not!
What would give you that idea...
Well, for one thing, you're practically covered in her scent.
And well...
I... may have taken a quick peek into your mind...
What?! You saw...?
Not on purpose! Though, it was quite interesting...


Relax, Trace.
It matters little to me who you choose to be with.
I find it humorous how devoted that thing is to you, however.
One look into her mind and it's obvious her attraction to you.
No, what concerns me is the relationship itself. What do you plan to do after this little adventure is over?
Having a Keidran for a wife wouldn't look good, you know?
Wife? Oh, no...
Marriage is... um.. I wasn't planning on that.
Is that so?
You could always go back to the Templar... you could keep her as a slave, if you wanted.
N-no... I couldn't do that to Flora. She told me about her childhood and growing up.
She wouldn't stand for it, I'm sure.
I'm don't know what we're going to do. I really care about Flora, but...
The more I think about it... the more I realize there's really no place for us.
A human and a beast... well, Trace, there is one place you could go...
The Orchard Valley.


What is the "Orchard Valley"?
Some... town?
No, it's not a town. It's a place.
It's hidden far off, beyond the Basitin Islands, on the other side of the continent.
It is a place beyond even the influence of the Templar.
The village itself is called Lyn`knoll. Ugly word, but it's a combination of two languages.
I do not think the Templar are even aware of it's existence.
But if they are, they don't seem to be taking actions against it.
In the village, members of all three races coexist... relatively in peace.
Not so many Basitins, of course. They have that stubborn pride.
I only know of the village because I had happened across it on one of my flights.
They've paid me quite well to keep their secret to myself, and make sure no one but the right people find it.
But if you are looking for a place to get away from it all, that would be where to go.
Simply travel beyond the shores of the Basitin Islands, once you're done there, and you'll reach the Orchard Valley.


Trace, I wish I could stay and help you, but I'm needed elsewhere.
Remember what I've told you. There is still much you need to know.
For now, I take my leave. I've released your... bestial companions from their sleep.
Goodbye, Trace!
Eh.. goodbye, I guess.
Neh...
Ah! Trace!
The dragon, where...?
Trace!?
Flora, relax, I'm right here.
The dragon's gone now, it's safe.
Trace...
Trace, you're okay!!
Blarg!

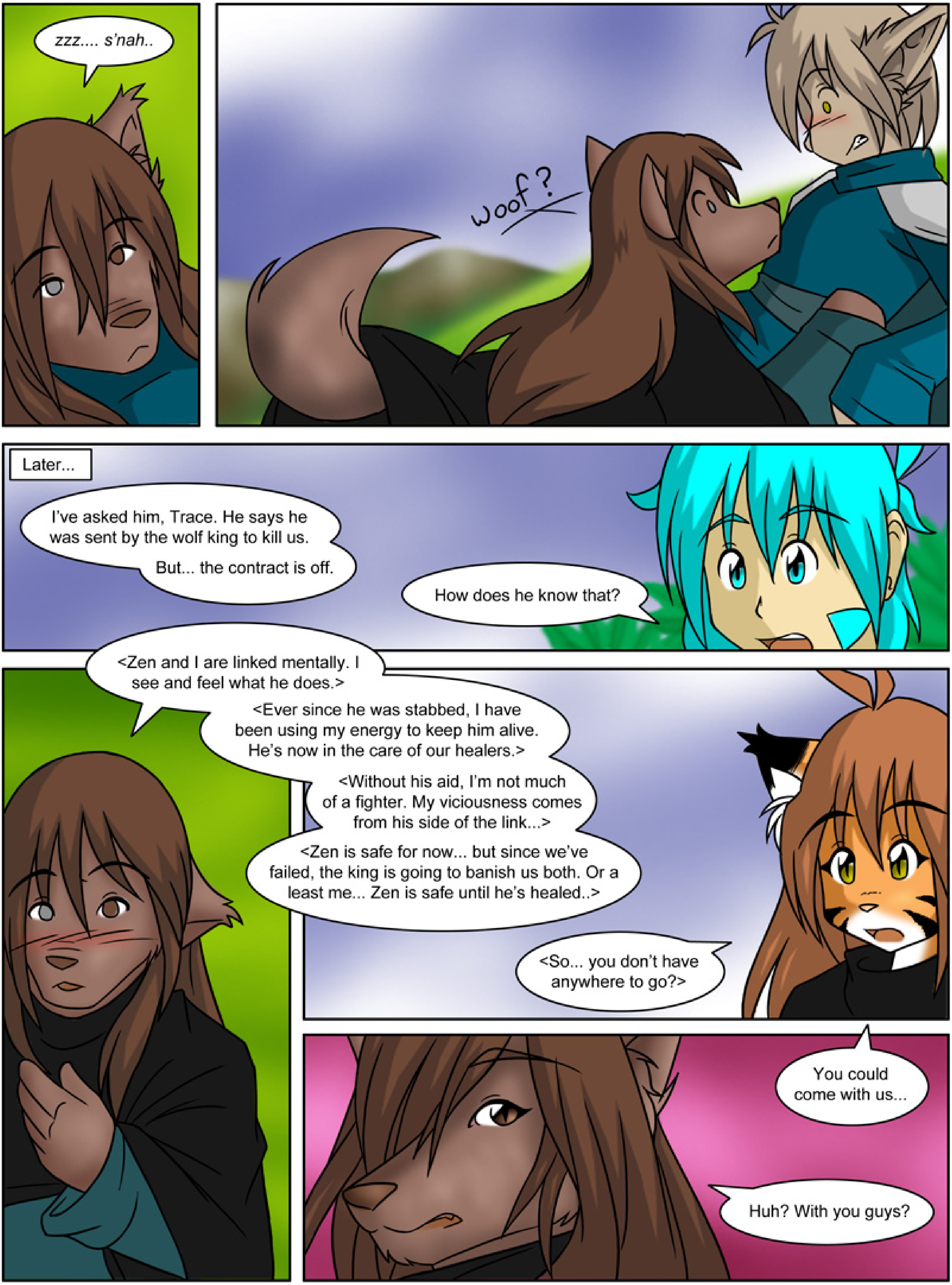

Heh, it's been a while since I've done that...
Yeah, I was almost beginning to miss the feeling of being crushed.
Come on, get up, we've got to find Keith and get going.
I want to get into town and find a boat before dark.
Sounds good! I'd rather not stay overnight in a human city again.
AAAHHHH!
What the heck was that?
Sounded like it was...
Keith?
Meanwhile, nearby...
Hey, get off me!
Jeez, wake up! Don't rub against me like that!
NUZZLE
NUZZLE
Z Z Z
Hm... I just realized I forgot to check if those other two were a couple before I set them down...
...oh well... I'm sure they'll sort it out.

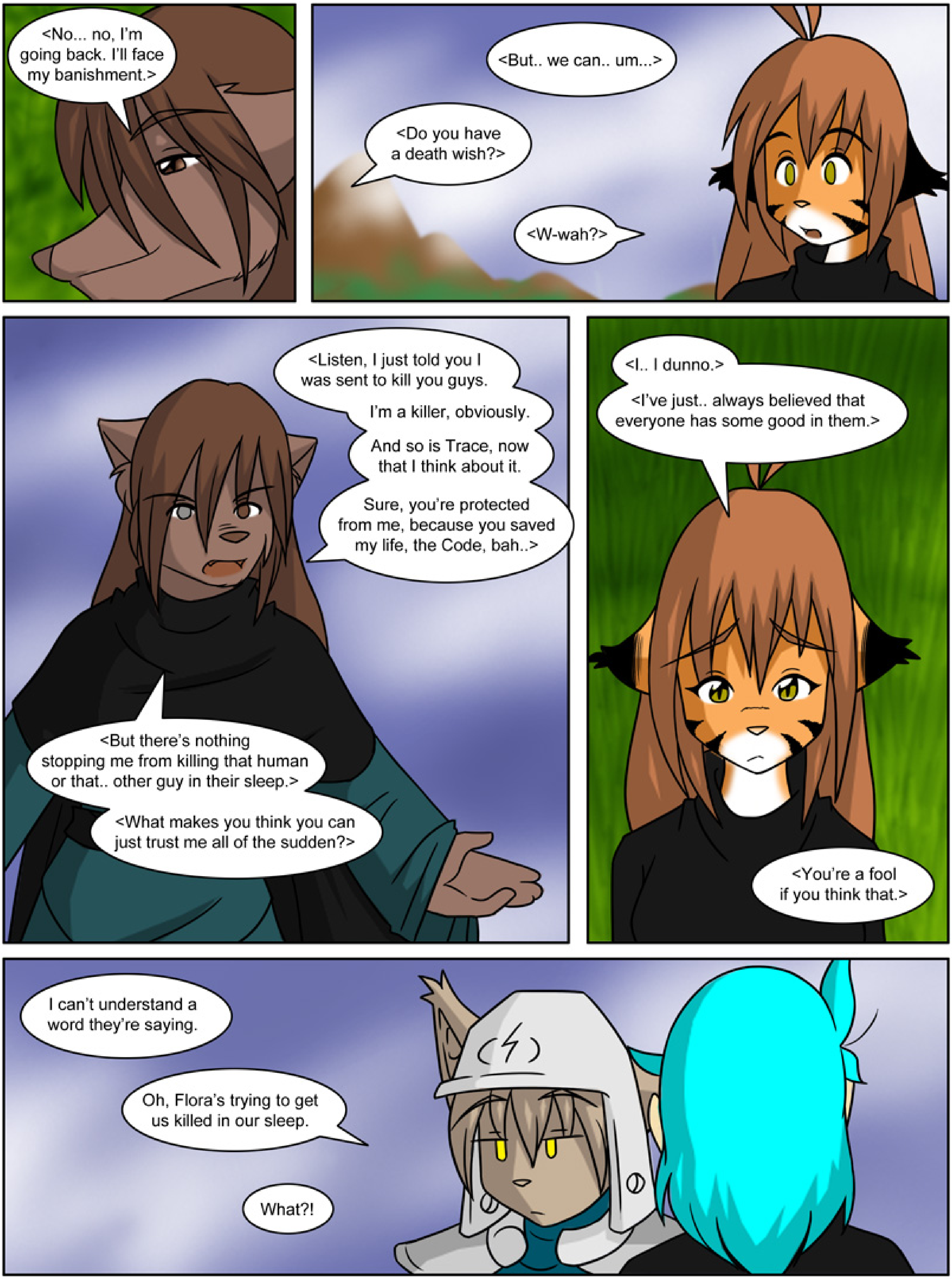

It's dark!
Technical Difficulties
Figures...
z z z

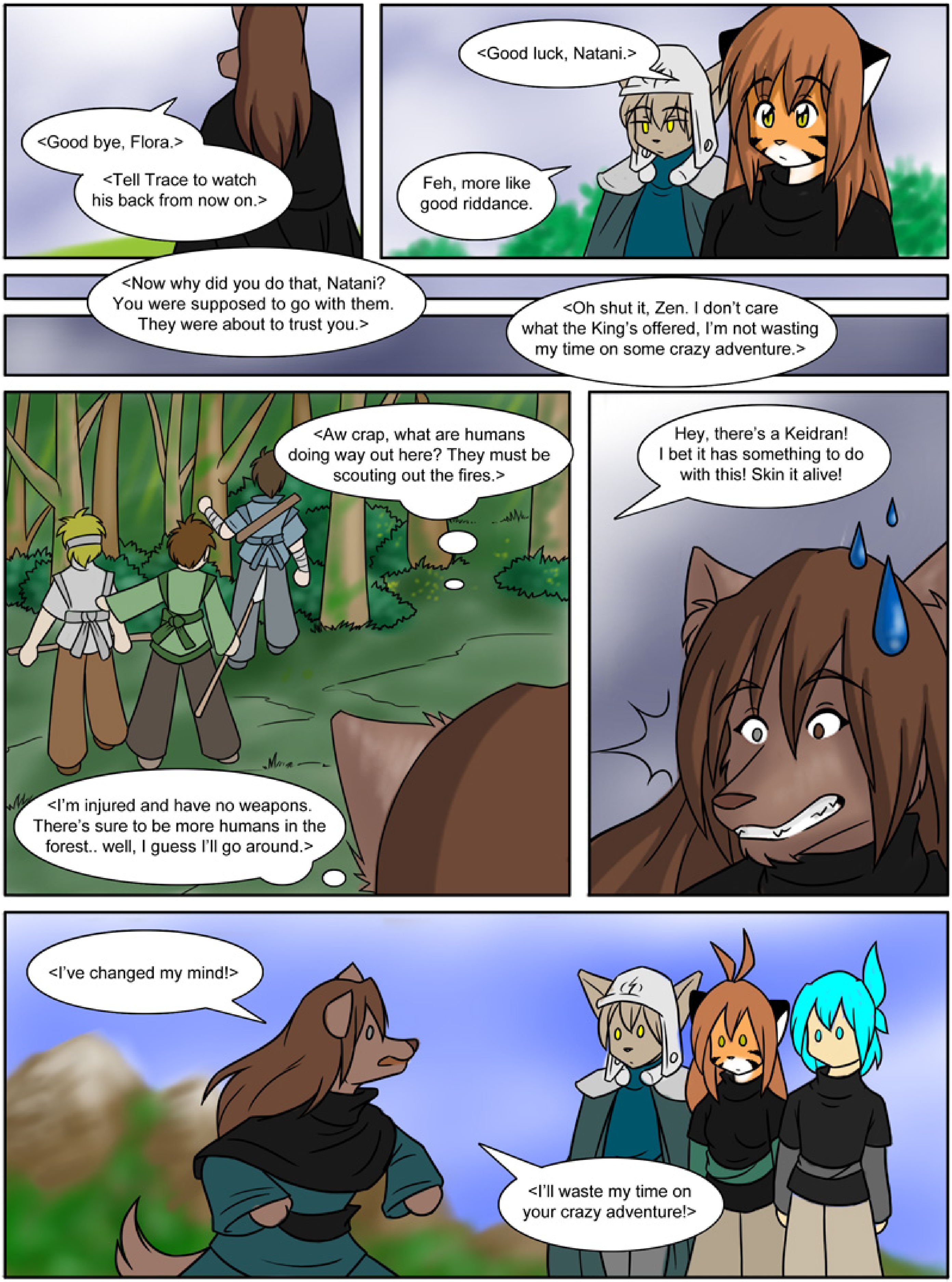
COMIC DELAYED

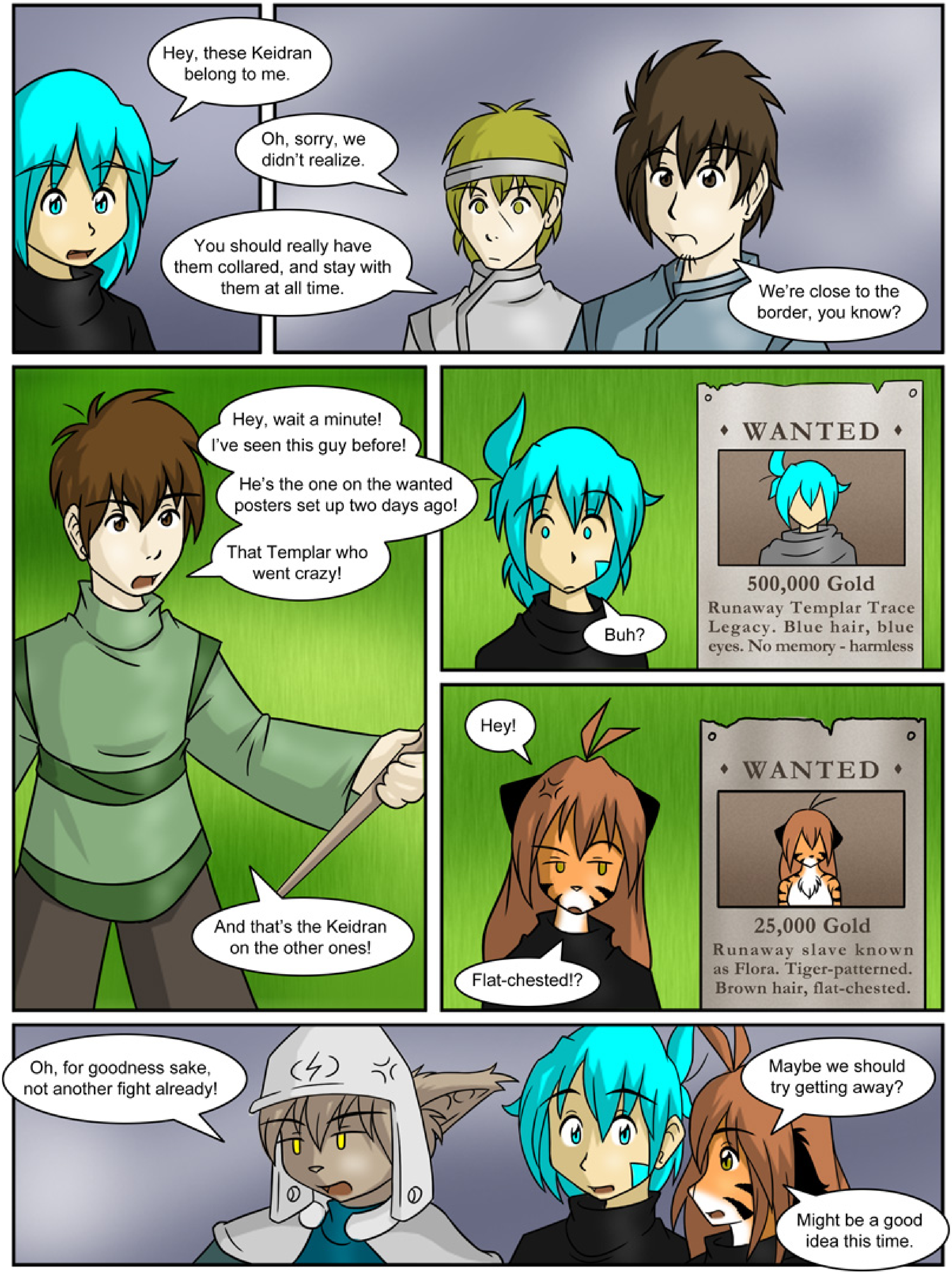
DUE TO SEVERE WEATHER AND POWER OUTAGES

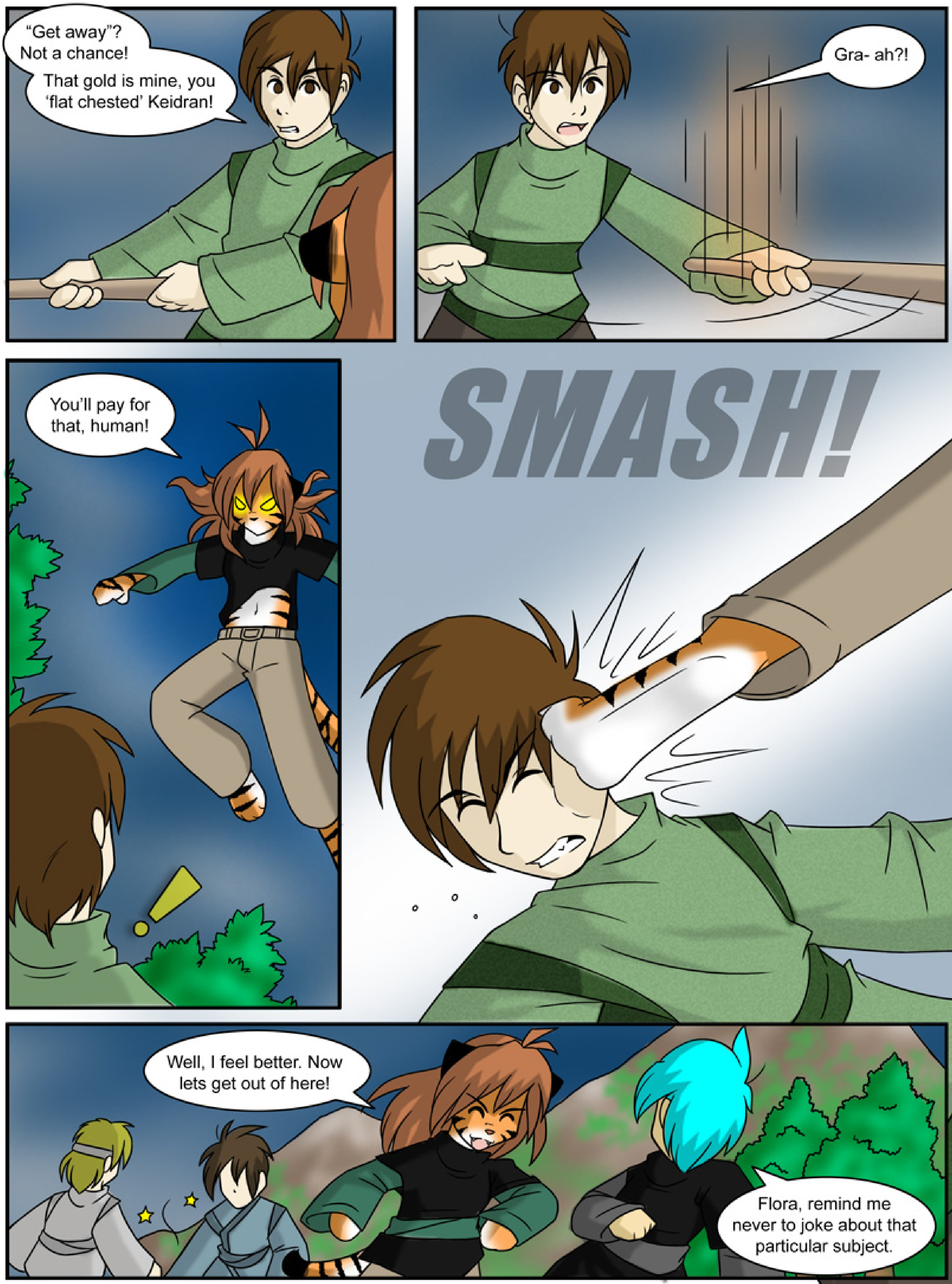
~~We'll be back Wednesday :)~~ :<

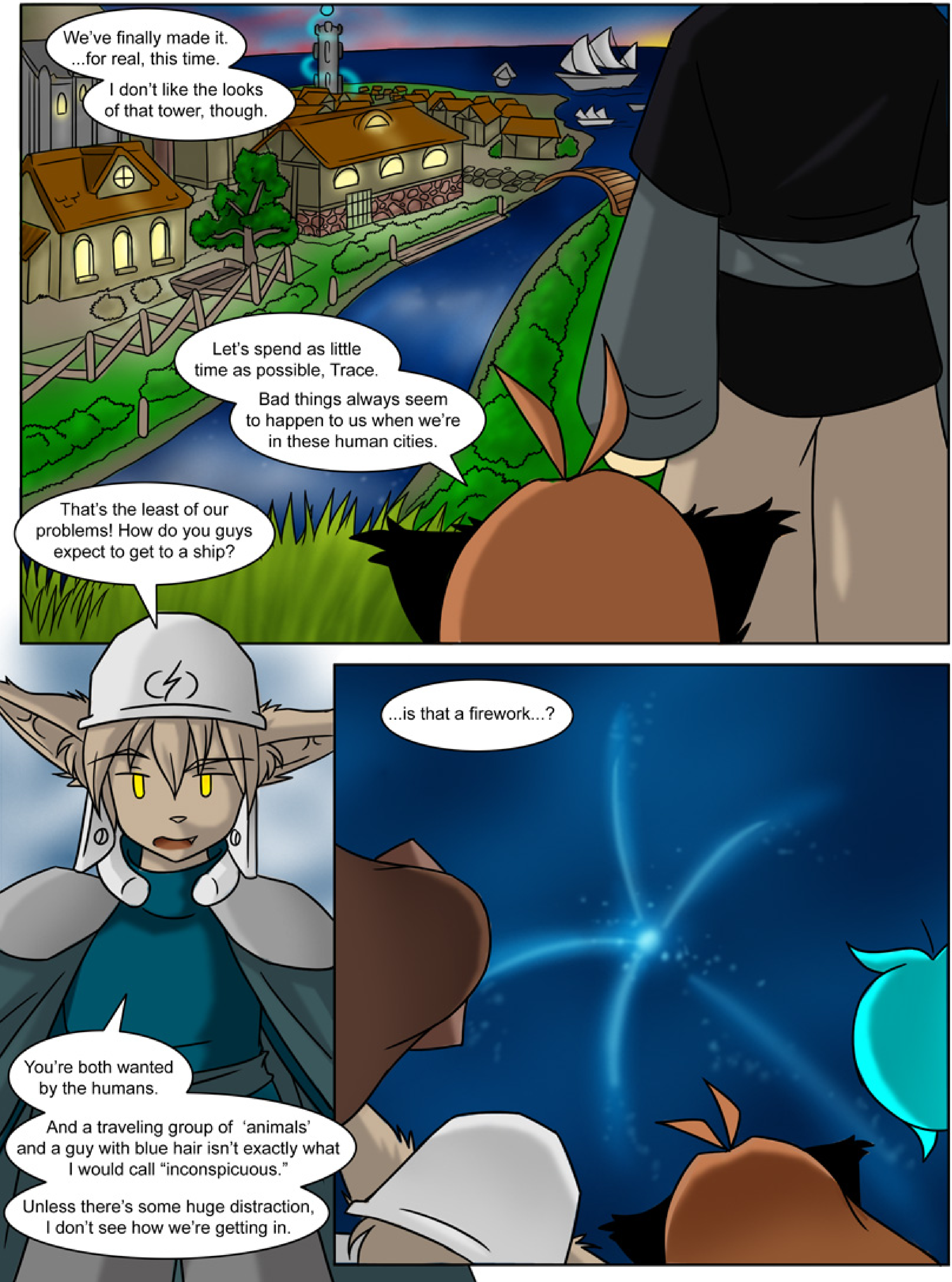

zzz.... s'nah..
woof?
Later...
I've asked him, Trace. He says he was sent by the wolf king to kill us.
But... the contract is off.
How does he know that?
<Zen and I are linked mentally. I see and feel what he does.>
<Ever since he was stabbed, I have been using my energy to keep him alive. He's now in the care of our healers.>
<Without his aid, I'm not much of a fighter. My viciousness comes from his side of the link...>
<Zen is safe for now... but since we've failed, the king is going to banish us both. Or a least me... Zen is safe until he's healed..>
<So... you don't have anywhere to go?>
You could come with us...
Huh? With you guys?

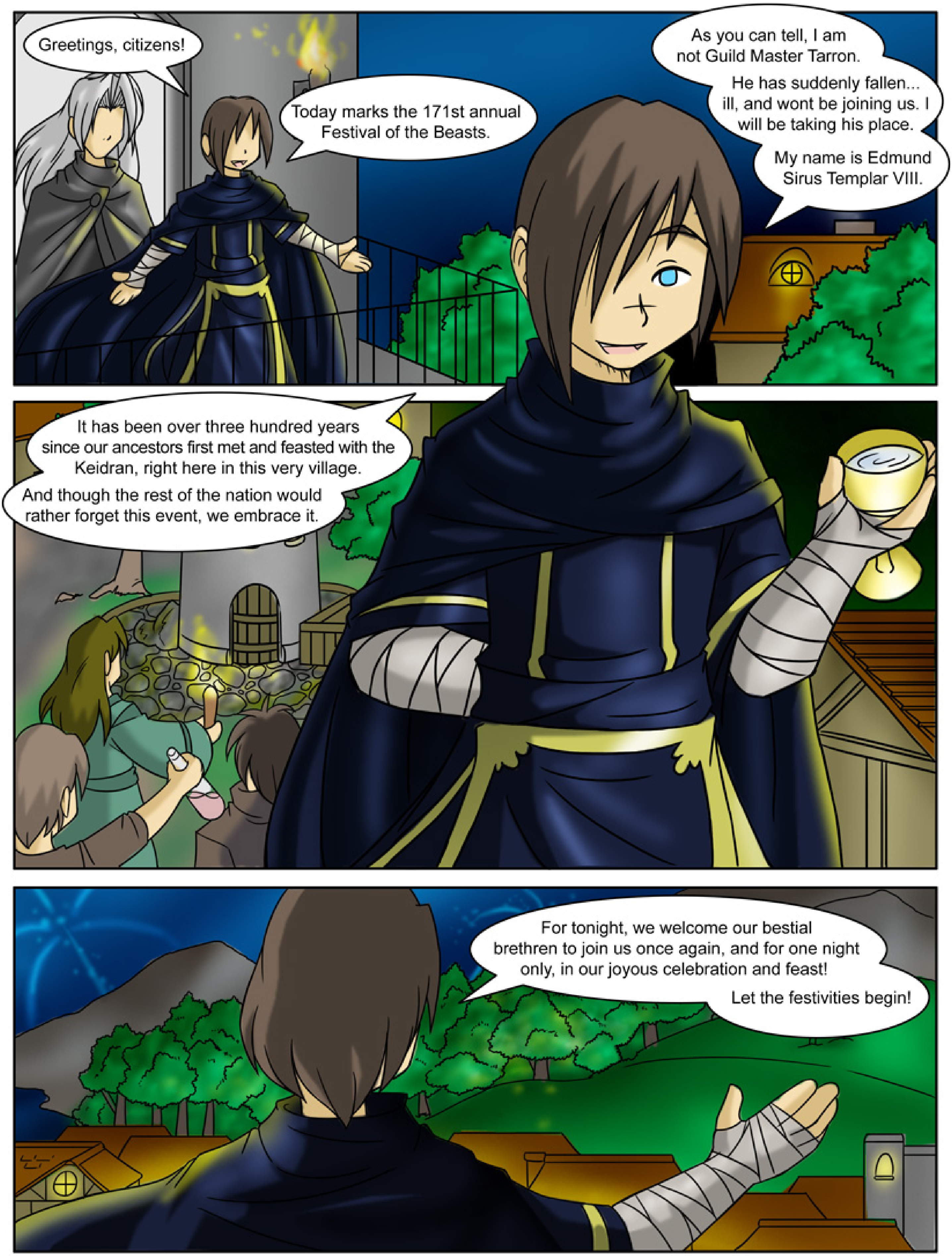

<No... no, I'm going back. I'll face my banishment.>
<But.. we can.. um...>
<Do you have a death wish?>
<W-wah?>
<Listen, I just told you I was sent to kill you guys.
I'm a killer, obviously.
And so is Trace, now that I think about it.
Sure, you're protected from me, because you saved my life, the Code, bah..>
<But there's nothing stopping me from killing that human or that.. other guy in their sleep.>
<What makes you think you can just trust me all of the sudden?>
<I.. I dunno.>
<I've just.. always believed that everyone has some good in them.>
<You're a fool if you think that.>
I can't understand a word they're saying.
Oh, Flora's trying to get us killed in our sleep.
What?!

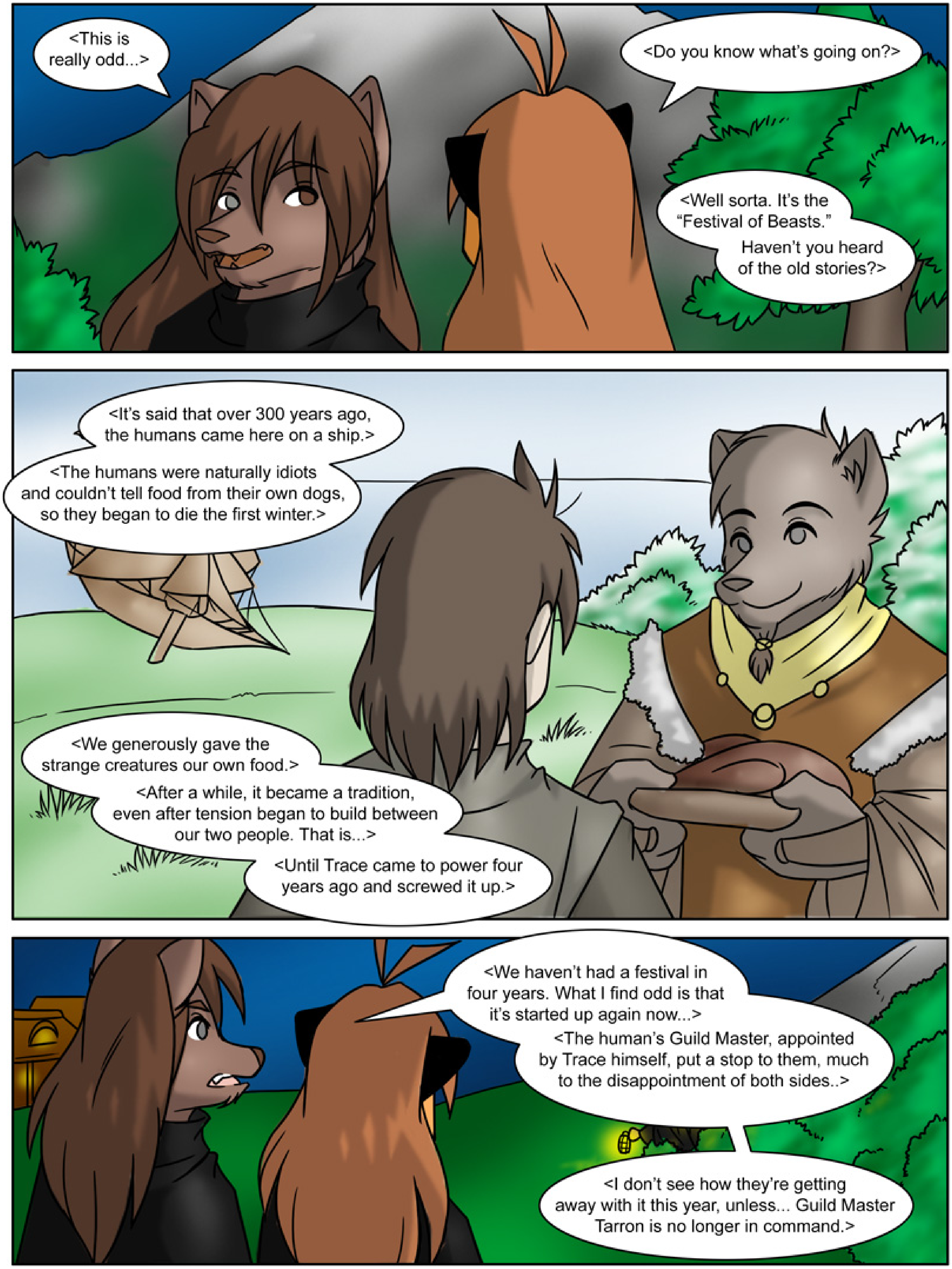

<Good bye, Flora.>
<Tell Trace to watch his back from now on.>
<Good luck, Natani.>
Feh, more like good riddance.
<Now why did you do that, Natani? You were supposed to go with them. They were about to trust you.>
<Oh shut it, Zen. I don't care what the King's offered, I'm not wasting my time on some crazy adventure.>
<Aw crap, what are humans doing way out here? They must be scouting out the fires.>
<I'm injured and have no weapons. There's sure to be more humans in the forest.. well, I guess I'll go around.>
Hey, there's a Keidran! I bet it has something to do with this! Skin it alive!
<I've changed my mind!>
<I'll waste my time on your crazy adventure!>

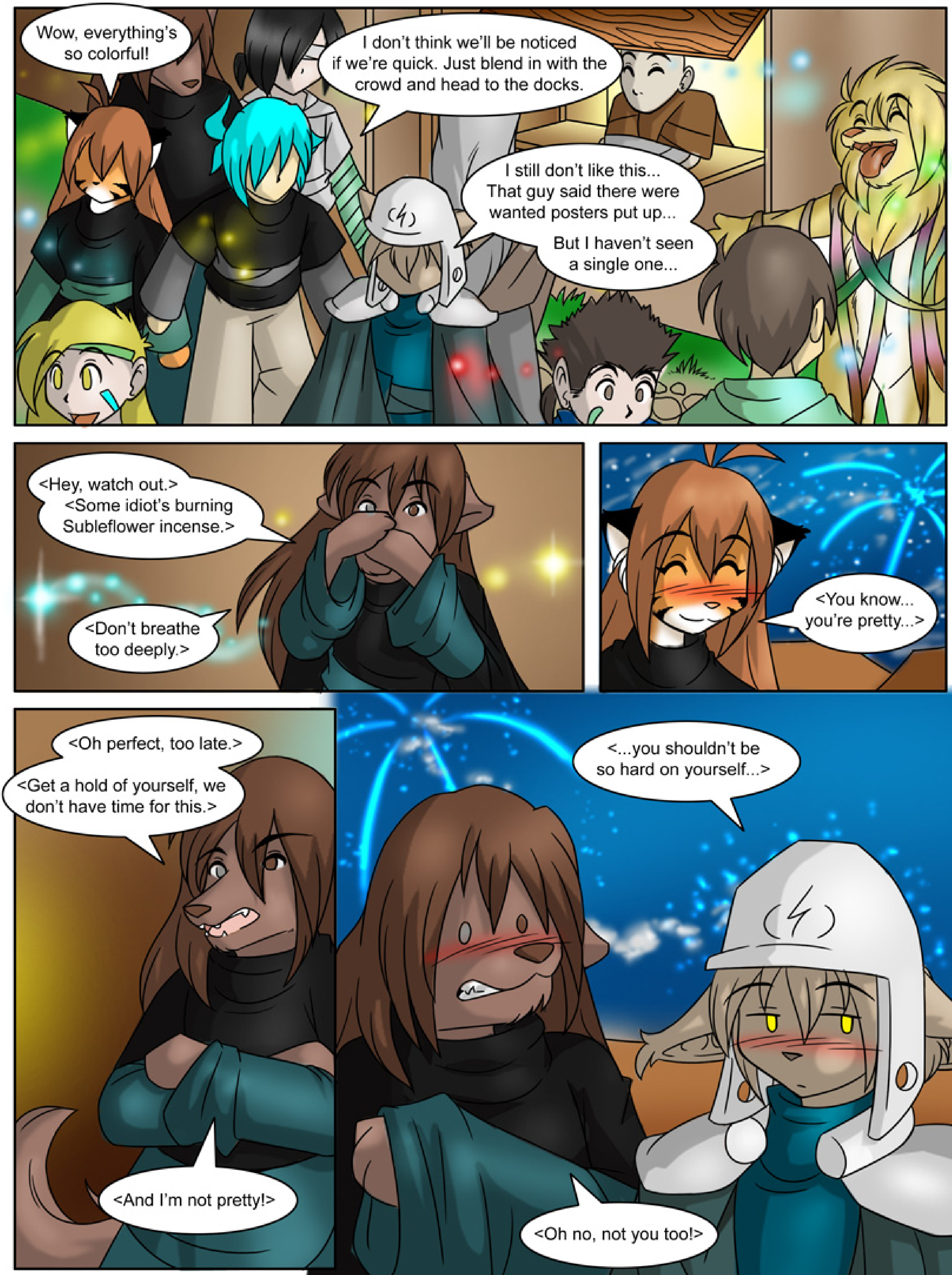

Hey, these Keidran belong to me.
Oh, sorry, we didn't realize.
You should really have them collared, and stay with them at all time.
We're close to the border, you know?
Hey, wait a minute! I've seen this guy before!
He's the one on the wanted posters set up two days ago!
That Templar who went crazy!
And that's the Keidran on the other ones!
WANTED
500,000 Gold
Runaway Templar Trace Legacy. Blue hair, blue eyes. No memory - harmless
Buh?
Hey!
WANTED
25,000 Gold
Runaway slave known as Flora. Tiger-patterned. Brown hair, flat-chested.
Flat-chested!?
Oh, for goodness sake, not another fight already!
Maybe we should try getting away?
Might be a good idea this time.

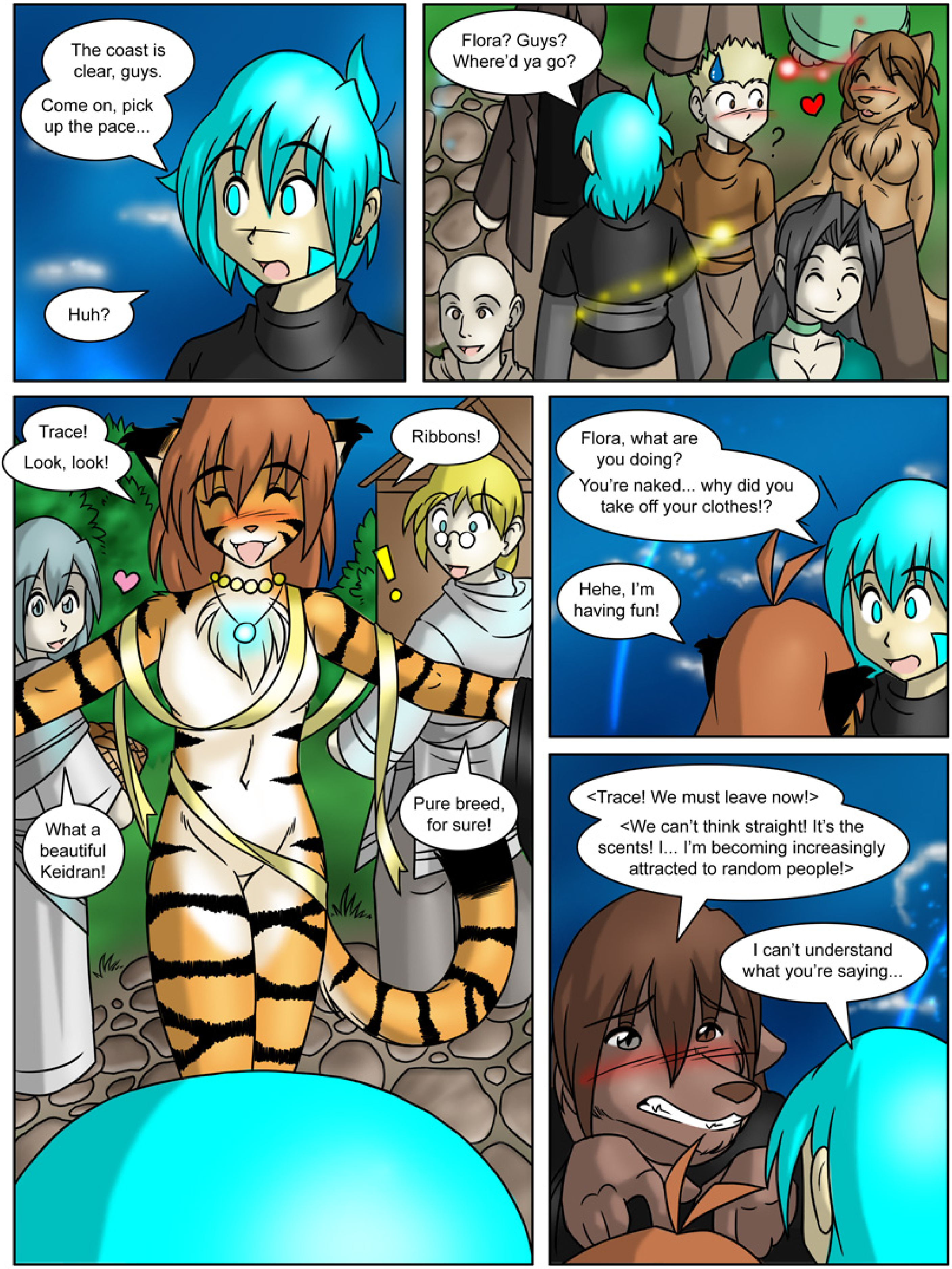

"Get away"? Not a chance!
That gold is mine, you 'flat chested' Keidran!
Gra- ah?!
You'll pay for that, human!
SMASH!
Well, I feel better. Now lets get out of here!
Flora, remind me never to joke about that particular subject.

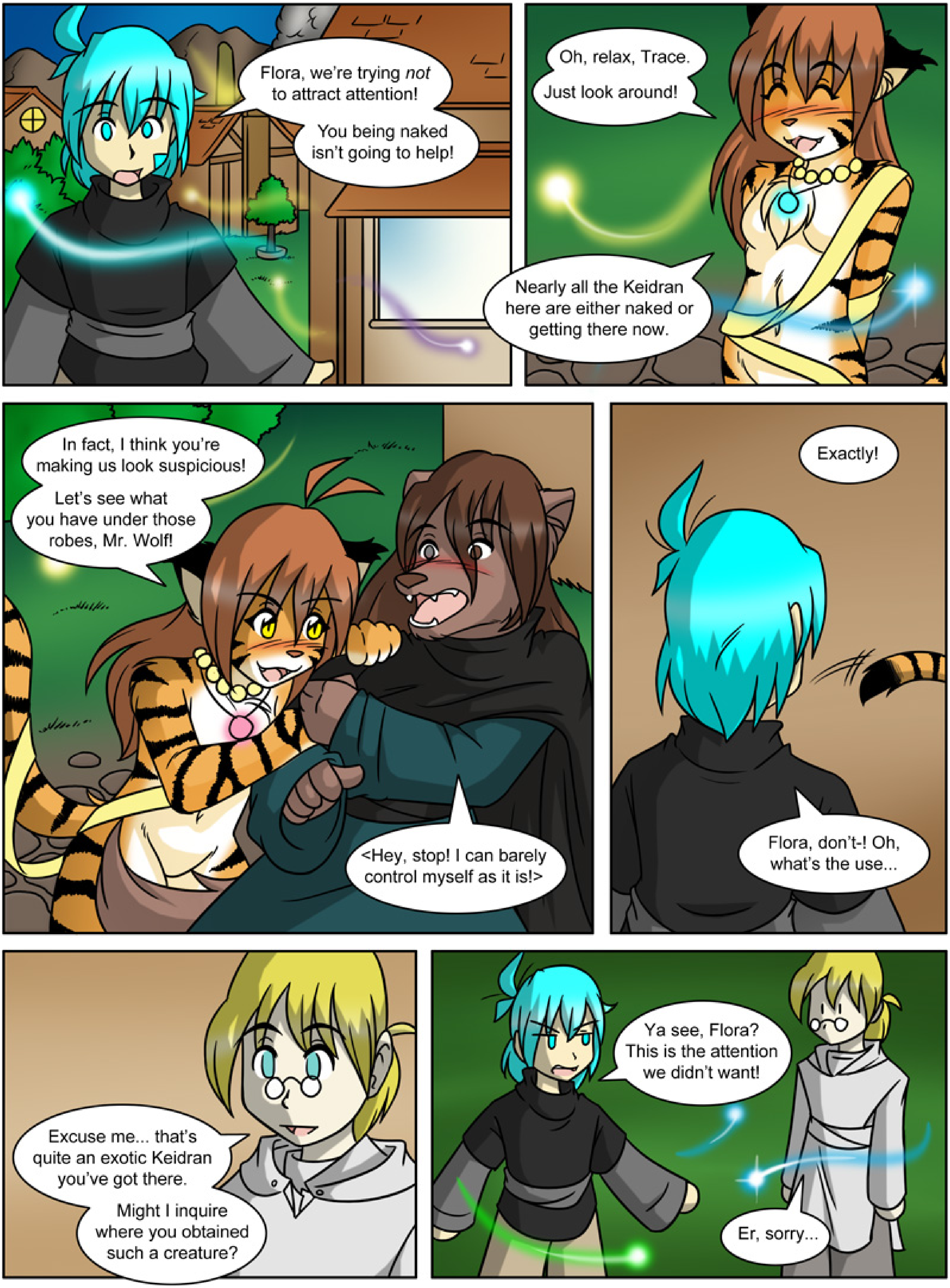

We've finally made it. ...for real, this time.
I don't like the looks of that tower, though.
Let's spend as little time as possible, Trace.
Bad things always seem to happen to us when we're in these human cities.
That's the least of our problems! How do you guys expect to get to a ship?
You're both wanted by the humans.
And a traveling group of 'animals' and a guy with blue hair isn't exactly what I would call "inconspicuous."
Unless there's some huge distraction, I don't see how we're getting in.
...is that a firework...?


Greetings, citizens!
Today marks the 171st annual Festival of the Beasts.
As you can tell, I am not Guild Master Tarron.
He has suddenly fallen... ill, and wont be joining us. I will be taking his place.
My name is Edmund Sirus Templar VIII.
It has been over three hundred years since our ancestors first met and feasted with the Keidran, right here in this very village.
And though the rest of the nation would rather forget this event, we embrace it.
For tonight, we welcome our bestial brethren to join us once again, and for one night only, in our joyous celebration and feast!
Let the festivities begin!

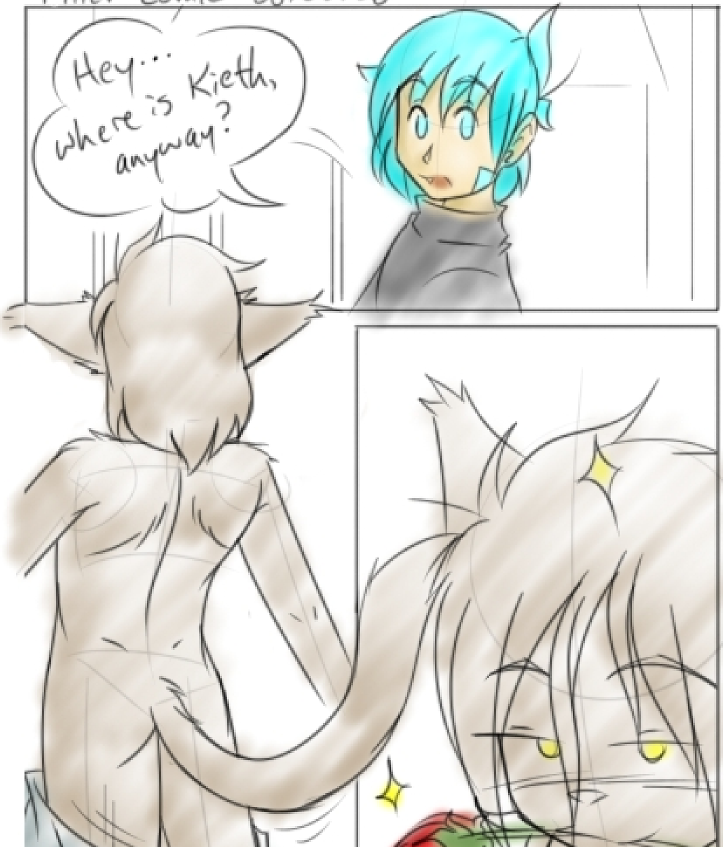

<This is really odd...>
<Do you know what's going on?>
<Well sorta. It's the "Festival of Beasts."
Haven't you heard of the old stories?>
<It's said that over 300 years ago, the humans came here on a ship.>
<The humans were naturally idiots and couldn't tell food from their own dogs, so they began to die the first winter.>
<We generously gave the strange creatures our own food.>
<After a while, it became a tradition, even after tension began to build between our two people. That is...>
<Until Trace came to power four years ago and screwed it up.>
<We haven't had a festival in four years. What I find odd is that it's started up again now...>
<The human's Guild Master, appointed by Trace himself, put a stop to them, much to the disappointment of both sides..>
<I don't see how they're getting away with it this year, unless... Guild Master Tarron is no longer in command.>

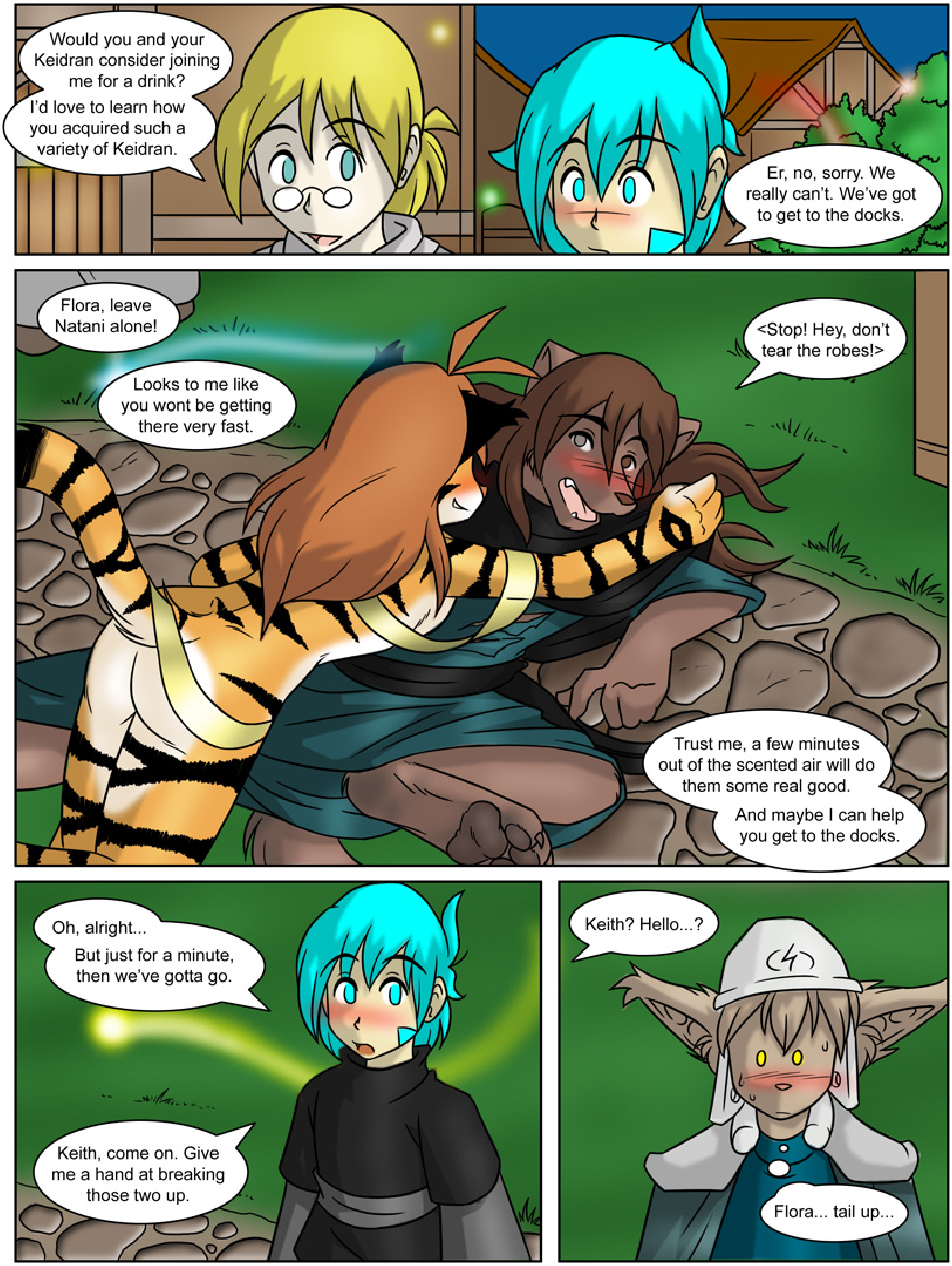

Wow, everything's so colorful!
I don't think we'll be noticed if we're quick. Just blend in with the crowd and head to the docks.
I still don't like this... That guy said there were wanted posters put up...
But I haven't seen a single one...
<Hey, watch out.>
<Some idiot's burning Subleflower incense.>
<Don't breathe too deeply.>
<You know... you're pretty...>
<Oh perfect, too late.>
<Get a hold of yourself, we don't have time for this.>
<And I'm not pretty!>
<...you shouldn't be so hard on yourself...>
<Oh no, not you too!>

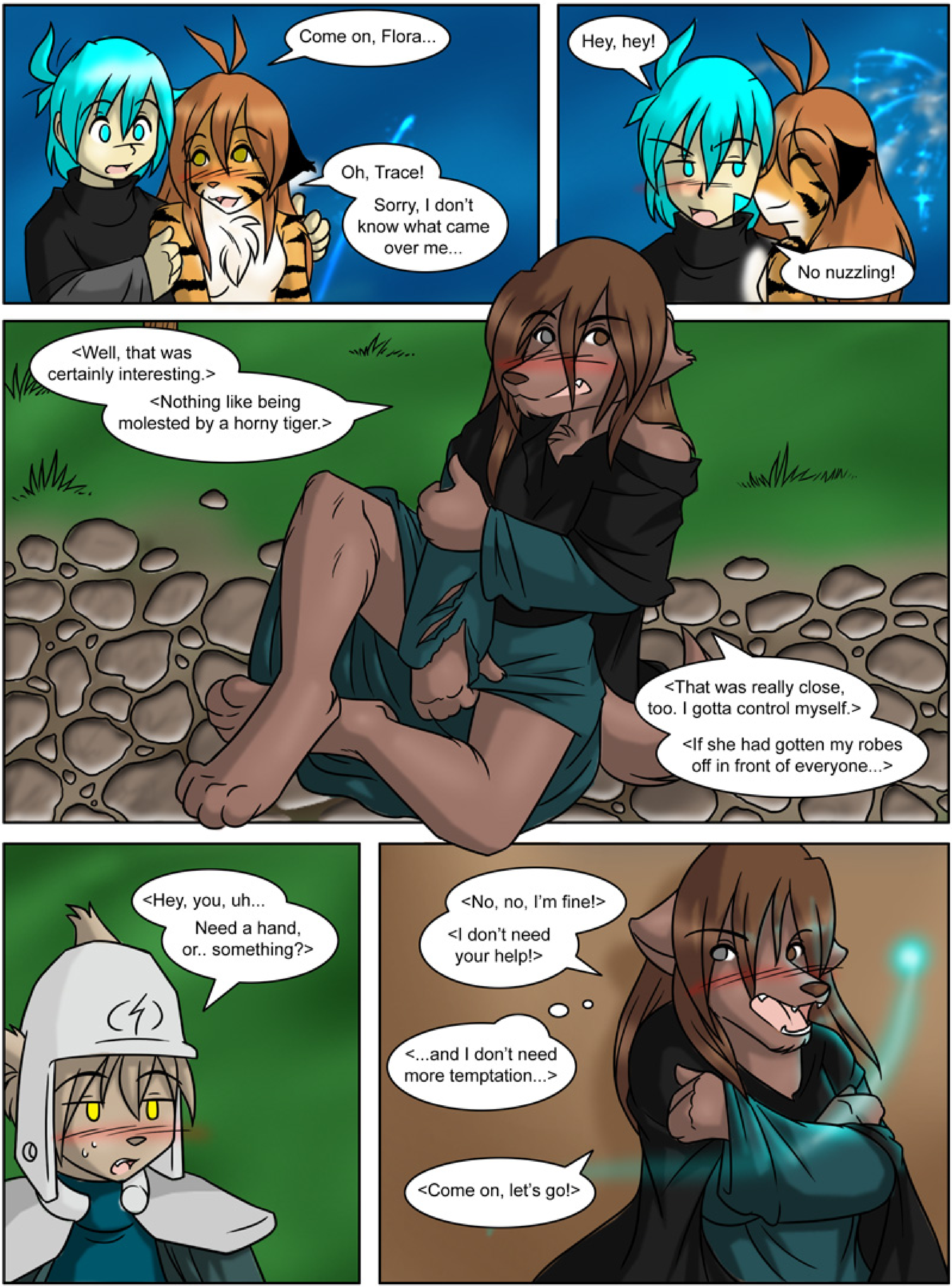

The coast is clear, guys.
Come on, pick up the pace...
Huh?
Flora? Guys? Where'd ya go?
?
Trace!
Look, look!
Ribbons!
What a beautiful Keidran!
Pure breed, for sure!
Flora, what are you doing?
You're naked... why did you take off your clothes!?
Hehe, I'm having fun!
<Trace! We must leave now!>
<We can't think straight! It's the scents! I... I'm becoming increasingly attracted to random people!>
I can't understand what you're saying...

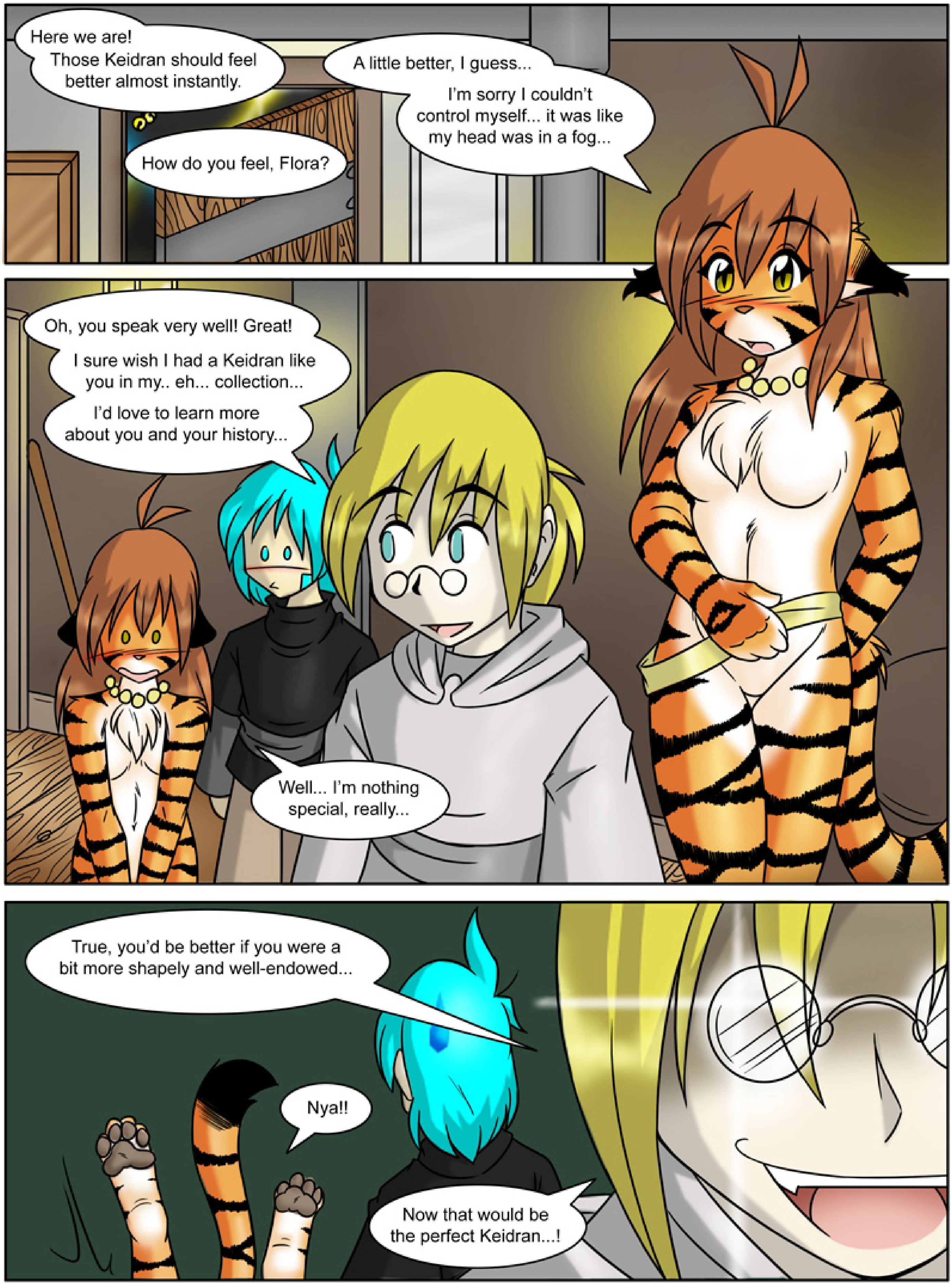

Flora, we're trying *not* to attract attention!
You being naked isn't going to help!
Oh, relax, Trace.
Just look around!
Nearly all the Keidran here are either naked or getting there now.
In fact, I think you're making us look suspicious!
Let's see what you have under those robes, Mr. Wolf!
<Hey, stop! I can barely control myself as it is!>
Exactly!
Flora, don't-! Oh, what's the use...
Excuse me... that's quite an exotic Keidran you've got there.
Might I inquire where you obtained such a creature?
Ya see, Flora? This is the attention we didn't want!
Er, sorry...

Filler Comic 06/03/06


Hey... where is Kieth, anyway?
Mrrrooow...!


Would you and your Keidran consider joining me for a drink?
I'd love to learn how you acquired such a variety of Keidran.
Er, no, sorry. We really can't. We've got to get to the docks.
Flora, leave Natani alone!
Looks to me like you wont be getting there very fast.
<Stop! Hey, don't tear the robes!>
Trust me, a few minutes out of the scented air will do them some real good.
And maybe I can help you get to the docks.
Oh, alright...
But just for a minute, then we've gotta go.
Keith, come on. Give me a hand at breaking those two up.
Keith? Hello...?
Flora... tail up...


Come on, Flora...
Oh, Trace!
Sorry, I don't know what came over me...
Hey, hey!
No nuzzling!
<Well, that was certainly interesting.>
<Nothing like being molested by a horny tiger.>
<That was really close, too. I gotta control myself.>
<If she had gotten my robes off in front of everyone...>
<Hey, you, uh...
Need a hand, or.. something?>
<No, no, I'm fine!>
<I don't need your help!>
<...and I don't need more temptation...>
<Come on, let's go!>


Here we are!
Those Keidran should feel better almost instantly.
How do you feel, Flora?
A little better, I guess...
I'm sorry I couldn't control myself... it was like my head was in a fog...
Oh, you speak very well! Great!
I sure wish I had a Keidran like you in my.. eh... collection...
I'd love to learn more about you and your history...
Well... I'm nothing special, really...
True, you'd be better if you were a bit more shapely and well-endowed...
Nya!!
Now that would be the perfect Keidran...!

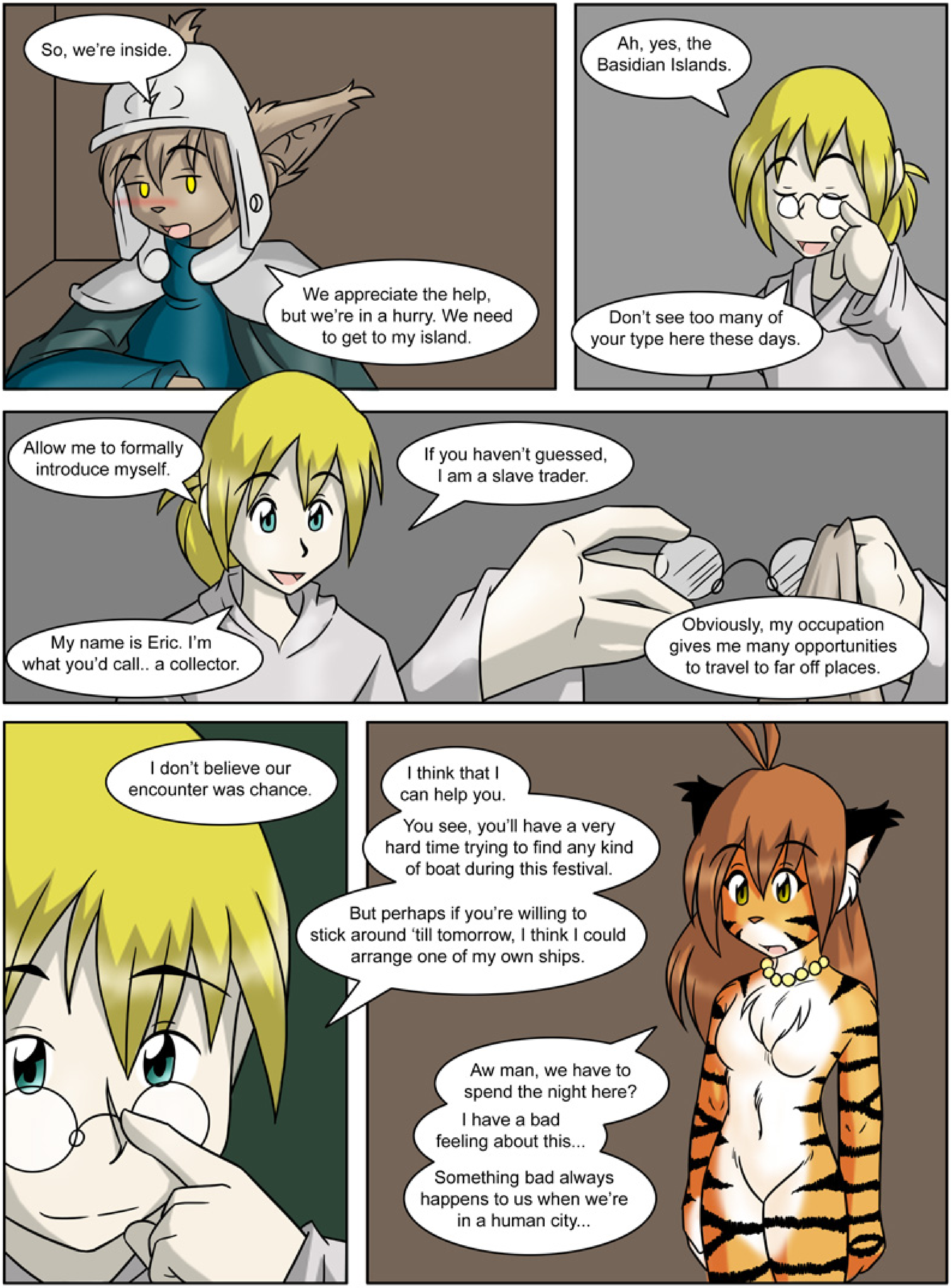
Twokinds will update soon...

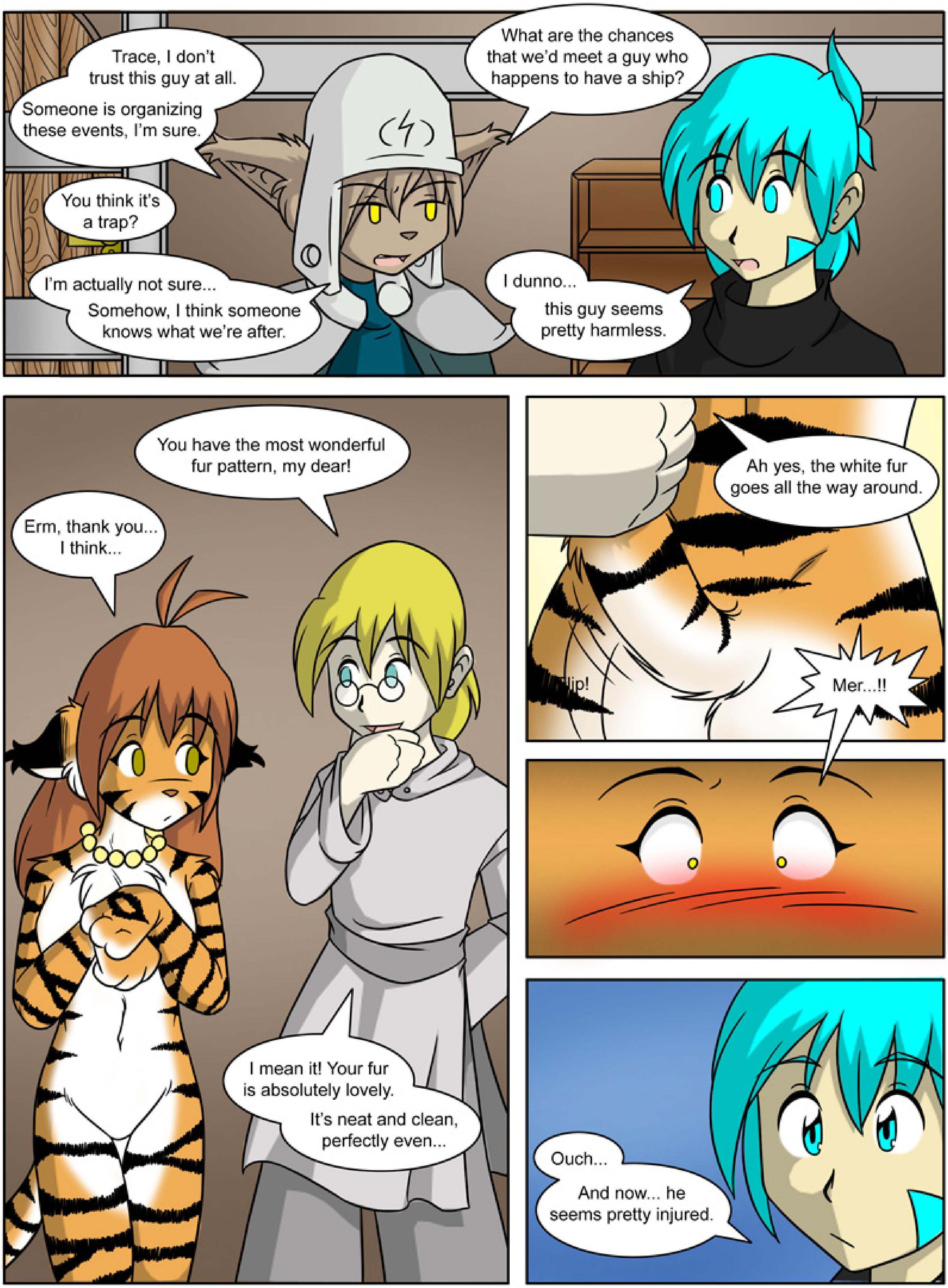
Just need to sleep first...

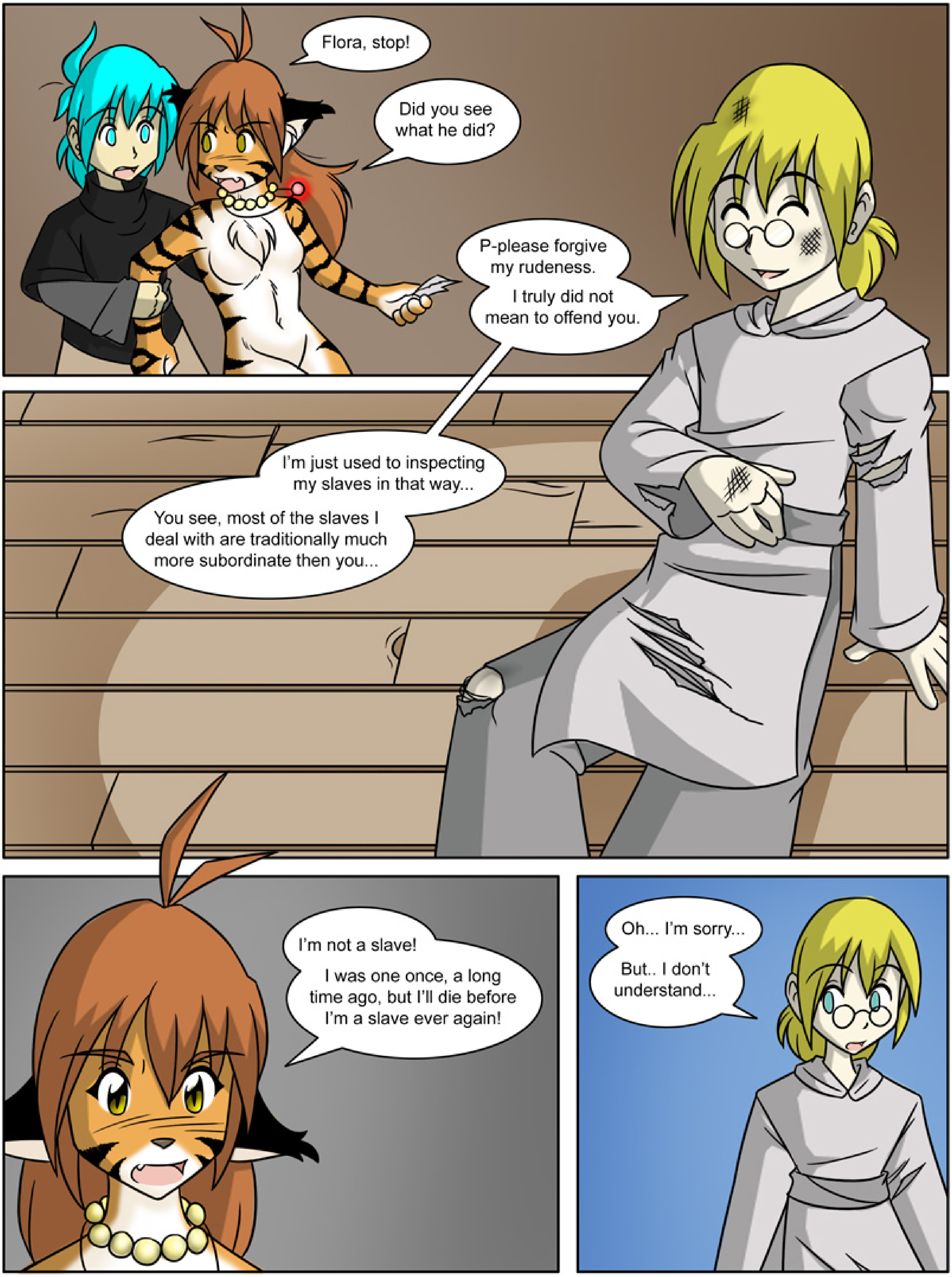
Look for it tonight...
or tomorrow morning!

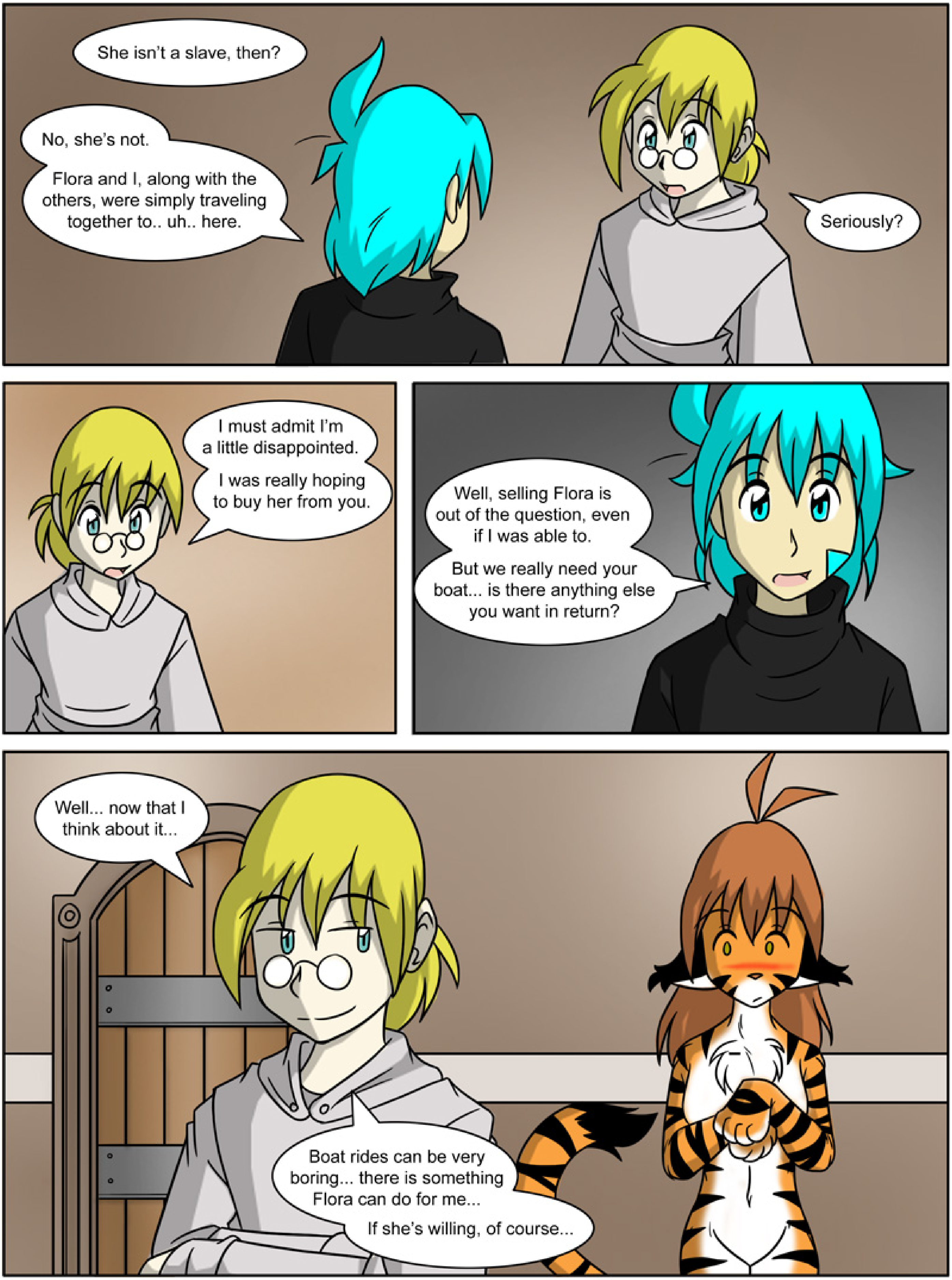
Sorry. ;)

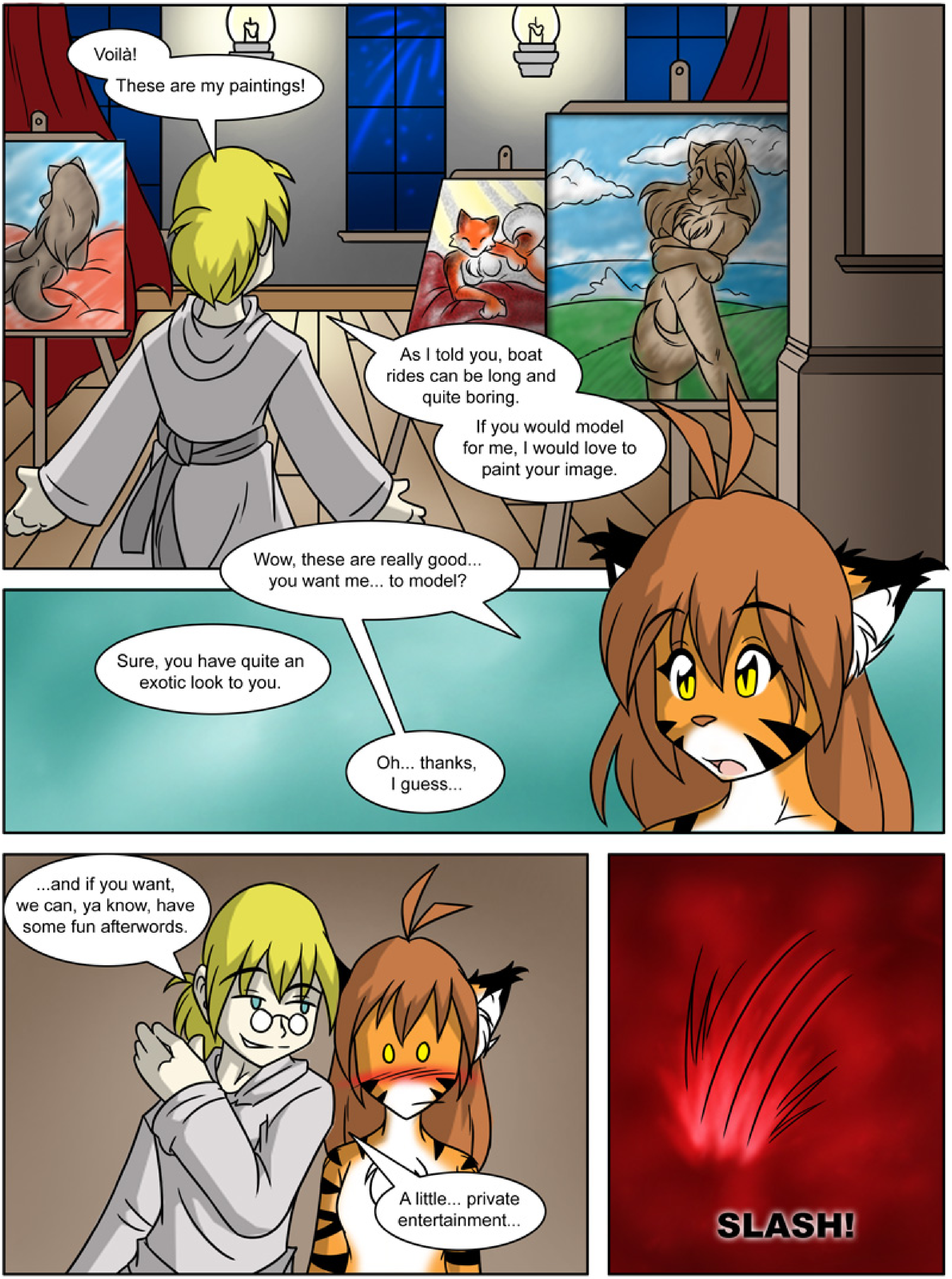
Tom

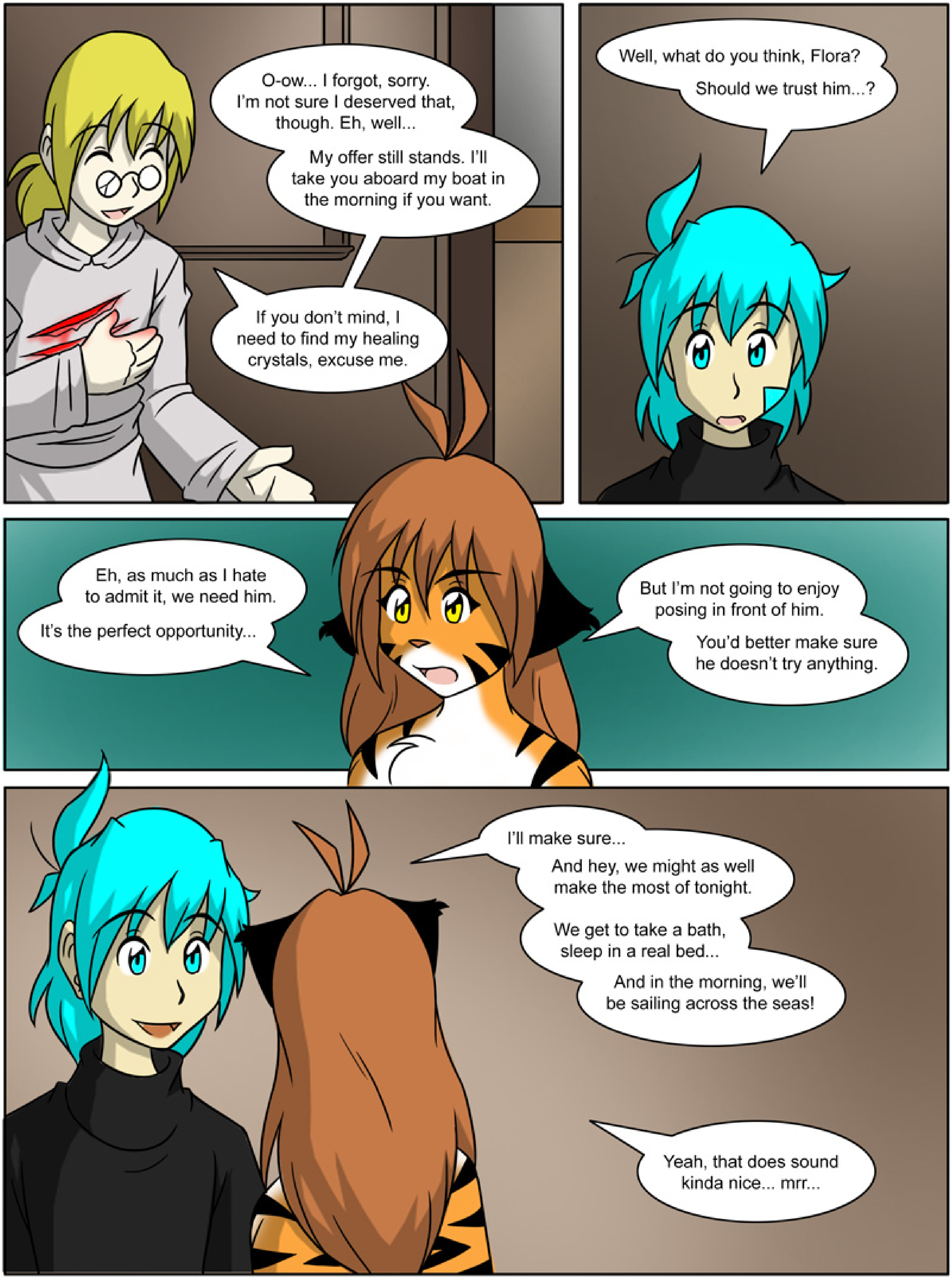

So, we're inside.
We appreciate the help, but we're in a hurry. We need to get to my island.
Ah, yes, the Basidian Islands.
Don't see too many of your type here these days.
Allow me to formally introduce myself.
If you haven't guessed, I am a slave trader.
My name is Eric. I'm what you'd call.. a collector.
Obviously, my occupation gives me many opportunities to travel to far off places.
I don't believe our encounter was chance.
I think that I can help you.
You see, you'll have a very hard time trying to find any kind of boat during this festival.
But perhaps if you're willing to stick around 'till tomorrow, I think I could arrange one of my own ships.
Aw man, we have to spend the night here?
I have a bad feeling about this...
Something bad always happens to us when we're in a human city...

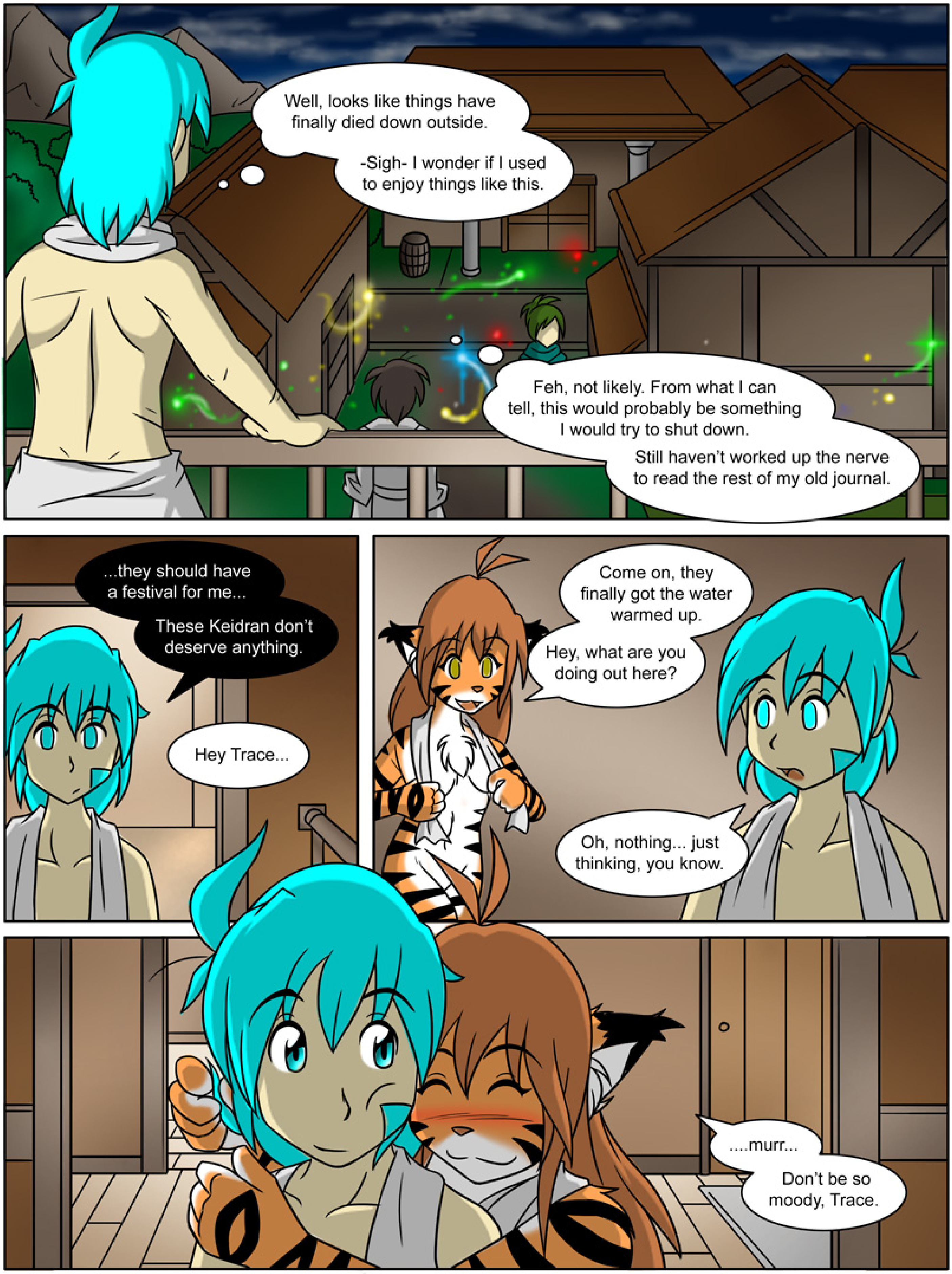

Trace, I don't trust this guy at all.
Someone is organizing these events, I'm sure.
What are the chances that we'd meet a guy who happens to have a ship?
You think it's a trap?
I'm actually not sure...
Somehow, I think someone knows what we're after.
I dunno...
this guy seems pretty harmless.
You have the most wonderful fur pattern, my dear!
Erm, thank you... I think...
I mean it! Your fur is absolutely lovely.
It's neat and clean, perfectly even...
Ah yes, the white fur goes all the way around.
lip!
Mer...!!
Ouch...
And now... he seems pretty injured.

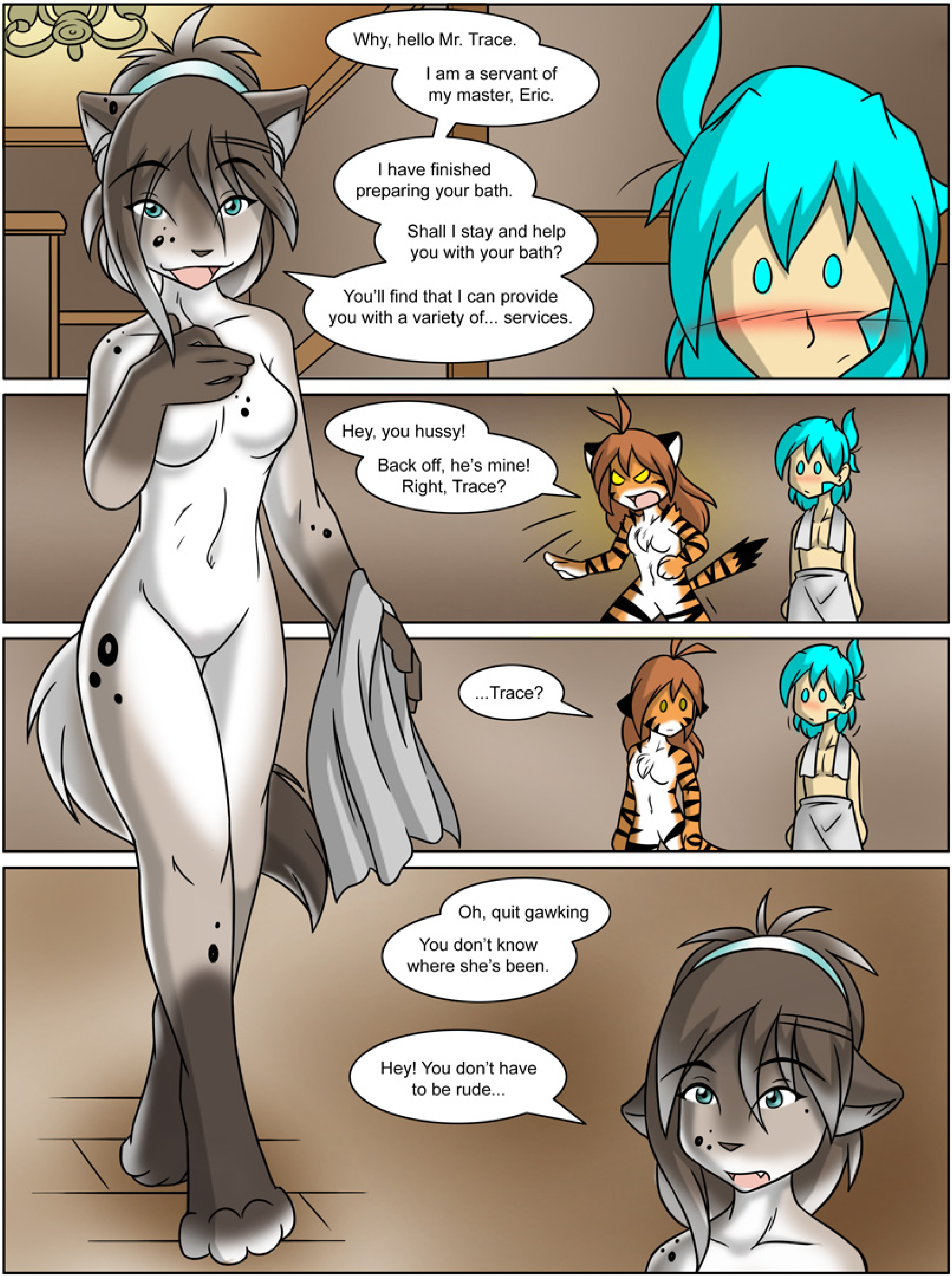

Flora, stop!
Did you see what he did?
P-please forgive my rudeness.
I truly did not mean to offend you.
I'm just used to inspecting my slaves in that way...
You see, most of the slaves I deal with are traditionally much more subordinate then you...
I'm not a slave!
I was one once, a long time ago, but I'll die before I'm a slave ever again!
Oh... I'm sorry...
But.. I don't understand...

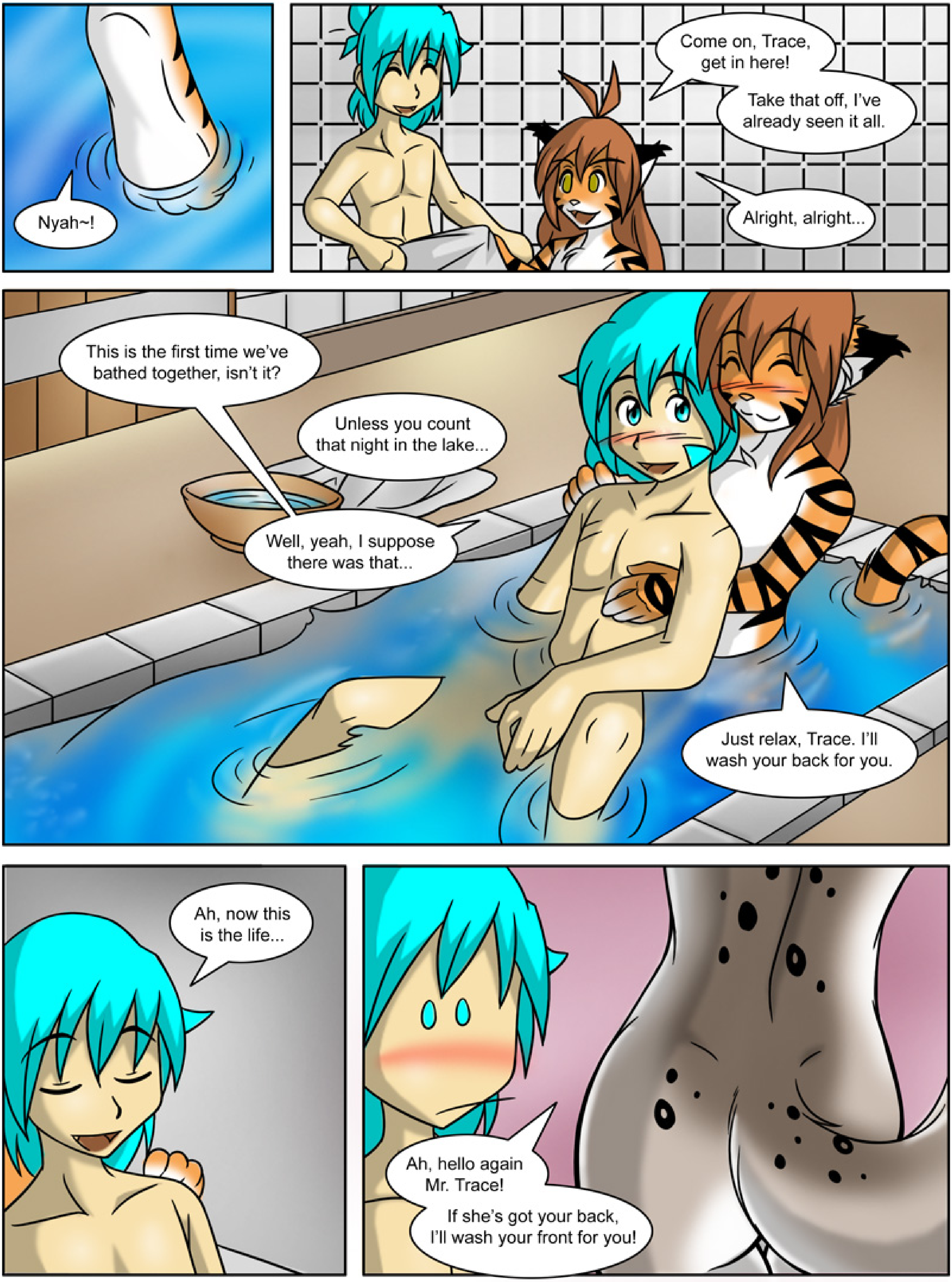

She isn't a slave, then?
No, she's not.
Flora and I, along with the others, were simply traveling together to.. uh.. here.
Seriously?
I must admit I'm a little disappointed.
I was really hoping to buy her from you.
Well, selling Flora is out of the question, even if I was able to.
But we really need your boat... is there anything else you want in return?
Well... now that I think about it...
Boat rides can be very boring... there is something Flora can do for me...
If she's willing, of course...

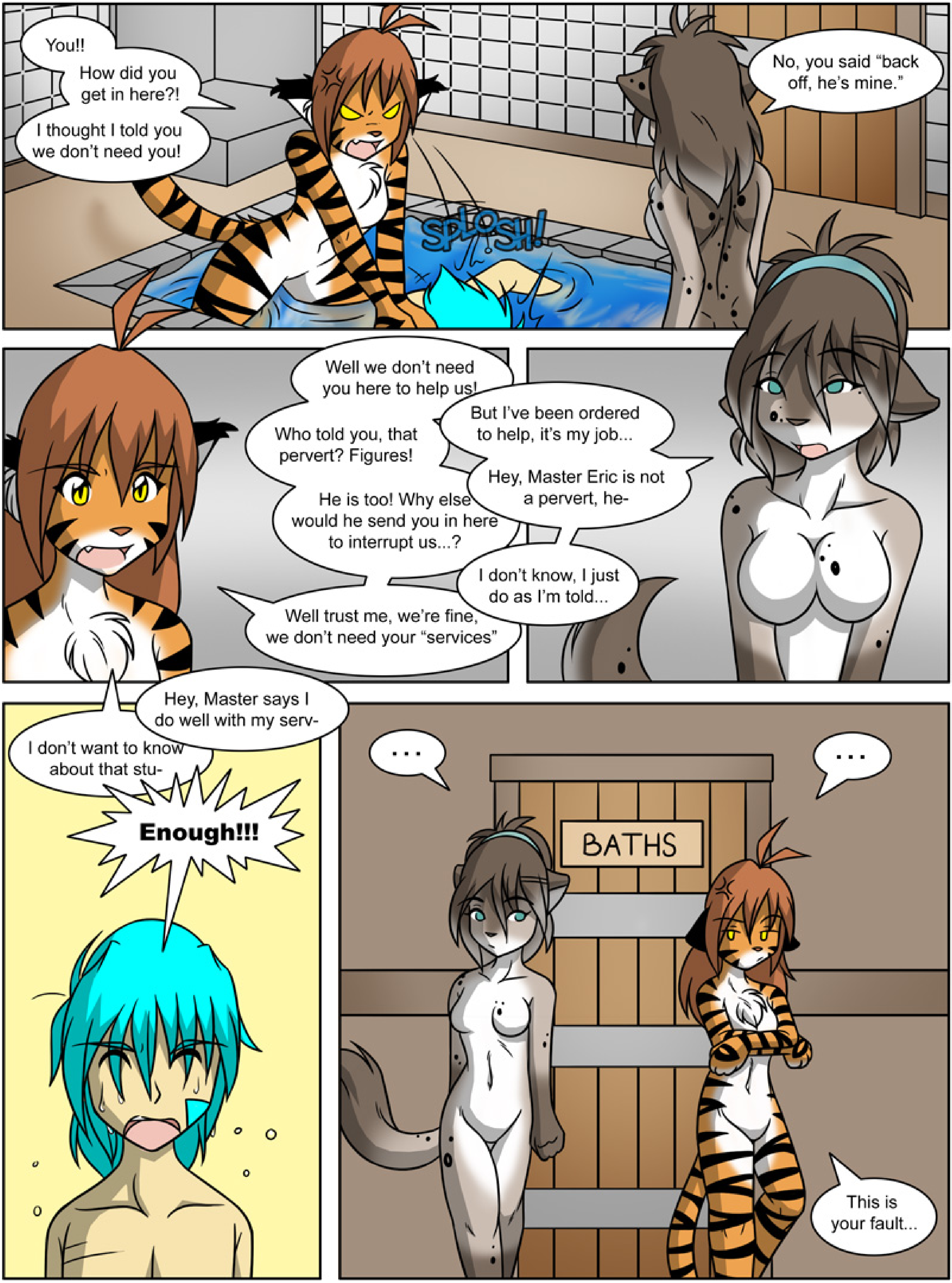

Voilà!
These are my paintings!
As I told you, boat rides can be long and quite boring.
If you would model for me, I would love to paint your image.
Wow, these are really good... you want me... to model?
Sure, you have quite an exotic look to you.
Oh... thanks, I guess...
...and if you want, we can, ya know, have some fun afterwords.
A little... private entertainment...
SLASH!

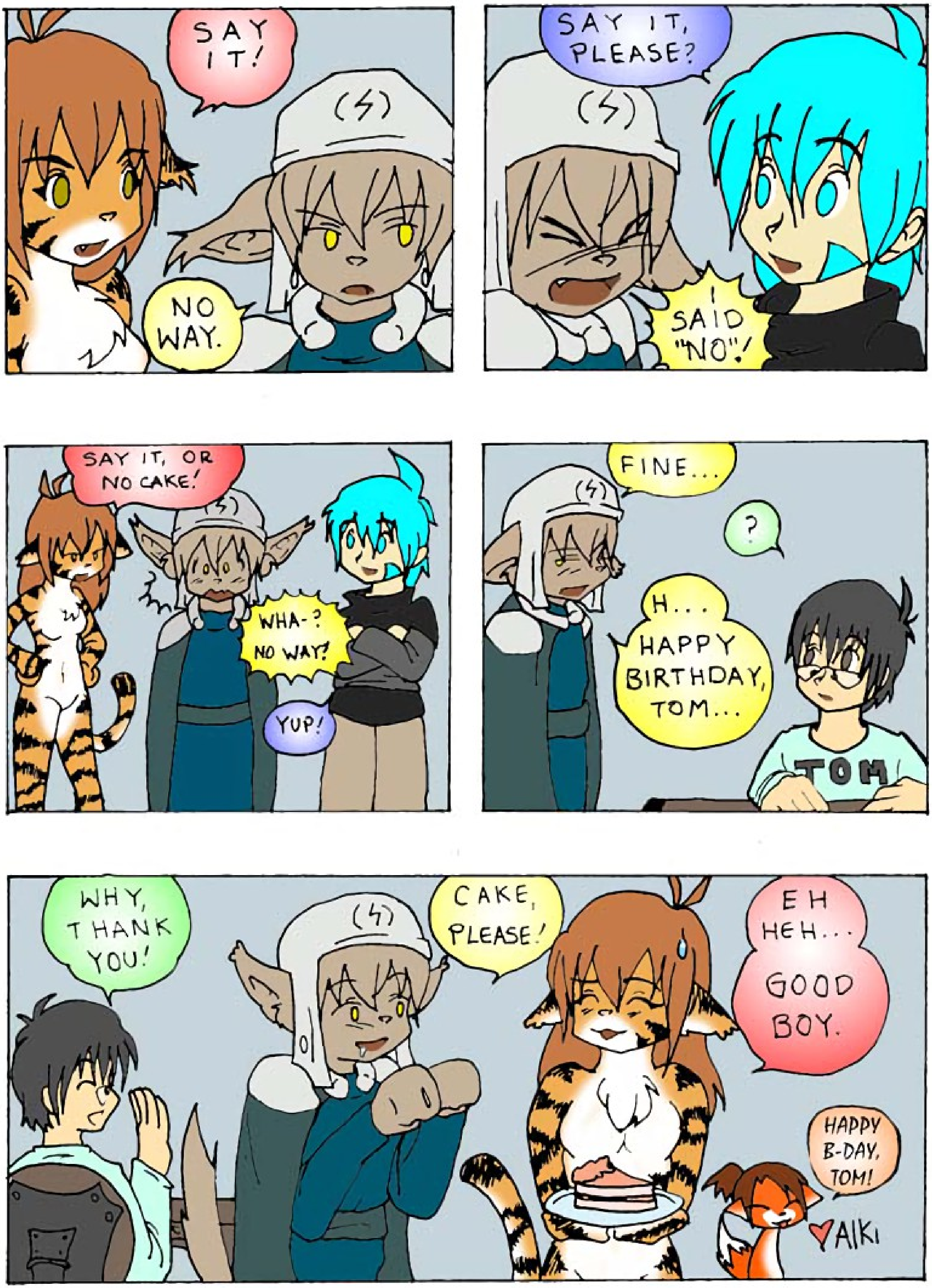

O-ow... I forgot, sorry. I'm not sure I deserved that, though. Eh, well...
My offer still stands. I'll take you aboard my boat in the morning if you want.
If you don't mind, I need to find my healing crystals, excuse me.
Well, what do you think, Flora?
Should we trust him...?
Eh, as much as I hate to admit it, we need him.
It's the perfect opportunity...
But I'm not going to enjoy posing in front of him.
You'd better make sure he doesn't try anything.
I'll make sure...
And hey, we might as well make the most of tonight.
We get to take a bath, sleep in a real bed...
And in the morning, we'll be sailing across the seas!
Yeah, that does sound kinda nice... mrr...

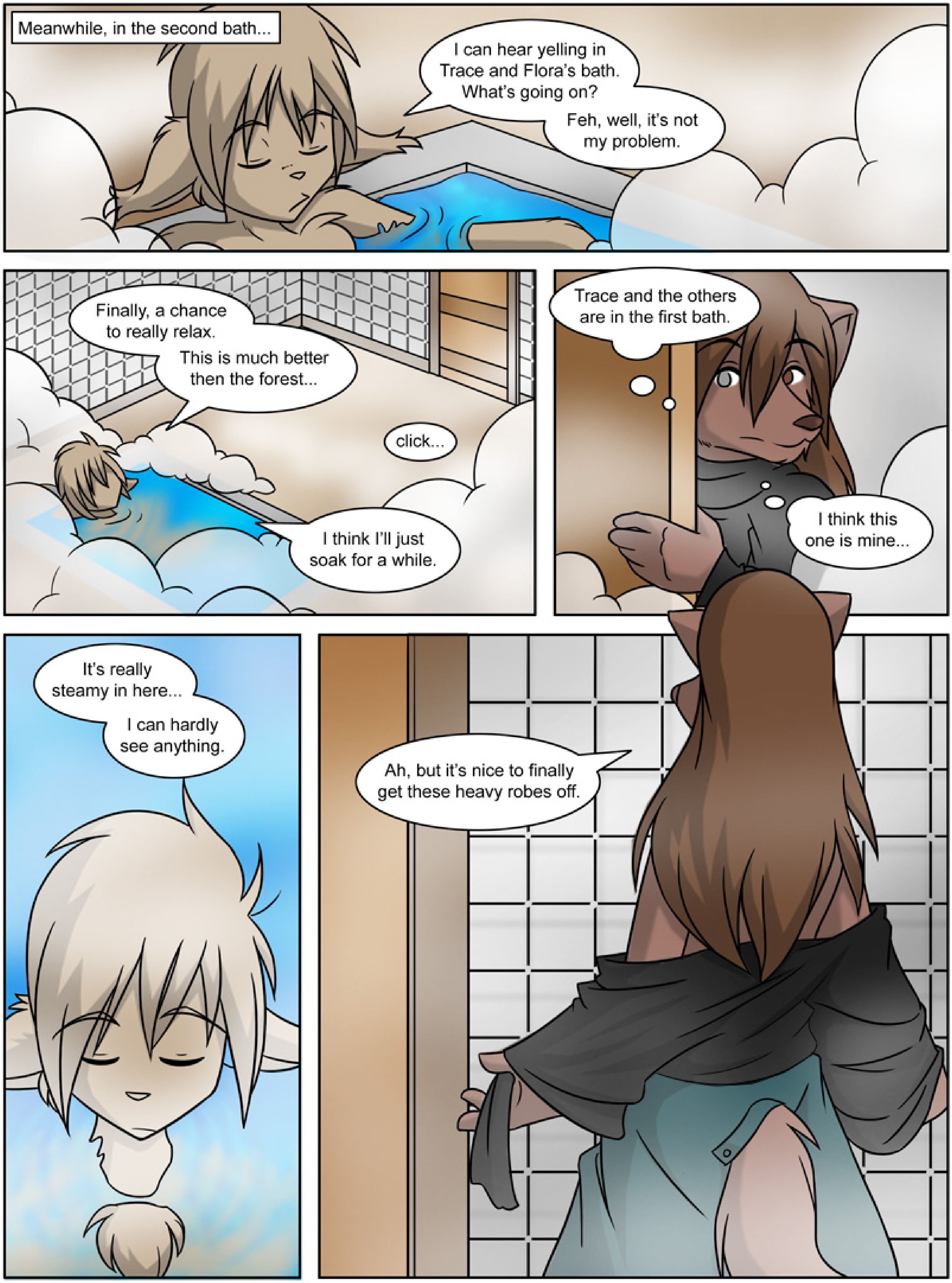

Well, looks like things have finally died down outside.
-Sigh- I wonder if I used to enjoy things like this.
Feh, not likely. From what I can tell, this would probably be something I would try to shut down.
Still haven't worked up the nerve to read the rest of my old journal.
...they should have a festival for me...
These Keidran don't deserve anything.
Hey Trace...
Come on, they finally got the water warmed up.
Hey, what are you doing out here?
Oh, nothing... just thinking, you know.
....murr...
Don't be so moody, Trace.

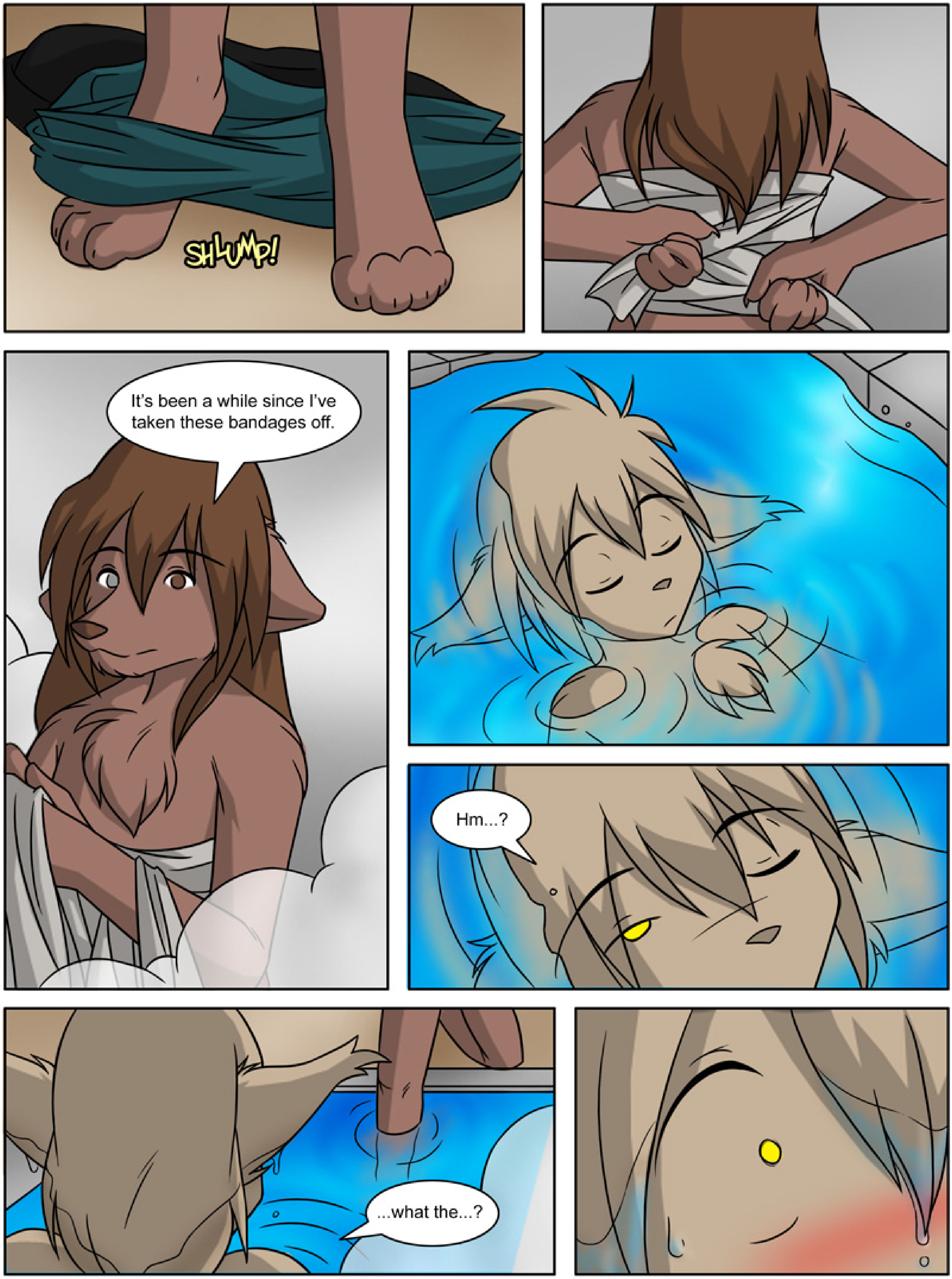

Why, hello Mr. Trace.
I am a servant of my master, Eric.
I have finished preparing your bath.
Shall I stay and help you with your bath?
You'll find that I can provide you with a variety of... services.
Hey, you hussy!
Back off, he's mine! Right, Trace?
...Trace?
Oh, quit gawking
You don't know where she's been.
Hey! You don't have to be rude...

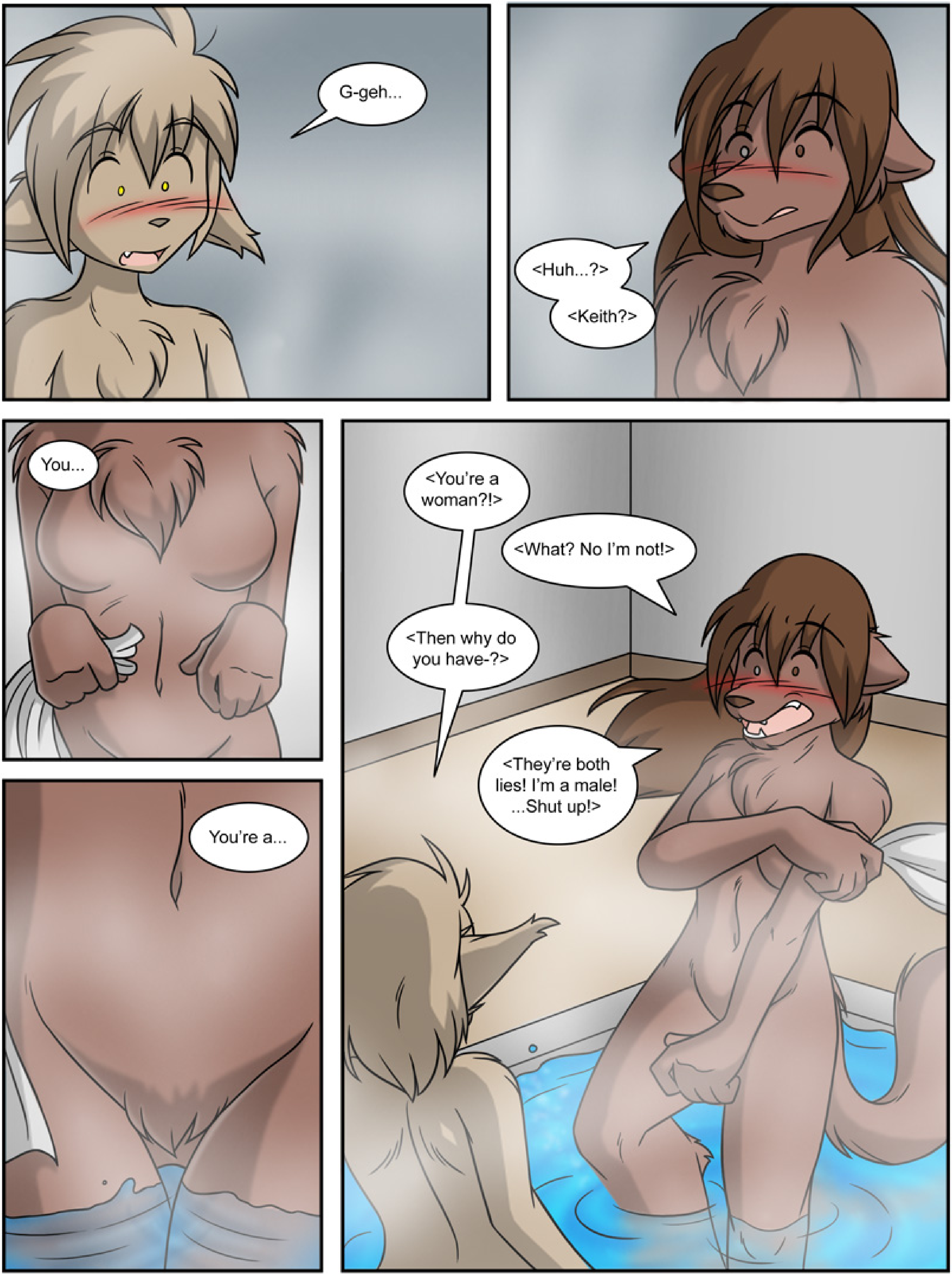

Nyah~!
Come on, Trace, get in here!
Take that off, I've already seen it all.
Alright, alright...
This is the first time we've bathed together, isn't it?
Unless you count that night in the lake...
Well, yeah, I suppose there was that...
Just relax, Trace. I'll wash your back for you.
Ah, now this is the life...
Ah, hello again Mr. Trace!
If she's got your back, I'll wash your front for you!

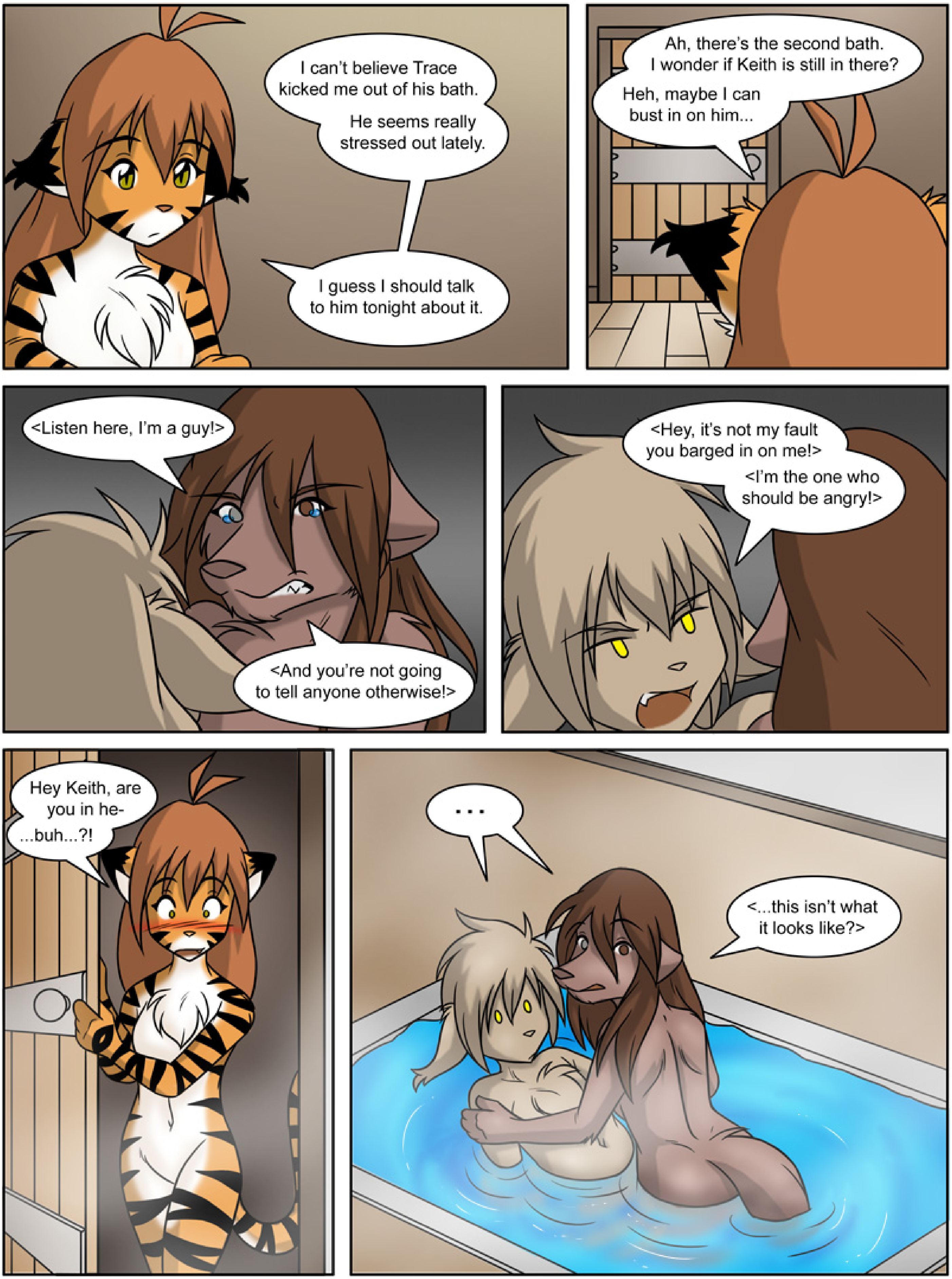

You!!
How did you get in here?!
I thought I told you we don't need you!
SPLOSH!
No, you said "back off, he's mine."
Well we don't need you here to help us!
Who told you, that pervert? Figures!
But I've been ordered to help, it's my job...
Hey, Master Eric is not a pervert, he-
He is too! Why else would he send you in here to interrupt us...?
I don't know, I just do as I'm told...
Well trust me, we're fine, we don't need your "services"
Hey, Master says I do well with my serv-
I don't want to know about that stu-
Enough!!!
...
...
BATHS
This is your fault...

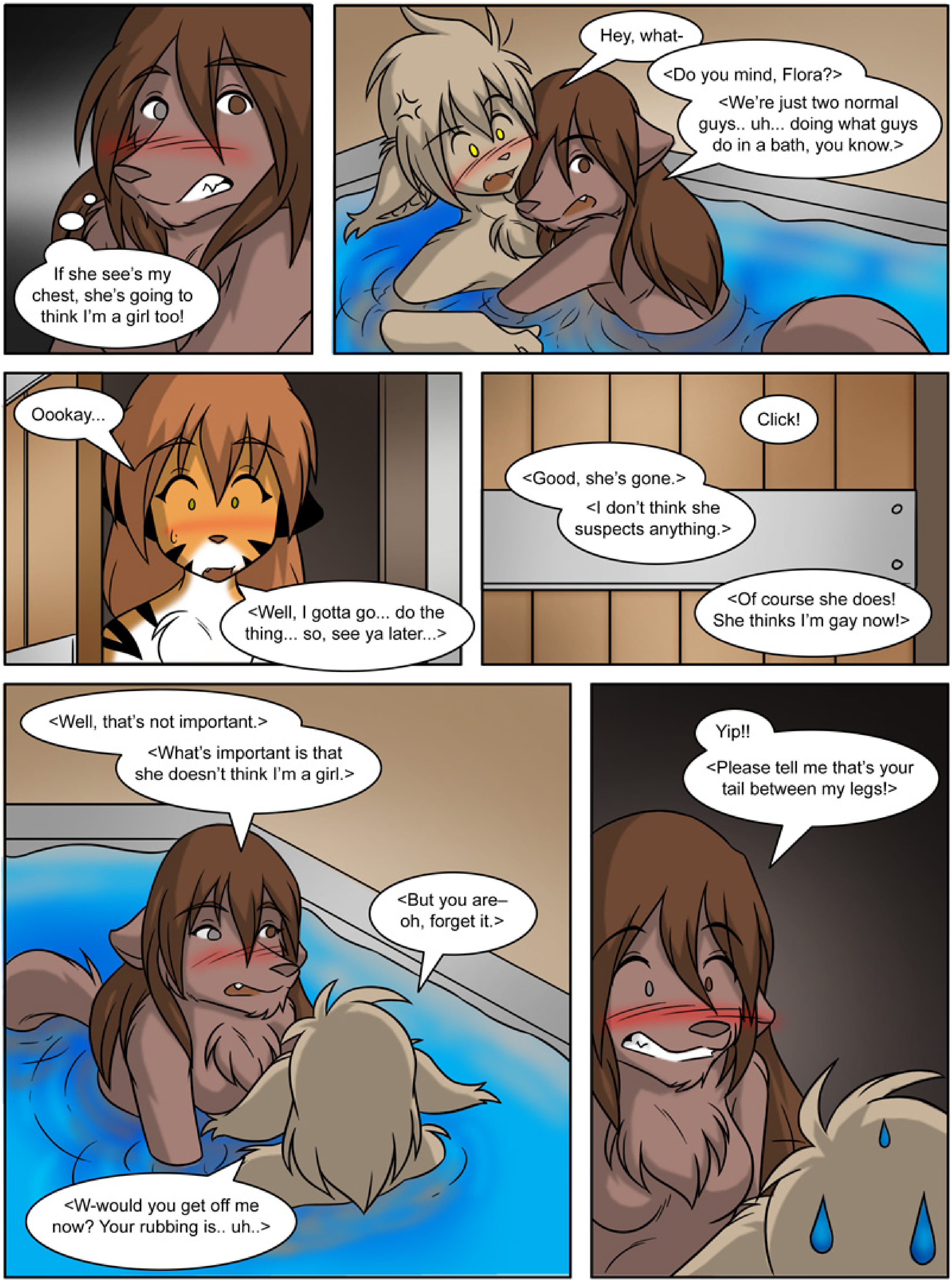

SAY IT!
NO WAY.
SAY IT, PLEASE?
I SAID "NO"!
SAY IT, OR NO CAKE!
WHA-? NO WAY!
YUP!
FINE...
?
H...
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TOM...
TOM
WHY, THANK YOU!
CAKE, PLEASE!
EH HEH...
GOOD BOY.
HAPPY B-DAY, TOM!
AIKI

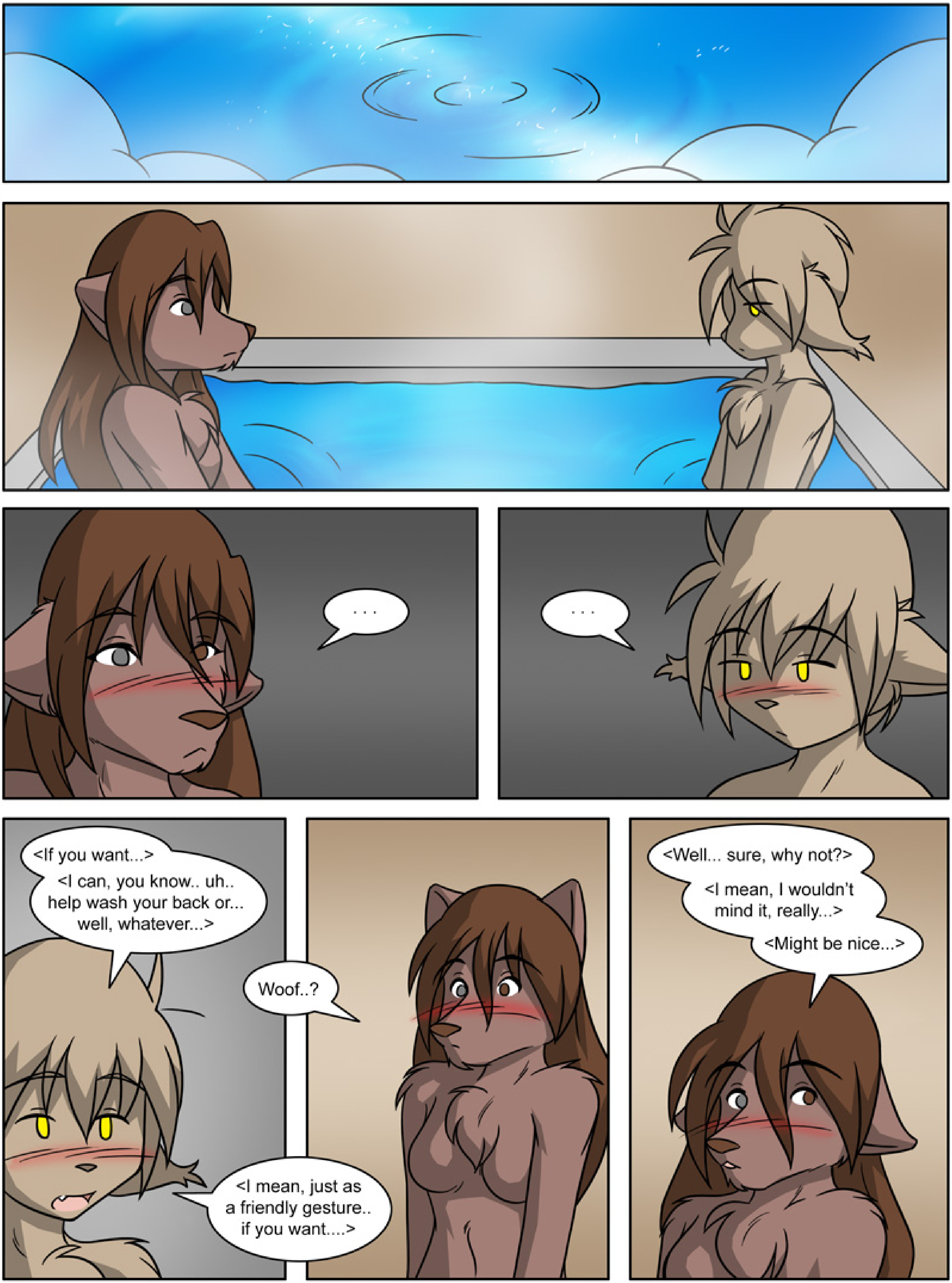

Meanwhile, in the second bath...
I can hear yelling in Trace and Flora's bath. What's going on?
Feh, well, it's not my problem.
Finally, a chance to really relax.
This is much better then the forest...
click...
I think I'll just soak for a while.
Trace and the others are in the first bath.
I think this one is mine...
It's really steamy in here...
I can hardly see anything.
Ah, but it's nice to finally get these heavy robes off.

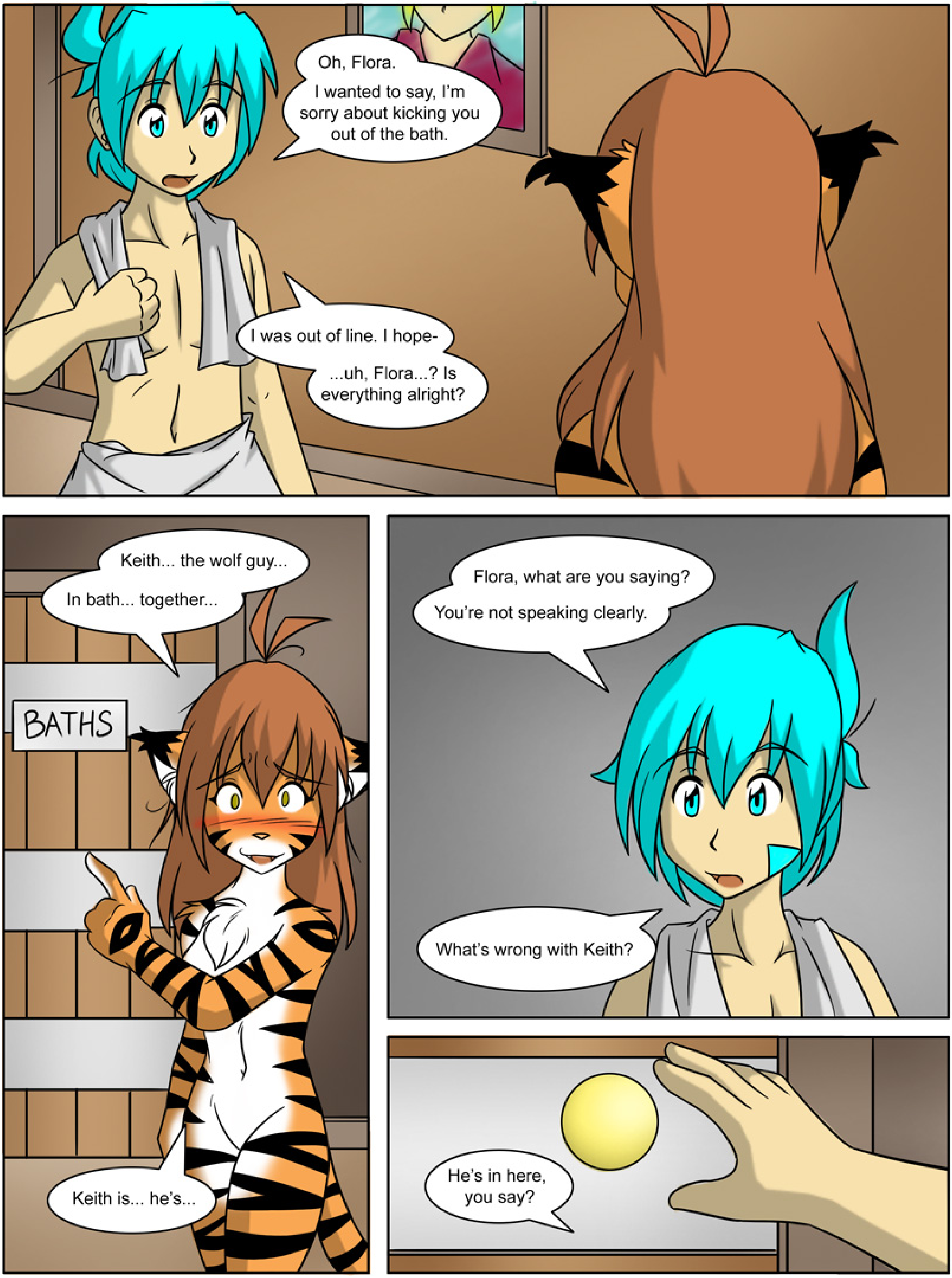

SHLUMP!
It's been a while since I've taken these bandages off.
Hm...?
...what the...?

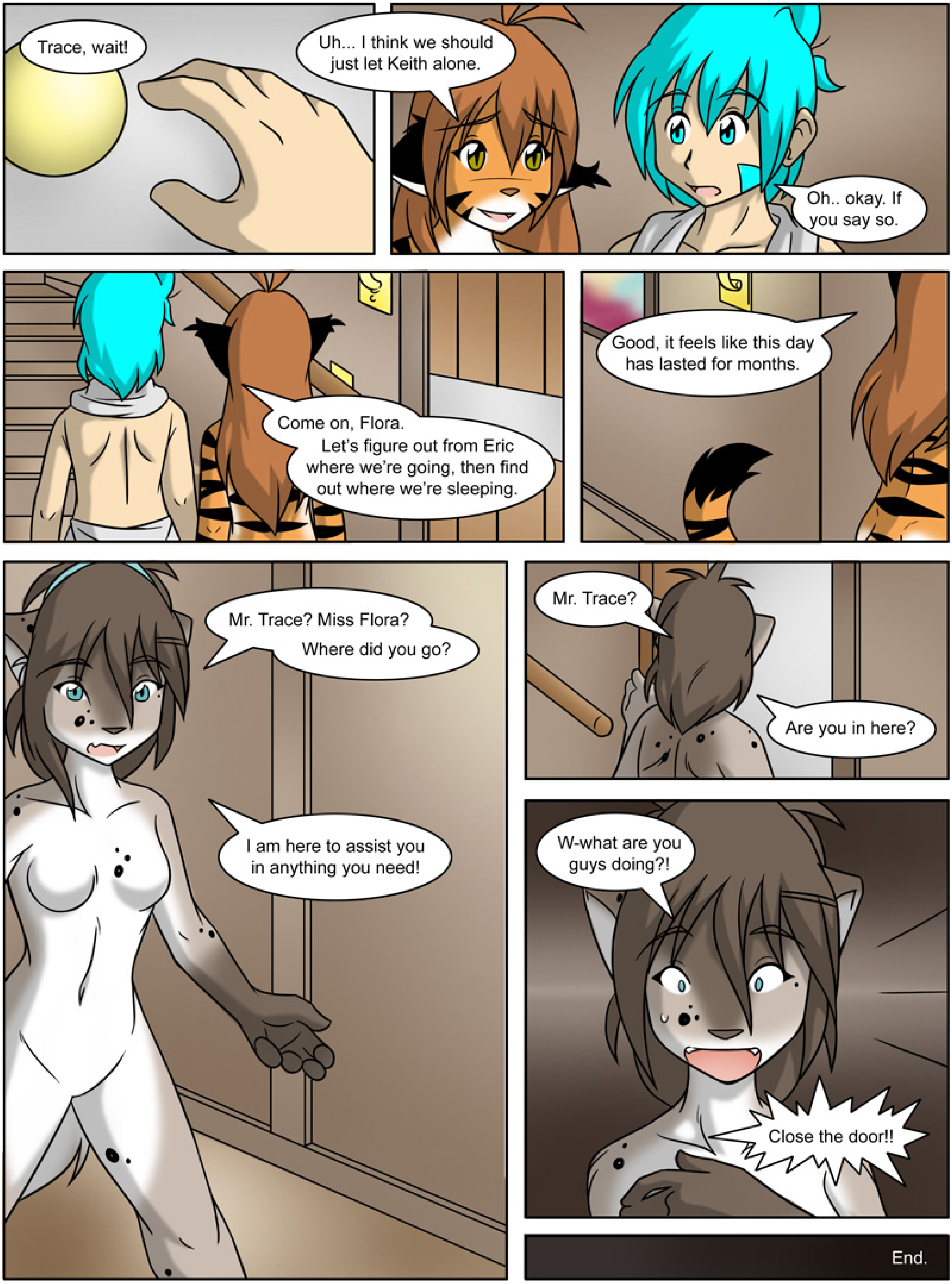

G-geh...
<Huh...?>
<Keith?>
You...
You're a...
<You're a woman?!>
<What? No I'm not!>
<Then why do you have-?>
<They're both lies! I'm a male! ...Shut up!>


I can't believe Trace kicked me out of his bath.
He seems really stressed out lately.
I guess I should talk to him tonight about it.
Ah, there's the second bath. I wonder if Keith is still in there?
Heh, maybe I can bust in on him...
<Listen here, I'm a guy!>
<And you're not going to tell anyone otherwise!>
<Hey, it's not my fault you barged in on me!>
<I'm the one who should be angry!>
Hey Keith, are you in he- ...buh...?!
...
<...this isn't what it looks like?>


If she see's my chest, she's going to think I'm a girl too!
Hey, what-
<Do you mind, Flora?>
<We're just two normal guys.. uh... doing what guys do in a bath, you know.>
Oookay...
<Well, I gotta go... do the thing... so, see ya later...>
Click!
<Good, she's gone.>
<I don't think she suspects anything.>
<Of course she does! She thinks I'm gay now!>
<Well, that's not important.>
<What's important is that she doesn't think I'm a girl.>
<But you are– oh, forget it.>
<W-would you get off me now? Your rubbing is.. uh..>
Yip!!
<Please tell me that's your tail between my legs!>

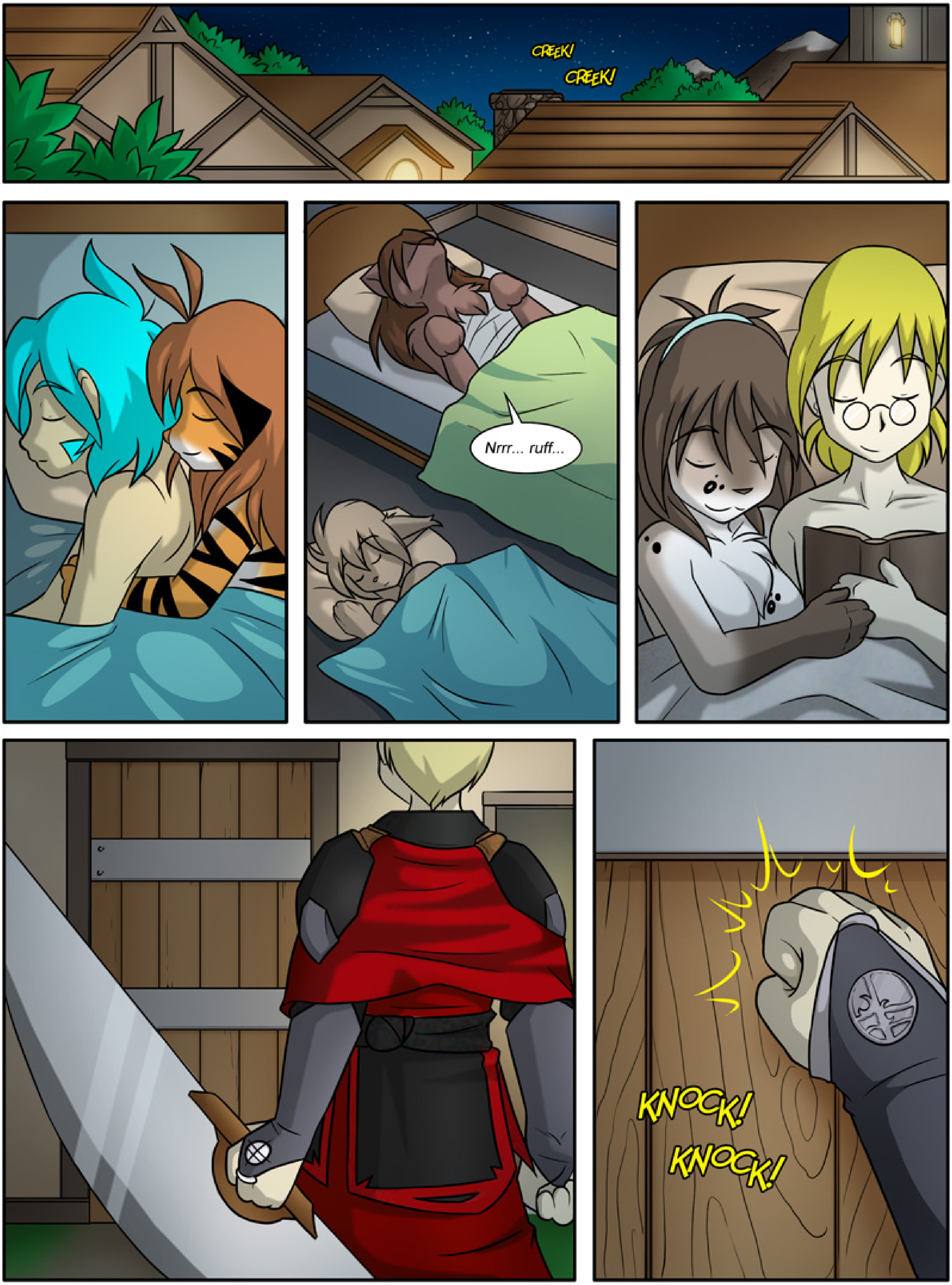

. . .
. . .
<If you want...>
<I can, you know.. uh.. help wash your back or... well, whatever...>
Woof..?
<I mean, just as a friendly gesture.. if you want....>
<Well... sure, why not?>
<I mean, I wouldn't mind it, really...>
<Might be nice...>

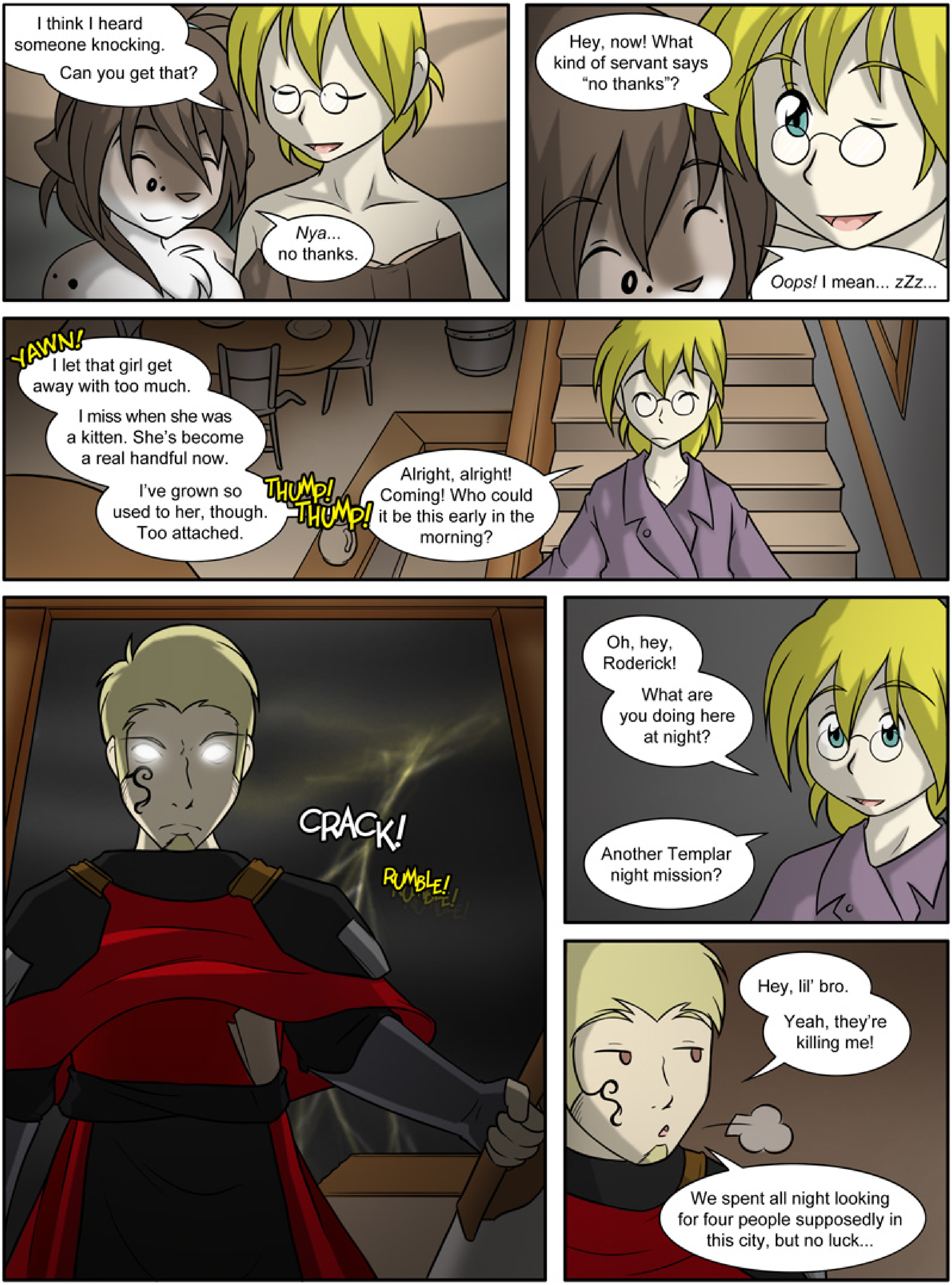

Oh, Flora.
I wanted to say, I'm sorry about kicking you out of the bath.
I was out of line. I hope-
...uh, Flora...? Is everything alright?
Keith... the wolf guy...
In bath... together...
BATHS
Keith is... he's...
Flora, what are you saying?
You're not speaking clearly.
What's wrong with Keith?
He's in here, you say?

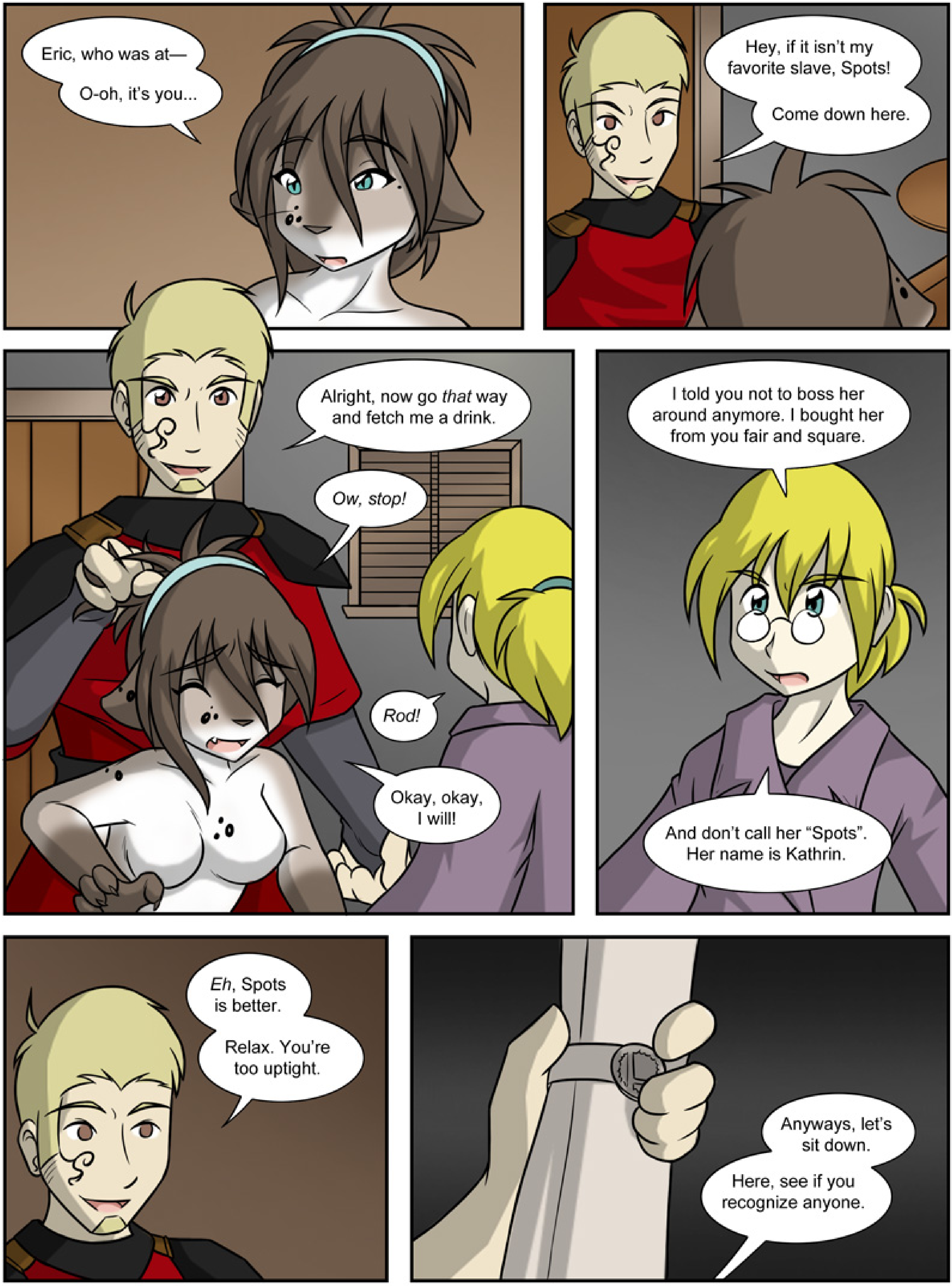

Trace, wait!
Uh... I think we should just let Keith alone.
Oh.. okay. If you say so.
Come on, Flora. Let's figure out from Eric where we're going, then find out where we're sleeping.
Good, it feels like this day has lasted for months.
Mr. Trace? Miss Flora? Where did you go?
I am here to assist you in anything you need!
Mr. Trace?
Are you in here?
W-what are you guys doing?!
Close the door!!
End.

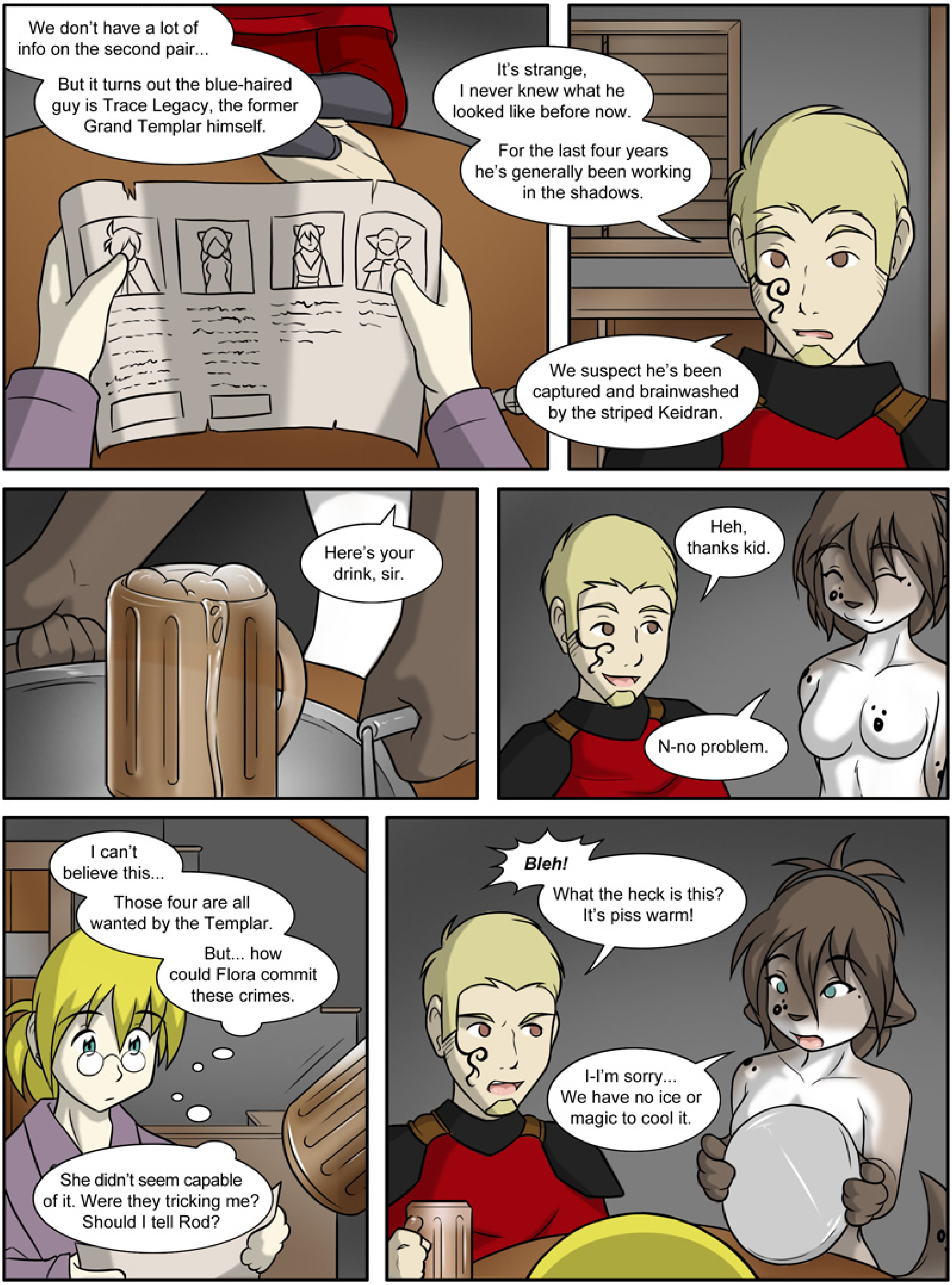
TwoKinds

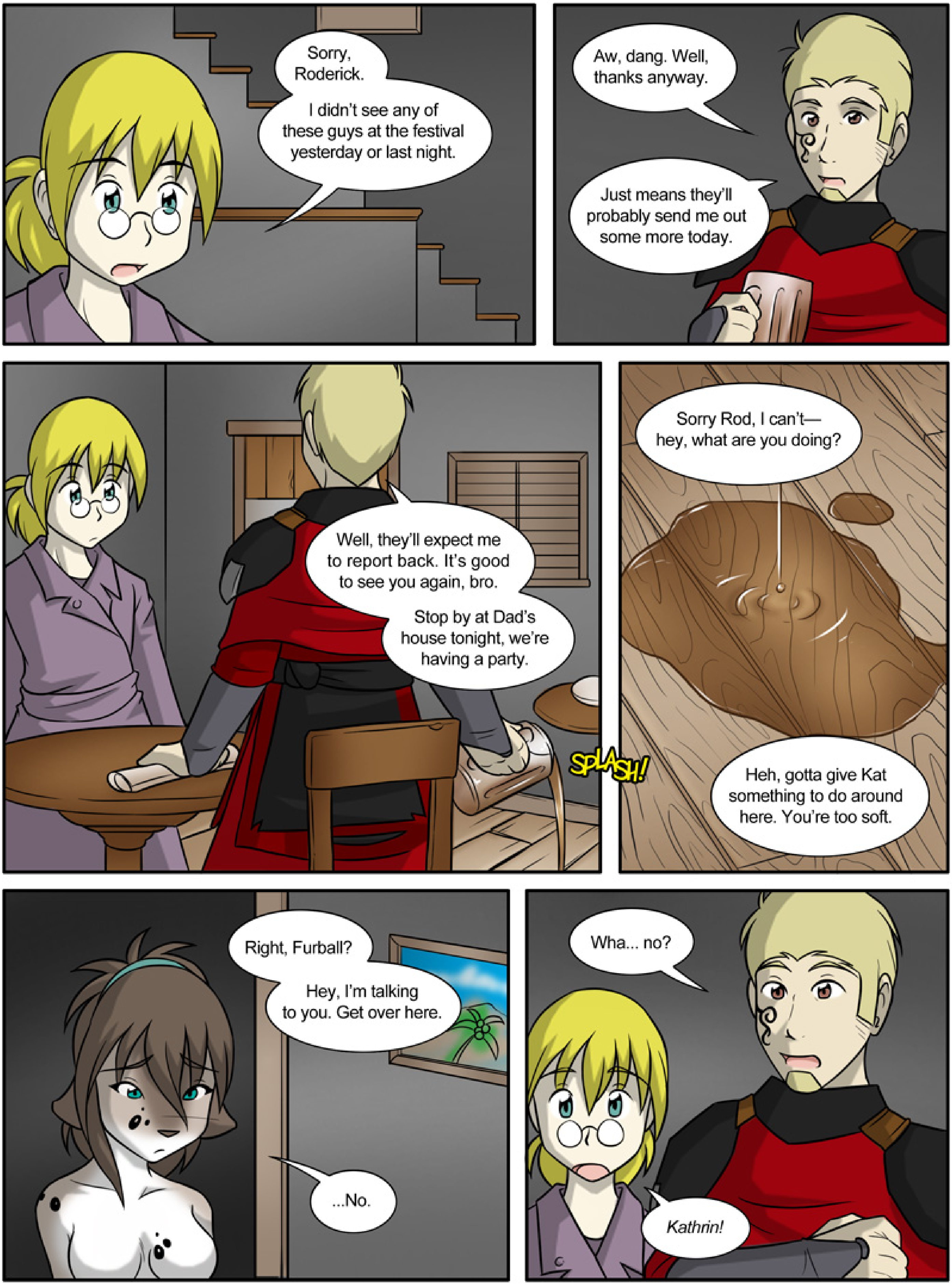
Chapter Nine

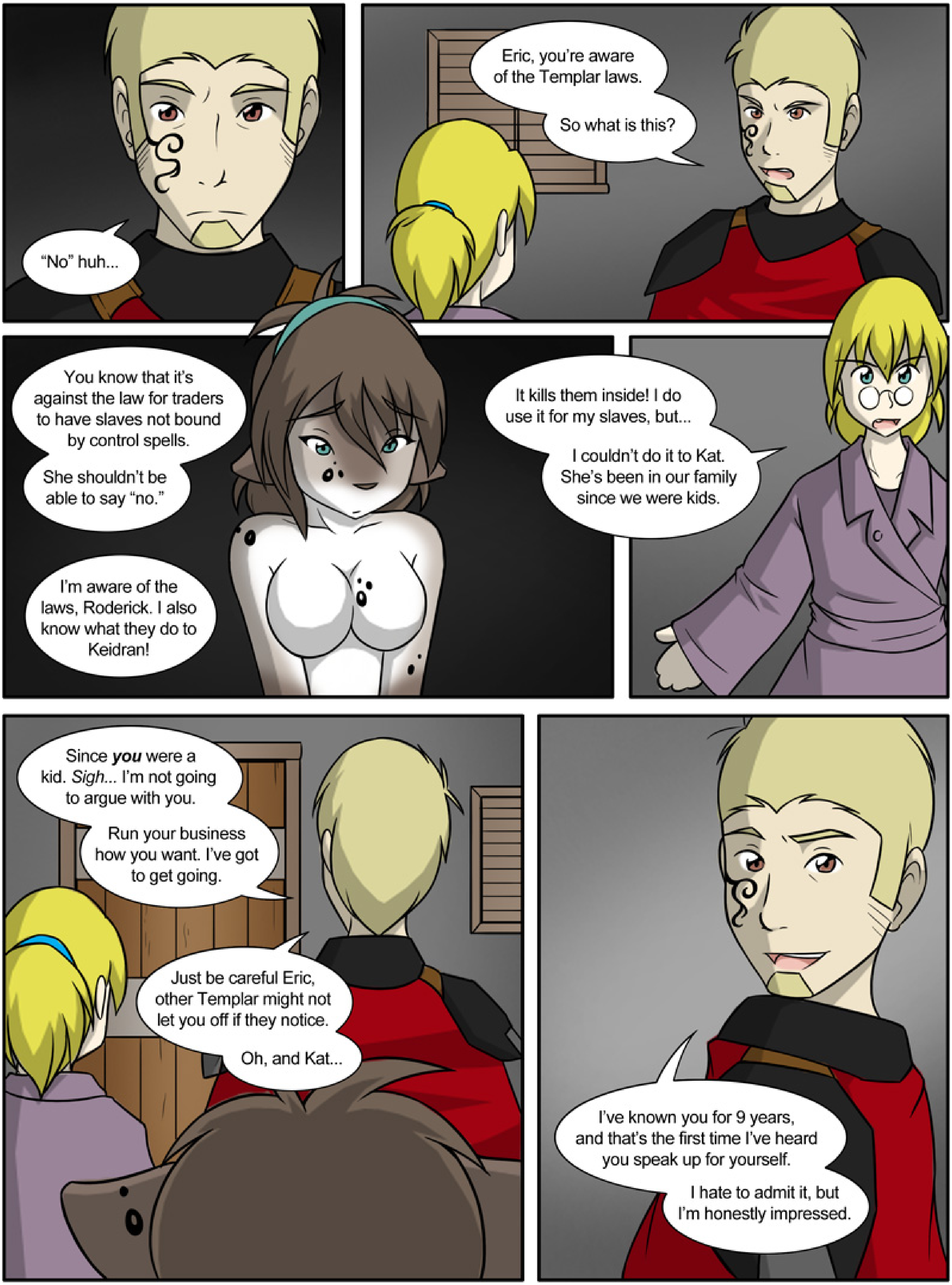

CREEK!
CREEK!
Nrrr... ruff...
KNOCK!
KNOCK!

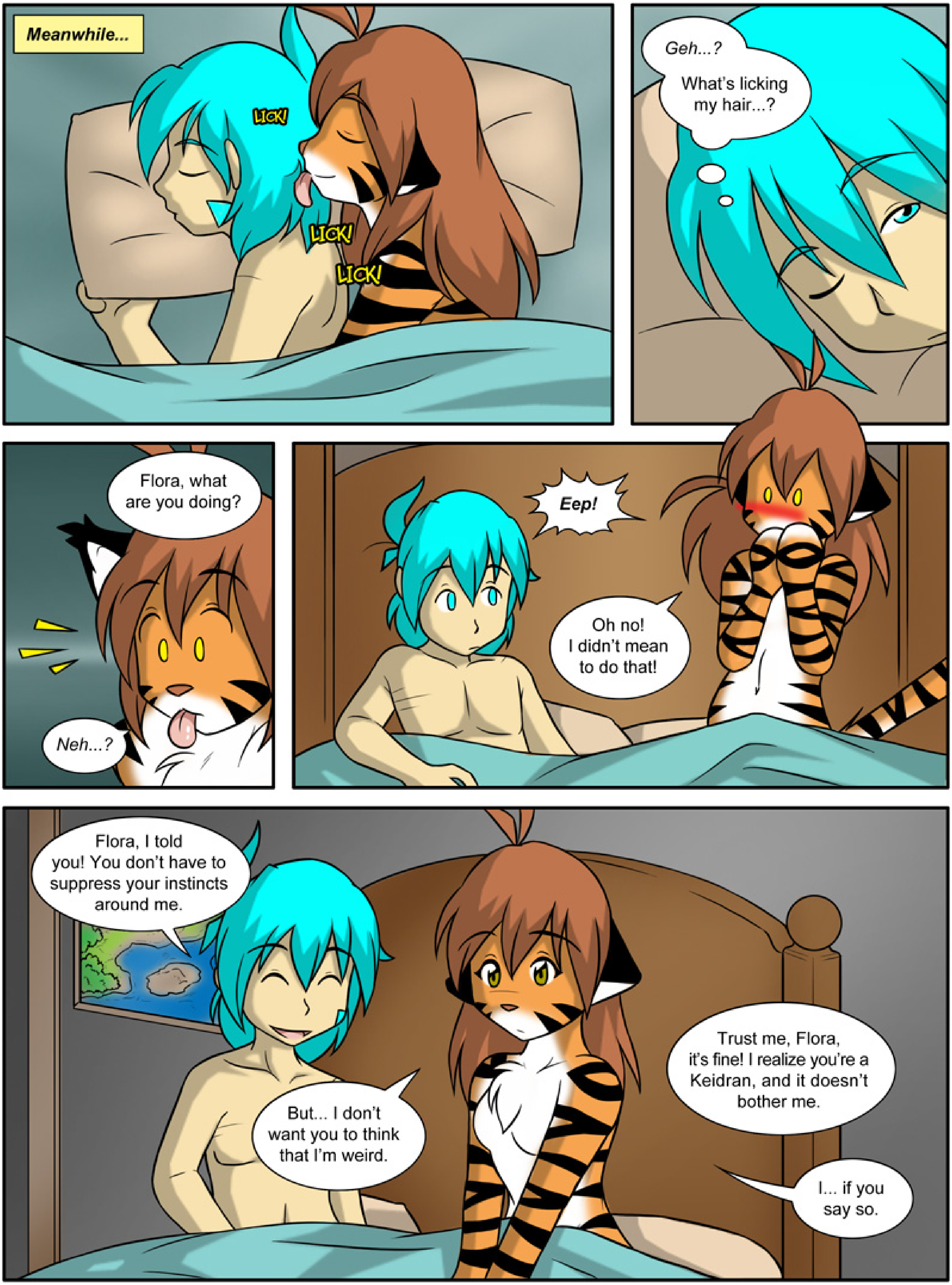

I think I heard someone knocking.
Can you get that?
Nya... no thanks.
Hey, now! What kind of servant says "no thanks"?
Oops! I mean... zZz...
YAWN!
I let that girl get away with too much.
I miss when she was a kitten. She's become a real handful now.
I've grown so used to her, though. Too attached.
THUMP! THUMP!
Alright, alright! Coming! Who could it be this early in the morning?
CRACK!
RUMBLE!
Oh, hey, Roderick!
What are you doing here at night?
Another Templar night mission?
Hey, lil' bro.
Yeah, they're killing me!
We spent all night looking for four people supposedly in this city, but no luck...

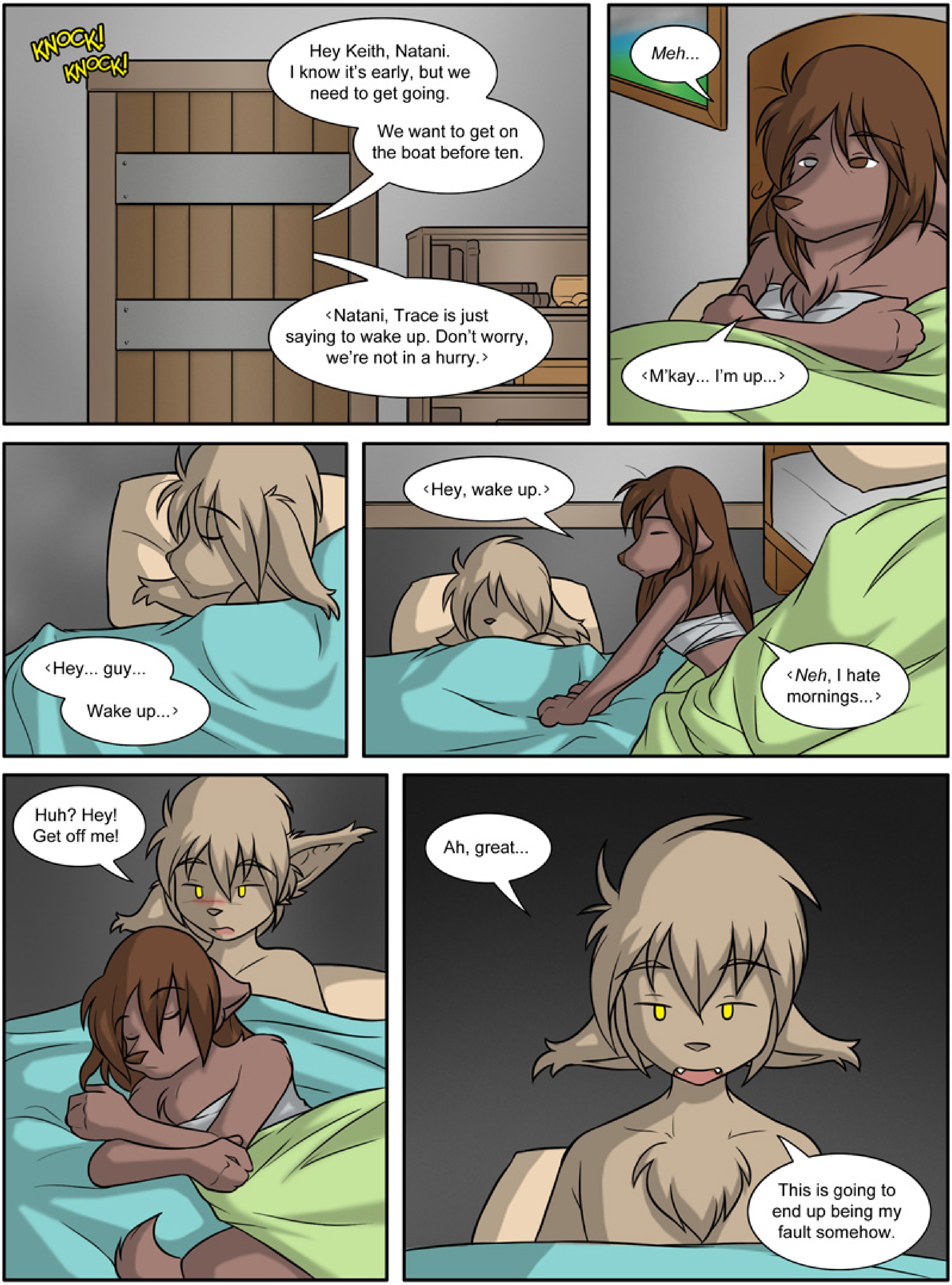

Eric, who was at—
O-oh, it's you...
Hey, if it isn't my favorite slave, Spots!
Come down here.
Alright, now go *that* way and fetch me a drink.
Ow, stop!
Rod!
Okay, okay, I will!
I told you not to boss her around anymore. I bought her from you fair and square.
And don't call her "Spots". Her name is Kathrin.
Eh, Spots is better.
Relax. You're too uptight.
Anyways, let's sit down.
Here, see if you recognize anyone.

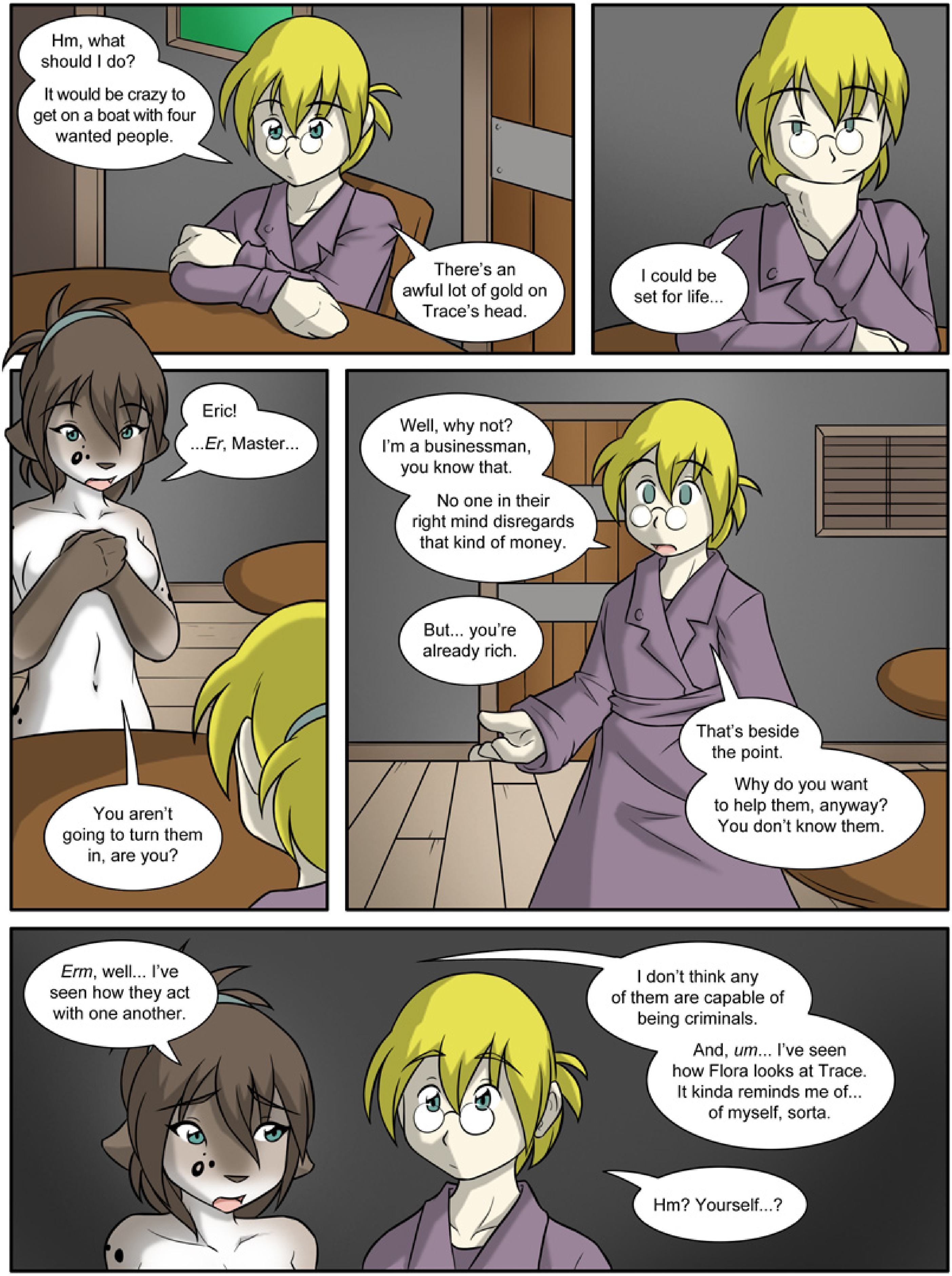

We don't have a lot of info on the second pair...
But it turns out the blue-haired guy is Trace Legacy, the former Grand Templar himself.
It's strange, I never knew what he looked like before now.
For the last four years he's generally been working in the shadows.
We suspect he's been captured and brainwashed by the striped Keidran.
Here's your drink, sir.
Heh, thanks kid.
N-no problem.
I can't believe this...
Those four are all wanted by the Templar.
But... how could Flora commit these crimes.
She didn't seem capable of it. Were they tricking me? Should I tell Rod?
Bleh!
What the heck is this? It's piss warm!
I-I'm sorry... We have no ice or magic to cool it.

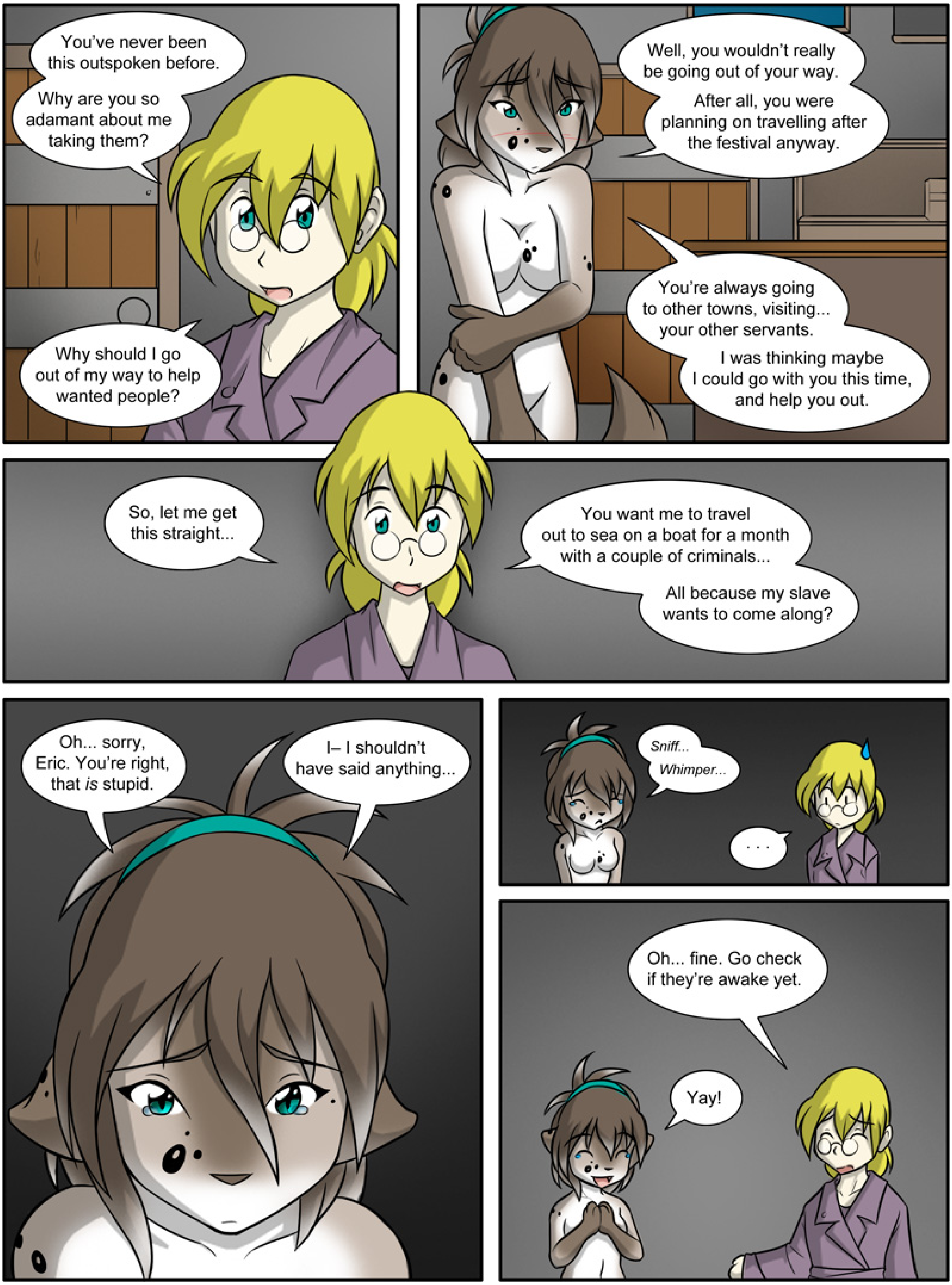

Sorry, Roderick.
I didn't see any of these guys at the festival yesterday or last night.
Aw, dang. Well, thanks anyway.
Just means they'll probably send me out some more today.
Well, they'll expect me to report back. It's good to see you again, bro.
Stop by at Dad's house tonight, we're having a party.
SPLASH!
Sorry Rod, I can't— hey, what are you doing?
Heh, gotta give Kat something to do around here. You're too soft.
Right, Furball?
Hey, I'm talking to you. Get over here.
...No.
Wha... no?
Kathrin!

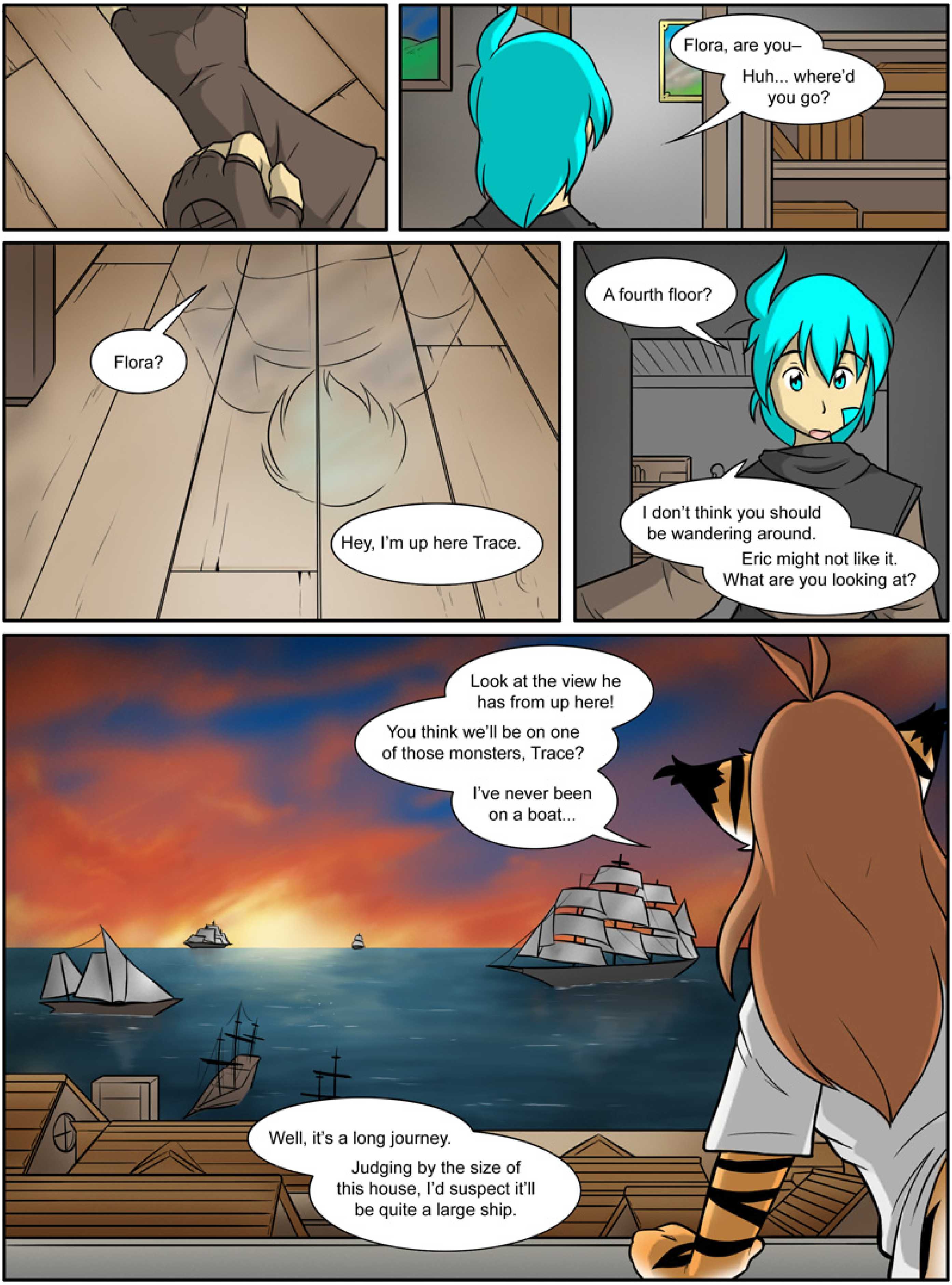

"No" huh...
Eric, you're aware of the Templar laws.
So what is this?
You know that it's against the law for traders to have slaves not bound by control spells.
She shouldn't be able to say "no."
I'm aware of the laws, Roderick. I also know what they do to Keidran!
It kills them inside! I do use it for my slaves, but...
I couldn't do it to Kat. She's been in our family since we were kids.
Since **you** were a kid. *Sigh*... I'm not going to argue with you.
Run your business how you want. I've got to get going.
Just be careful Eric, other Templar might not let you off if they notice.
Oh, and Kat...
I've known you for 9 years, and that's the first time I've heard you speak up for yourself.
I hate to admit it, but I'm honestly impressed.

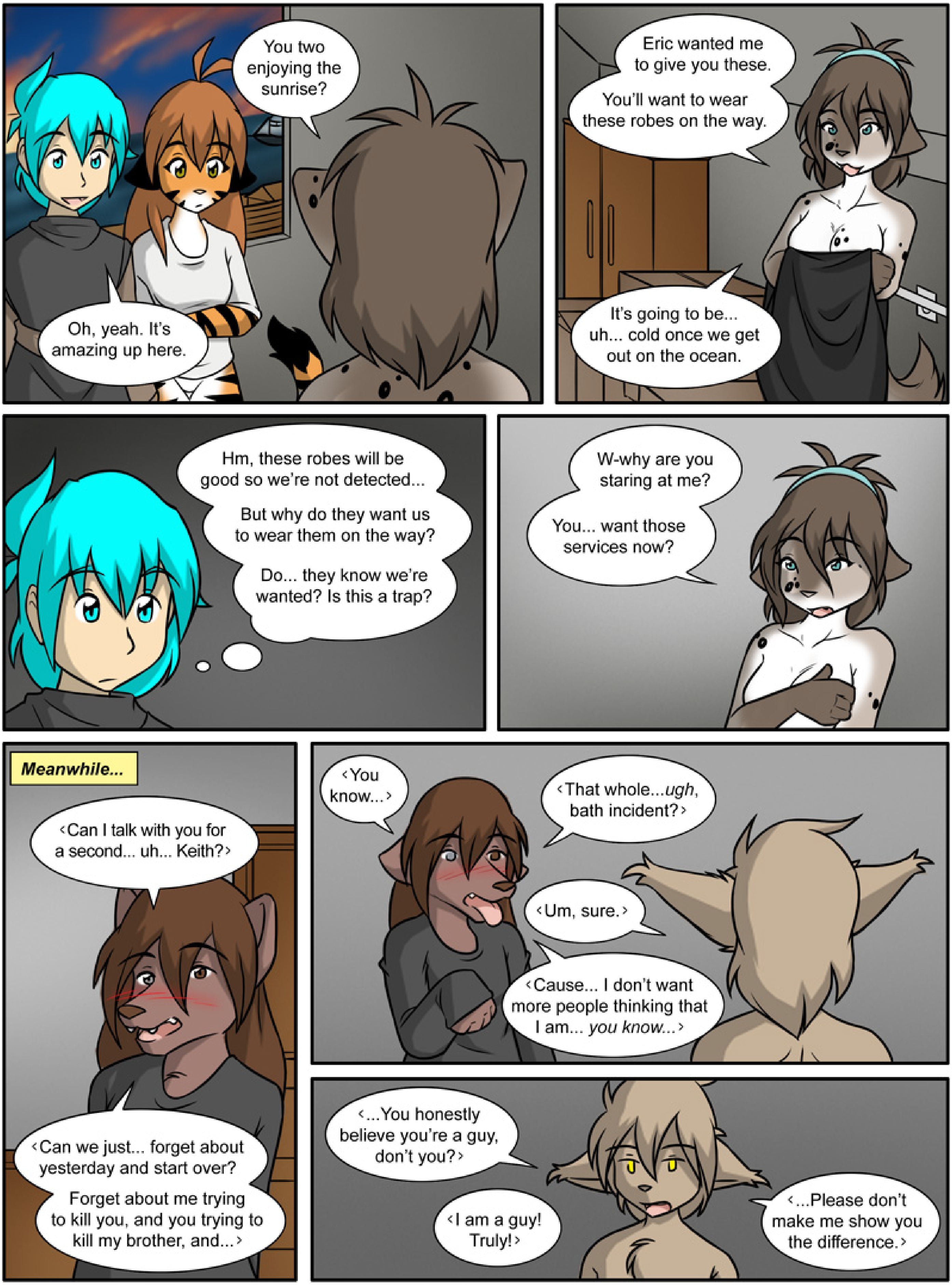

Meanwhile...
LICK!
LICK!
LICK!
Geh...? What's licking my hair...?
Flora, what are you doing?
Neh...?
Eep!
Oh no! I didn't mean to do that!
Flora, I told you! You don't have to suppress your instincts around me.
But... I don't want you to think that I'm weird.
Trust me, Flora, it's fine! I realize you're a Keidran, and it doesn't bother me.
I... if you say so.

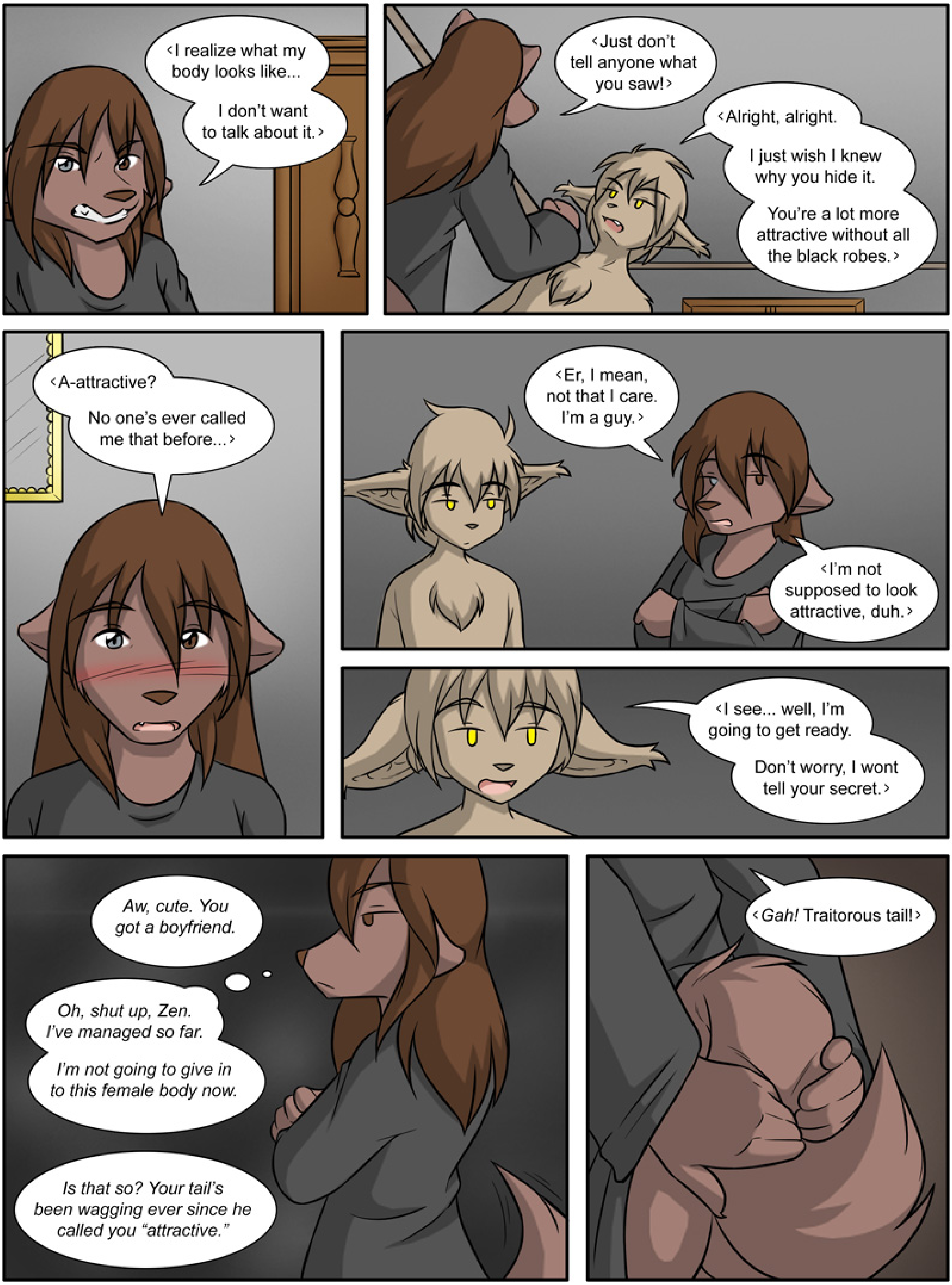

KNOCK! KNOCK!
Hey Keith, Natani. I know it's early, but we need to get going.
We want to get on the boat before ten.
‹Natani, Trace is just saying to wake up. Don't worry, we're not in a hurry.›
Meh...
‹M'kay... I'm up...›
‹Hey... guy...
Wake up...›
‹Hey, wake up.›
‹*Neh*, I hate mornings...›
Huh? Hey! Get off me!
Ah, great...
This is going to end up being my fault somehow.

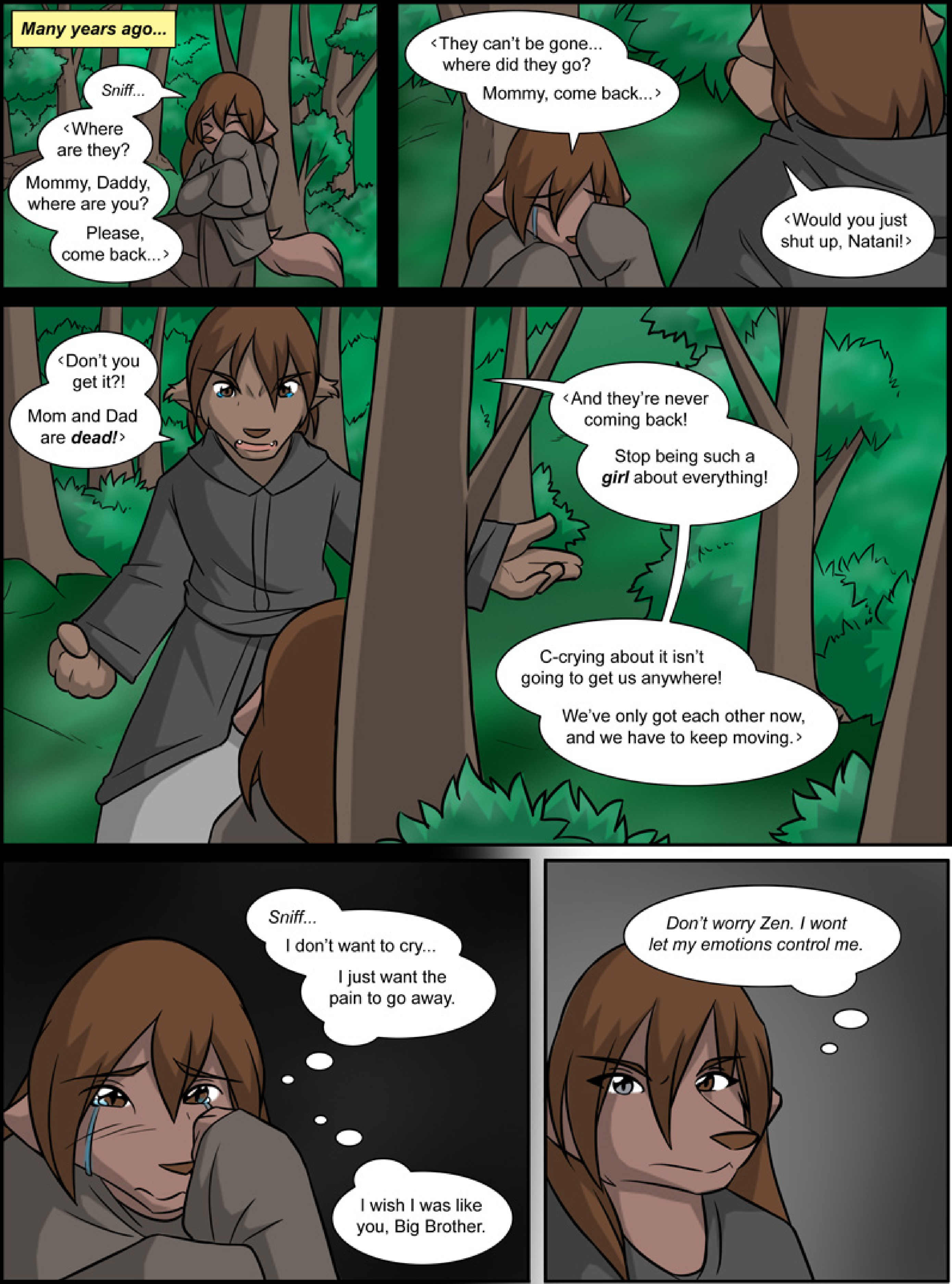

Hm, what should I do?
It would be crazy to get on a boat with four wanted people.
There's an awful lot of gold on Trace's head.
I could be set for life...
Eric!
...*Er*, Master...
You aren't going to turn them in, are you?
Well, why not? I'm a businessman, you know that.
No one in their right mind disregards that kind of money.
But... you're already rich.
That's beside the point.
Why do you want to help them, anyway? You don't know them.
Erm, well... I've seen how they act with one another.
I don't think any of them are capable of being criminals.
And, *um*... I've seen how Flora looks at Trace. It kinda reminds me of... of myself, sorta.
Hm? Yourself...?

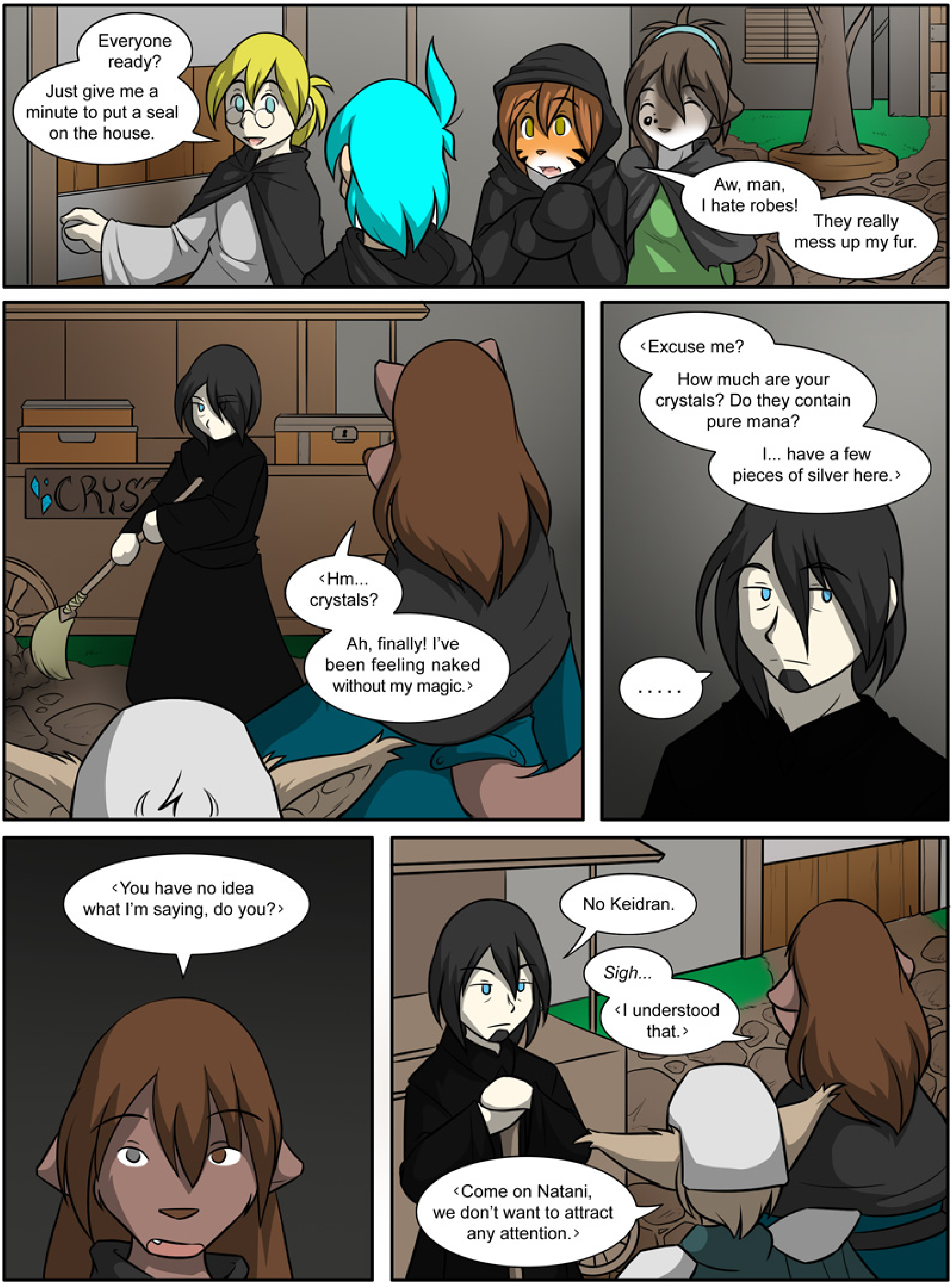

You've never been this outspoken before.
Why are you so adamant about me taking them?
Why should I go out of my way to help wanted people?
Well, you wouldn't really be going out of your way.
After all, you were planning on travelling after the festival anyway.
You're always going to other towns, visiting... your other servants.
I was thinking maybe I could go with you this time, and help you out.
So, let me get this straight...
You want me to travel out to sea on a boat for a month with a couple of criminals...
All because my slave wants to come along?
Oh... sorry, Eric. You're right, that *is* stupid.
I– I shouldn't have said anything...
Sniff...
Whimper...
. . .
Oh... fine. Go check if they're awake yet.
Yay!

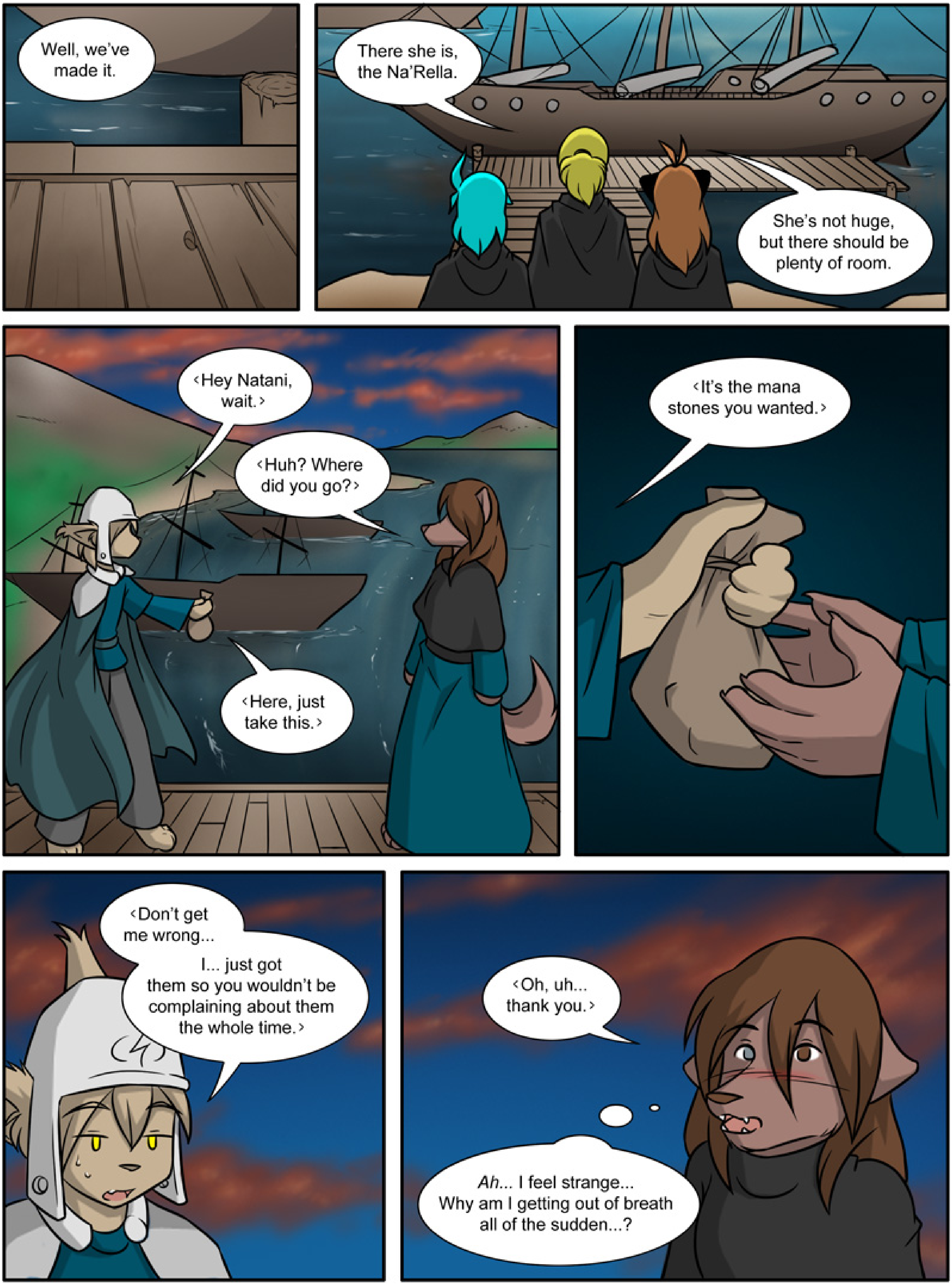

Flora, are you–
Huh... where'd you go?
Flora?
Hey, I'm up here Trace.
A fourth floor?
I don't think you should be wandering around.
Eric might not like it. What are you looking at?
Look at the view he has from up here!
You think we'll be on one of those monsters, Trace?
I've never been on a boat...
Well, it's a long journey.
Judging by the size of this house, I'd suspect it'll be quite a large ship.

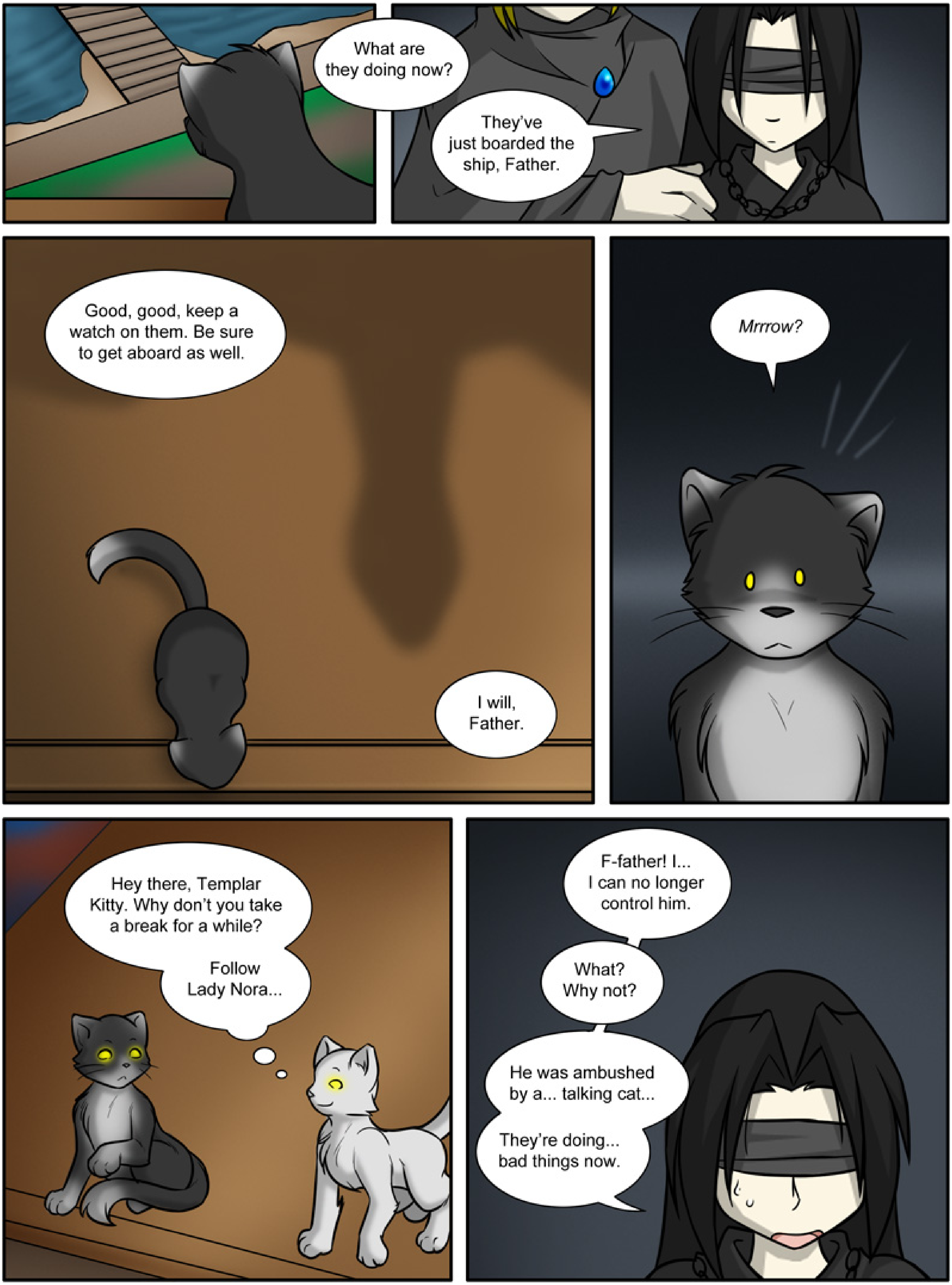

You two enjoying the sunrise?
Oh, yeah. It's amazing up here.
Eric wanted me to give you these.
You'll want to wear these robes on the way.
It's going to be... uh... cold once we get out on the ocean.
Hm, these robes will be good so we're not detected...
But why do they want us to wear them on the way?
Do... they know we're wanted? Is this a trap?
W-why are you staring at me?
You... want those services now?
Meanwhile...
‹Can I talk with you for a second... uh... Keith?›
‹Can we just... forget about yesterday and start over?
Forget about me trying to kill you, and you trying to kill my brother, and...›
‹You know...›
‹That whole...*ugh*, bath incident?›
‹Um, sure.›
‹Cause... I don't want more people thinking that I am... *you know...*›
‹...You honestly believe you're a guy, don't you?›
‹I am a guy! Truly!›
‹...Please don't make me show you the difference.›

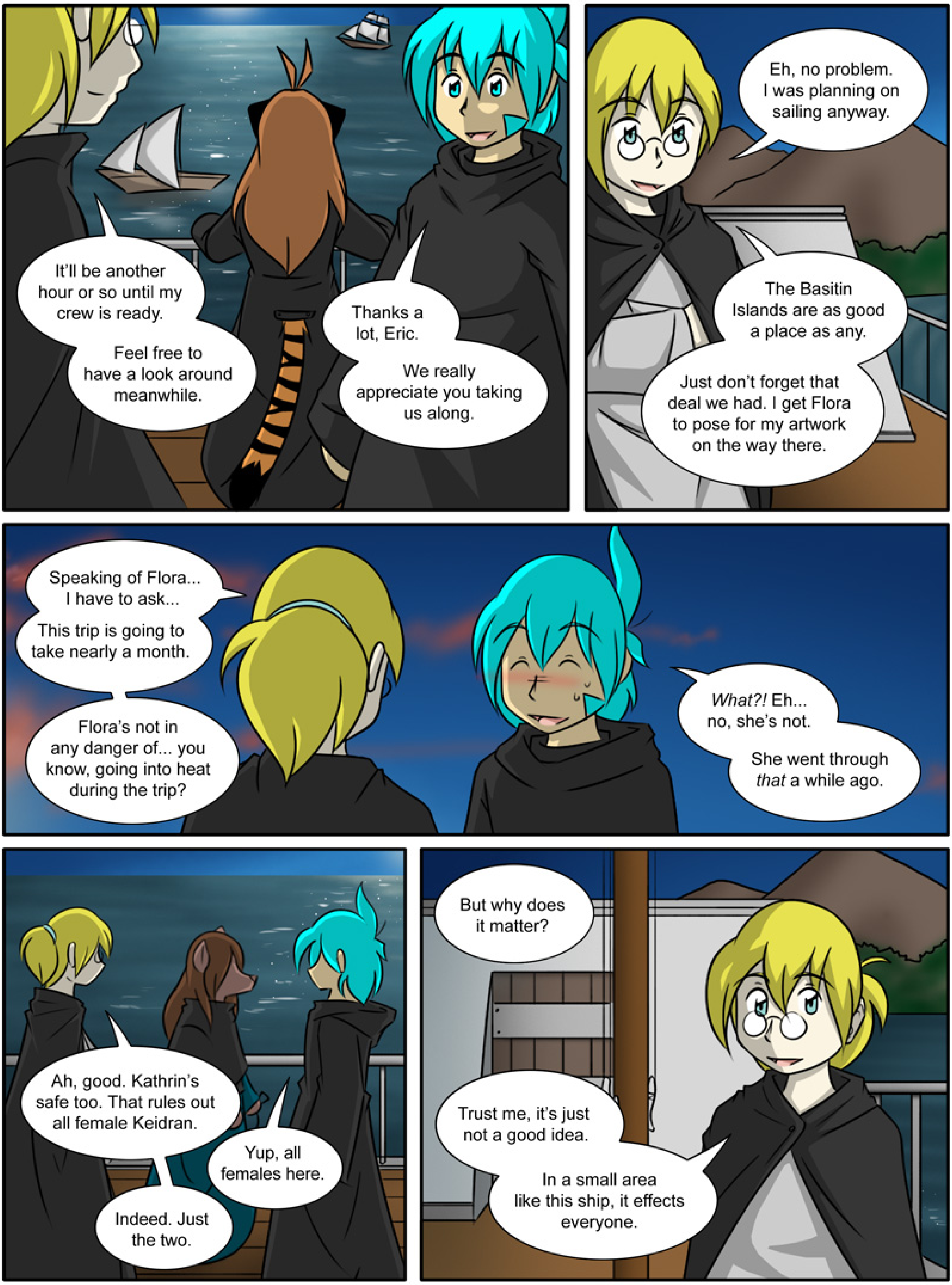

‹I realize what my body looks like...
I don't want to talk about it.›
‹Just don't tell anyone what you saw!›
‹Alright, alright.
I just wish I knew why you hide it.
You're a lot more attractive without all the black robes.›
‹A-attractive?
No one's ever called me that before...›
‹Er, I mean, not that I care. I'm a guy.›
‹I'm not supposed to look attractive, duh.›
‹I see... well, I'm going to get ready.
Don't worry, I wont tell your secret.›
Aw, cute. You got a boyfriend.
Oh, shut up, Zen. I've managed so far.
I'm not going to give in to this female body now.
Is that so? Your tail's been wagging ever since he called you "attractive."
‹*Gah!* Traitorous tail!›

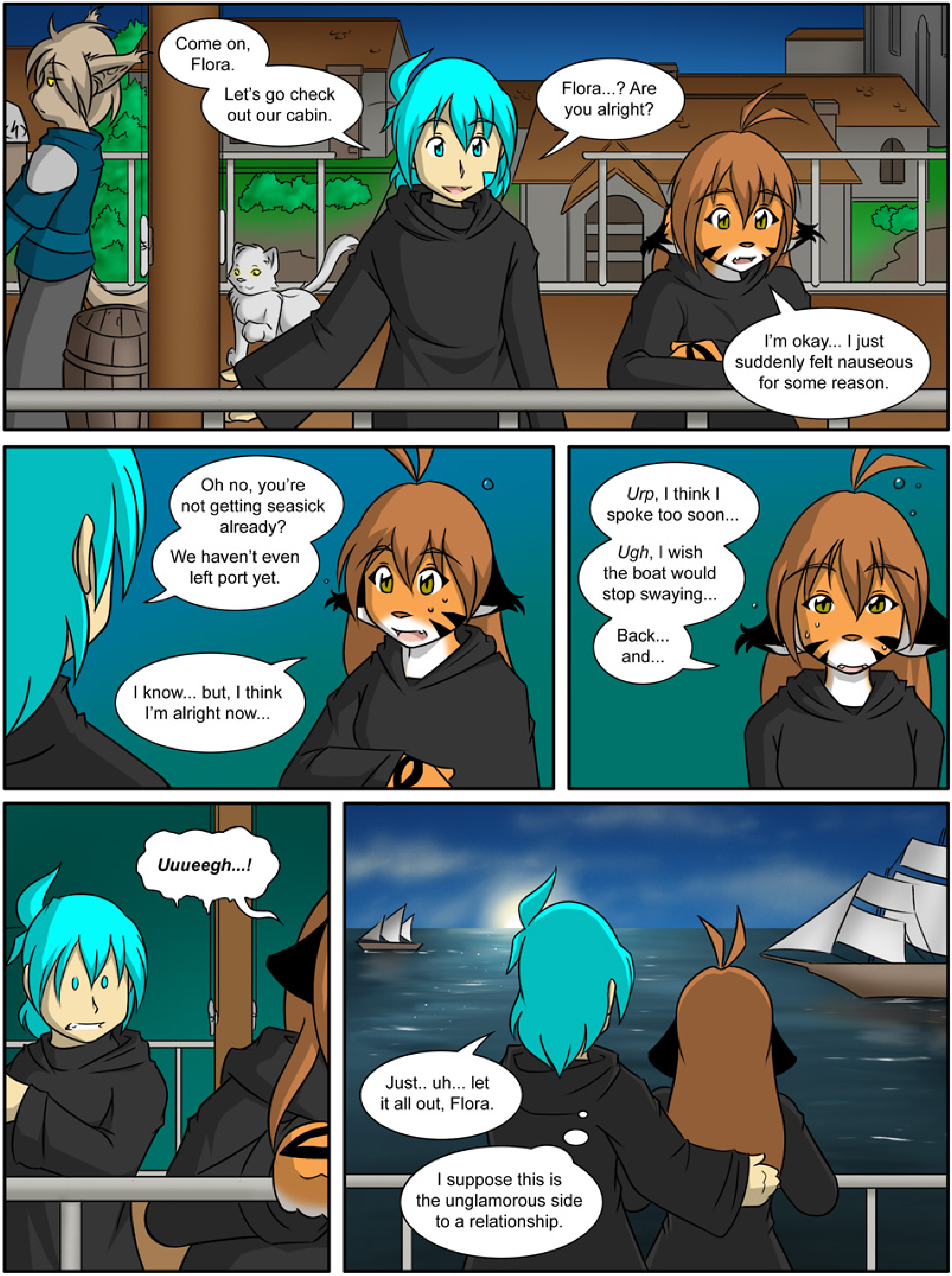

Many years ago...
Sniff...
<Where are they?
Mommy, Daddy, where are you?
Please, come back...>
<They can't be gone... where did they go?
Mommy, come back...>
<Would you just shut up, Natani!>
<Don't you get it?!
Mom and Dad are *dead!*>
<And they're never coming back!
Stop being such a *girl* about everything!
C-crying about it isn't going to get us anywhere!
We've only got each other now, and we have to keep moving.>
Sniff...
I don't want to cry...
I just want the pain to go away.
I wish I was like you, Big Brother.
Don't worry Zen. I wont let my emotions control me.

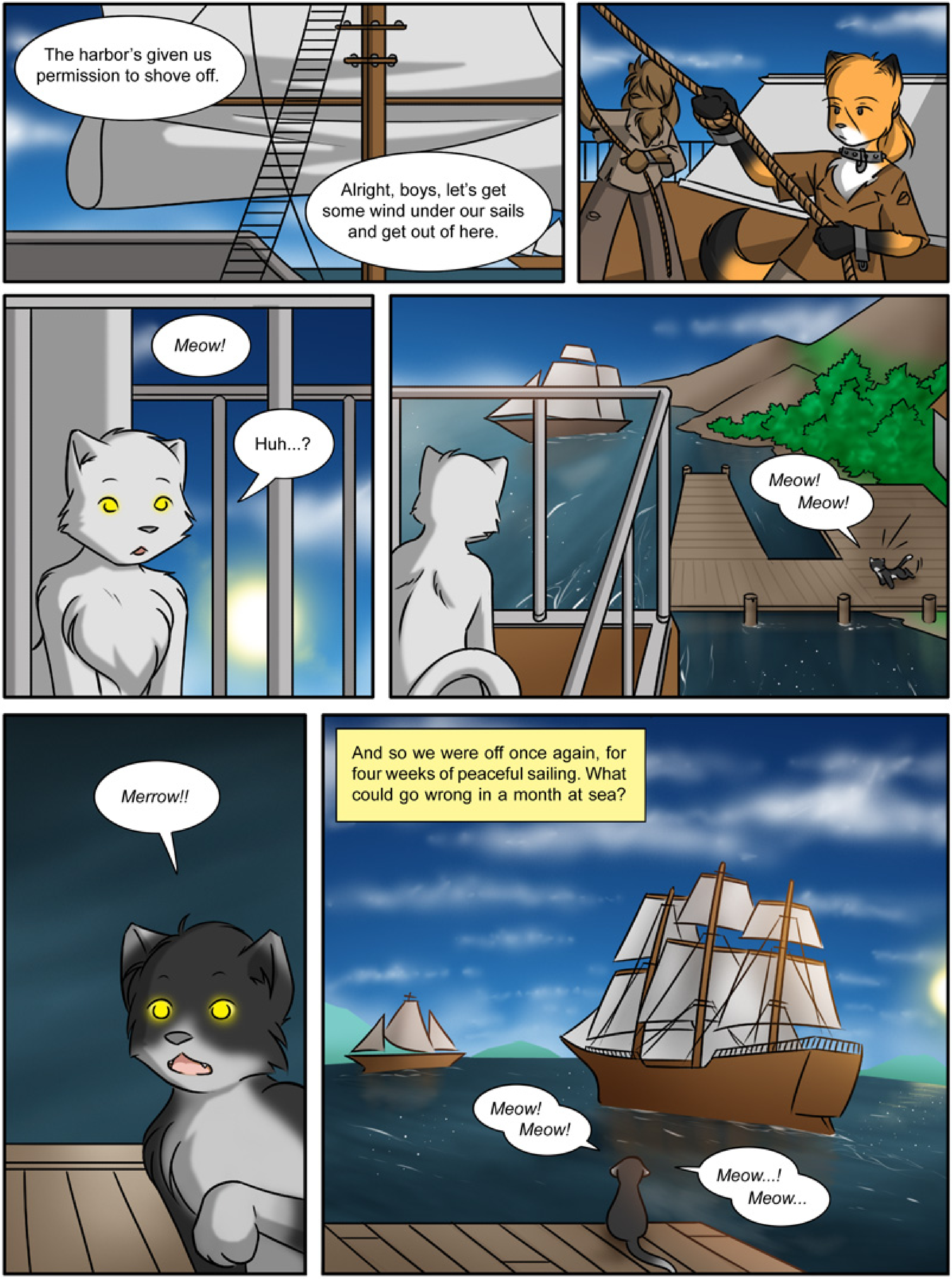

Everyone ready?
Just give me a minute to put a seal on the house.
Aw, man, I hate robes!
They really mess up my fur.
‹Hm... crystals?
Ah, finally! I've been feeling naked without my magic.›
CRYS
‹Excuse me?
How much are your crystals? Do they contain pure mana?
I... have a few pieces of silver here.›
.....
‹You have no idea what I'm saying, do you?›
No Keidran.
Sigh...
‹I understood that.›
‹Come on Natani, we don't want to attract any attention.›

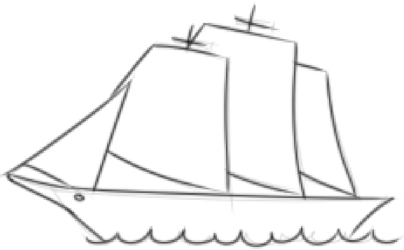

Well, we've made it.
There she is, the Na'Rella.
She's not huge, but there should be plenty of room.
‹Hey Natani, wait.›
‹Huh? Where did you go?›
‹Here, just take this.›
‹It's the mana stones you wanted.›
‹Don't get me wrong...
I... just got them so you wouldn't be complaining about them the whole time.›
‹Oh, uh... thank you.›
Ah... I feel strange... Why am I getting out of breath all of the sudden...?


What are they doing now?
They've just boarded the ship, Father.
Good, good, keep a watch on them. Be sure to get aboard as well.
I will, Father.
Mrrrow?
Hey there, Templar Kitty. Why don't you take a break for a while?
Follow Lady Nora...
F-father! I... I can no longer control him.
What? Why not?
He was ambushed by a... talking cat...
They're doing... bad things now.

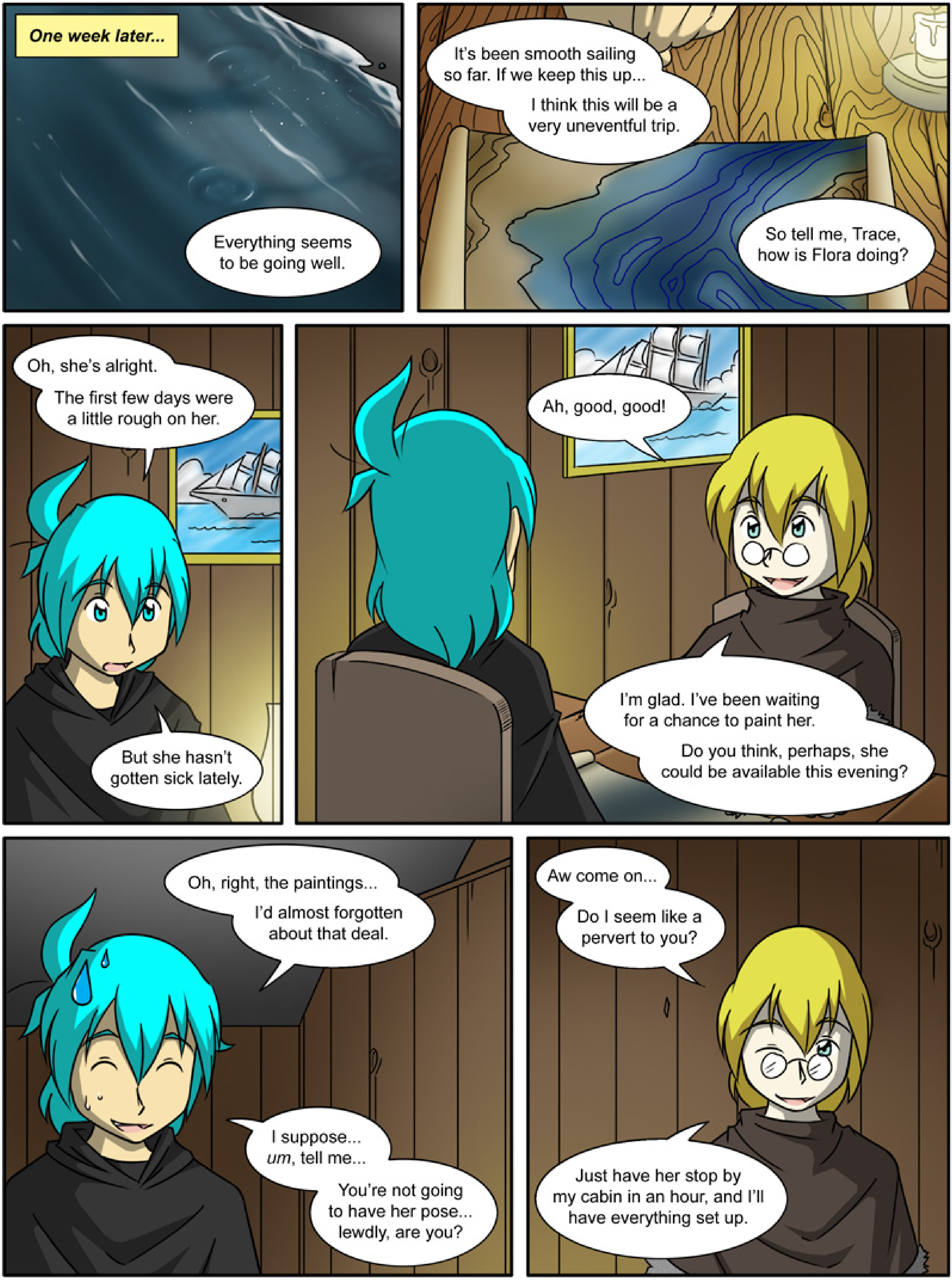

It'll be another hour or so until my crew is ready.
Feel free to have a look around meanwhile.
Thanks a lot, Eric.
We really appreciate you taking us along.
Eh, no problem. I was planning on sailing anyway.
The Basitin Islands are as good a place as any.
Just don't forget that deal we had. I get Flora to pose for my artwork on the way there.
Speaking of Flora... I have to ask...
This trip is going to take nearly a month.
Flora's not in any danger of... you know, going into heat during the trip?
What?! Eh... no, she's not.
She went through *that* a while ago.
Ah, good. Kathrin's safe too. That rules out all female Keidran.
Yup, all females here.
Indeed. Just the two.
But why does it matter?
Trust me, it's just not a good idea.
In a small area like this ship, it effects everyone.

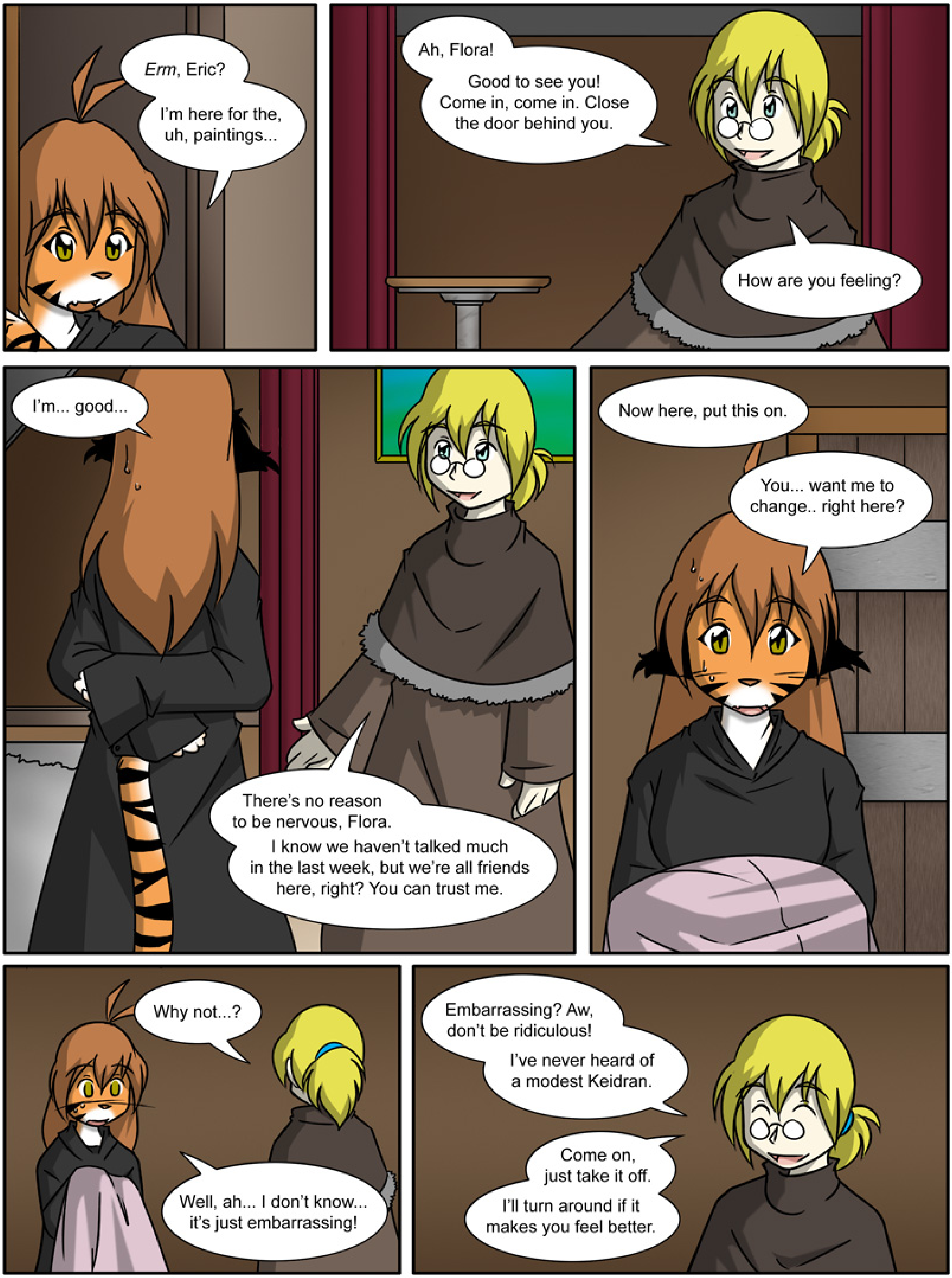

Come on, Flora.
Let's go check out our cabin.
Flora...? Are you alright?
I'm okay... I just suddenly felt nauseous for some reason.
Oh no, you're not getting seasick already?
We haven't even left port yet.
I know... but, I think I'm alright now...
Urp, I think I spoke too soon...
Ugh, I wish the boat would stop swaying...
Back... and...
Uuueegh...!
Just.. uh... let it all out, Flora.
I suppose this is the unglamorous side to a relationship.

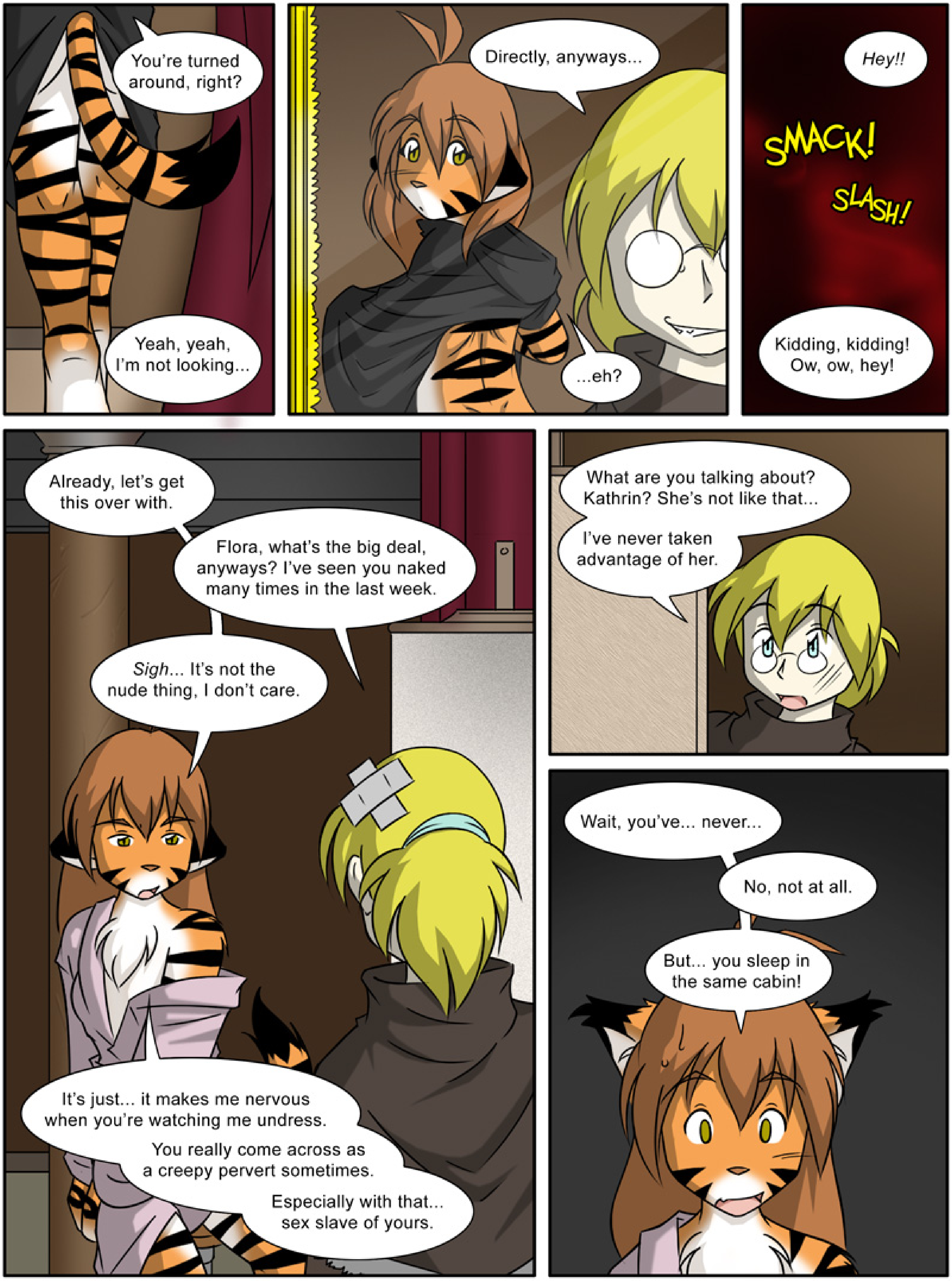

The harbor's given us permission to shove off.
Alright, boys, let's get some wind under our sails and get out of here.
Meow!
Huh...?
Meow! Meow!
Merrow!!
And so we were off once again, for four weeks of peaceful sailing. What could go wrong in a month at sea?
Meow! Meow!
Meow...! Meow...

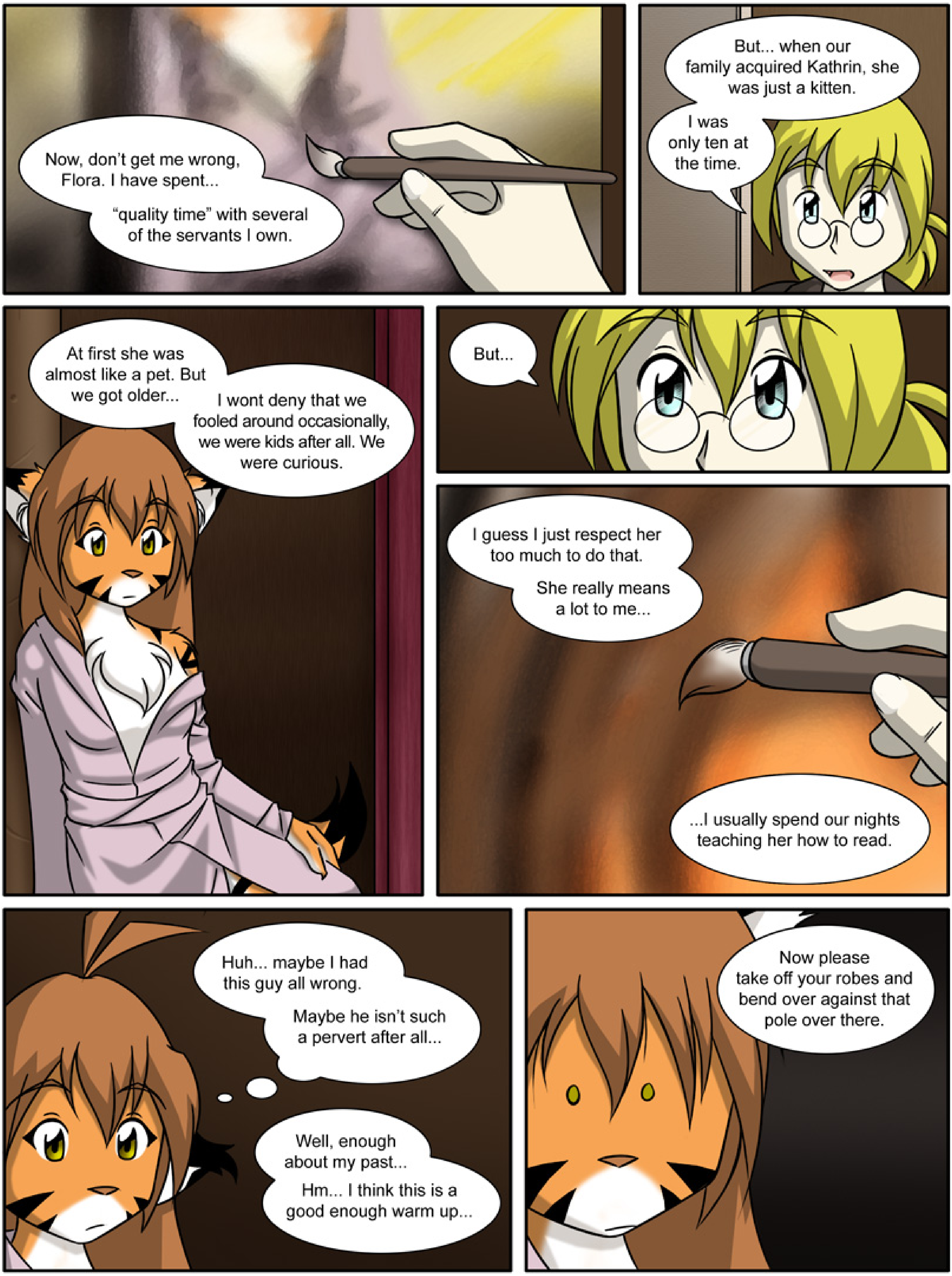


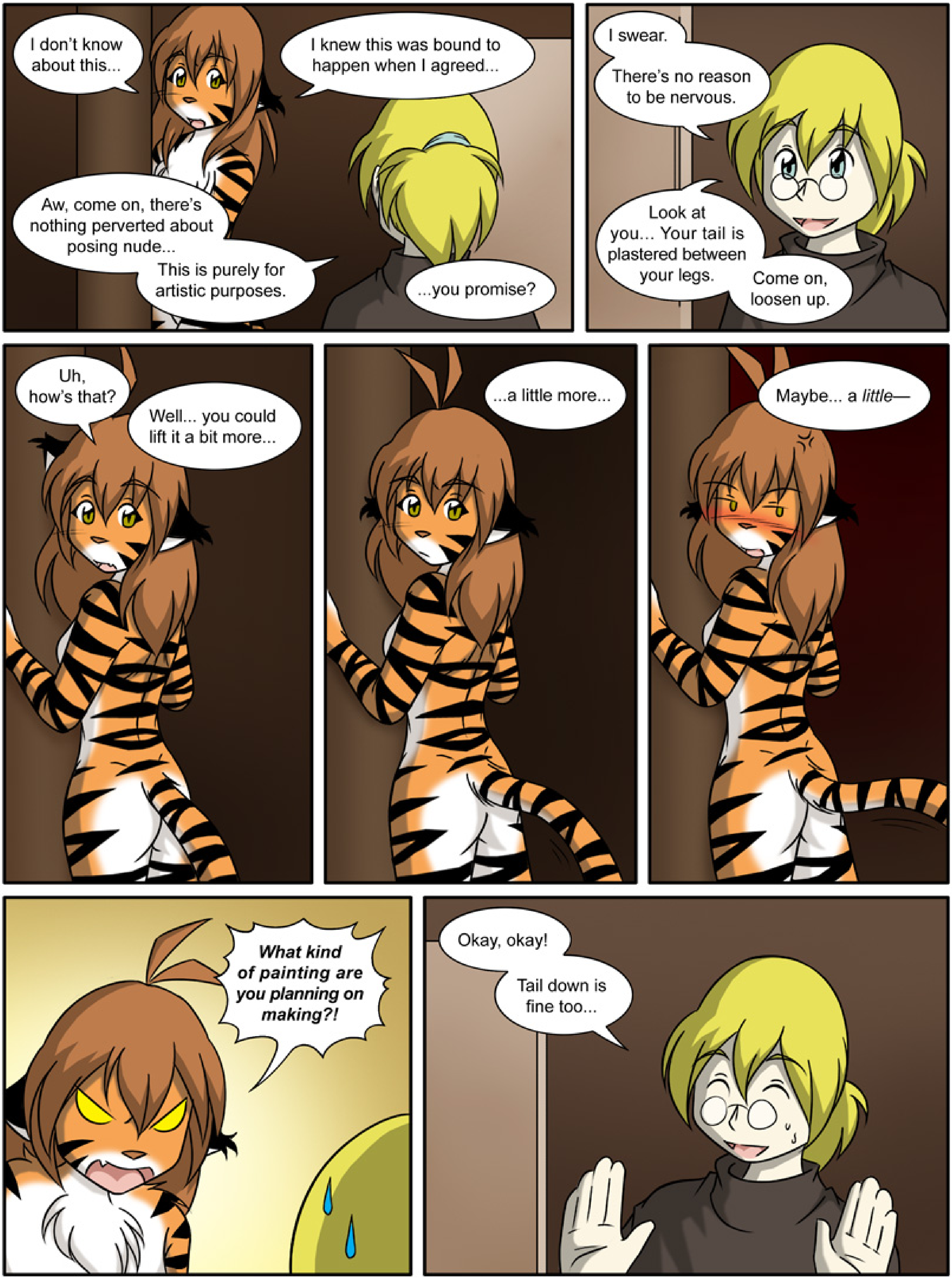
SAILING....

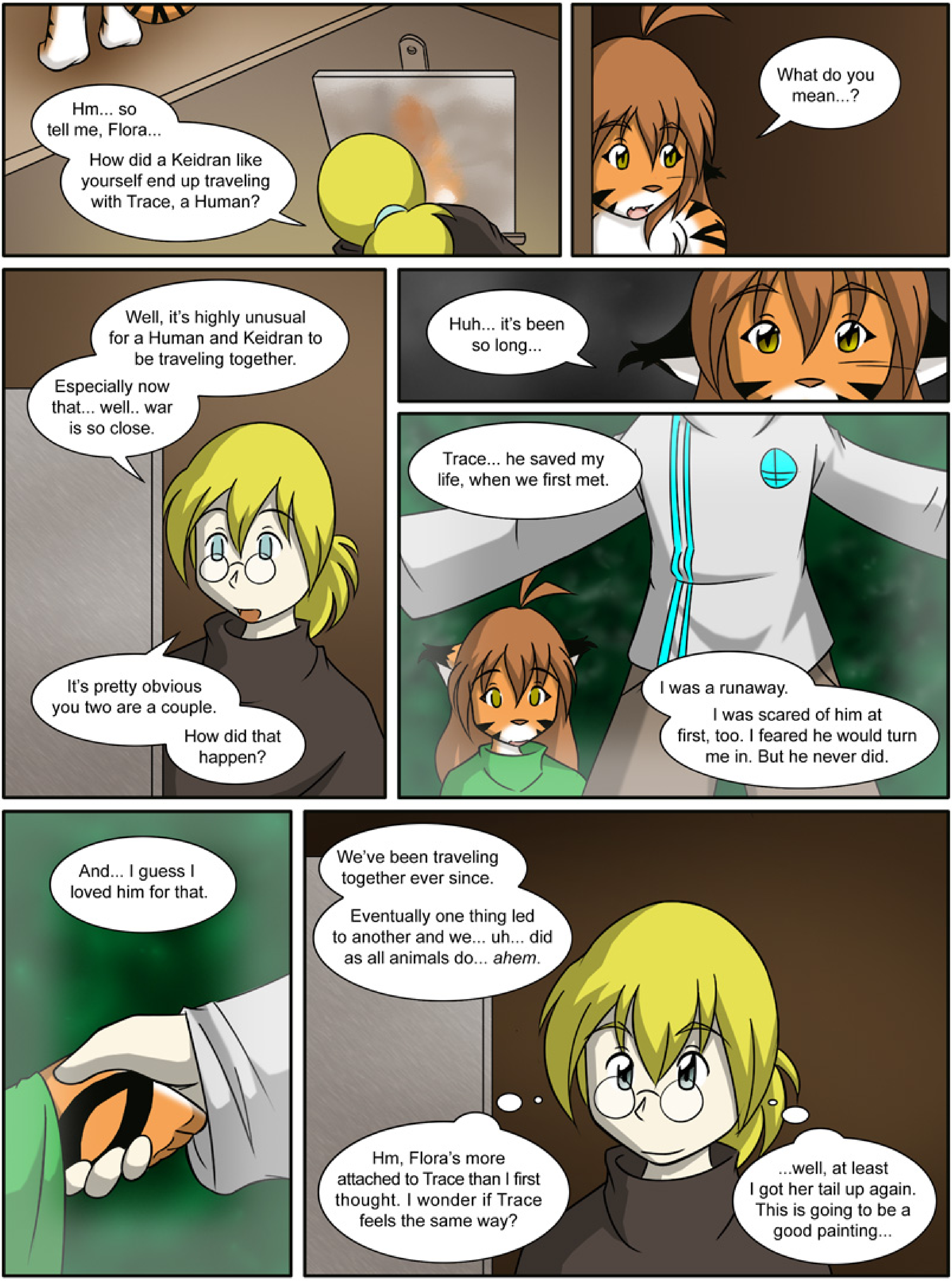

One week later...
Everything seems to be going well.
It's been smooth sailing so far. If we keep this up...
I think this will be a very uneventful trip.
So tell me, Trace, how is Flora doing?
Oh, she's alright.
The first few days were a little rough on her.
But she hasn't gotten sick lately.
Ah, good, good!
I'm glad. I've been waiting for a chance to paint her.
Do you think, perhaps, she could be available this evening?
Oh, right, the paintings...
I'd almost forgotten about that deal.
I suppose... *um*, tell me...
You're not going to have her pose... lewdly, are you?
Aw come on...
Do I seem like a pervert to you?
Just have her stop by my cabin in an hour, and I'll have everything set up.

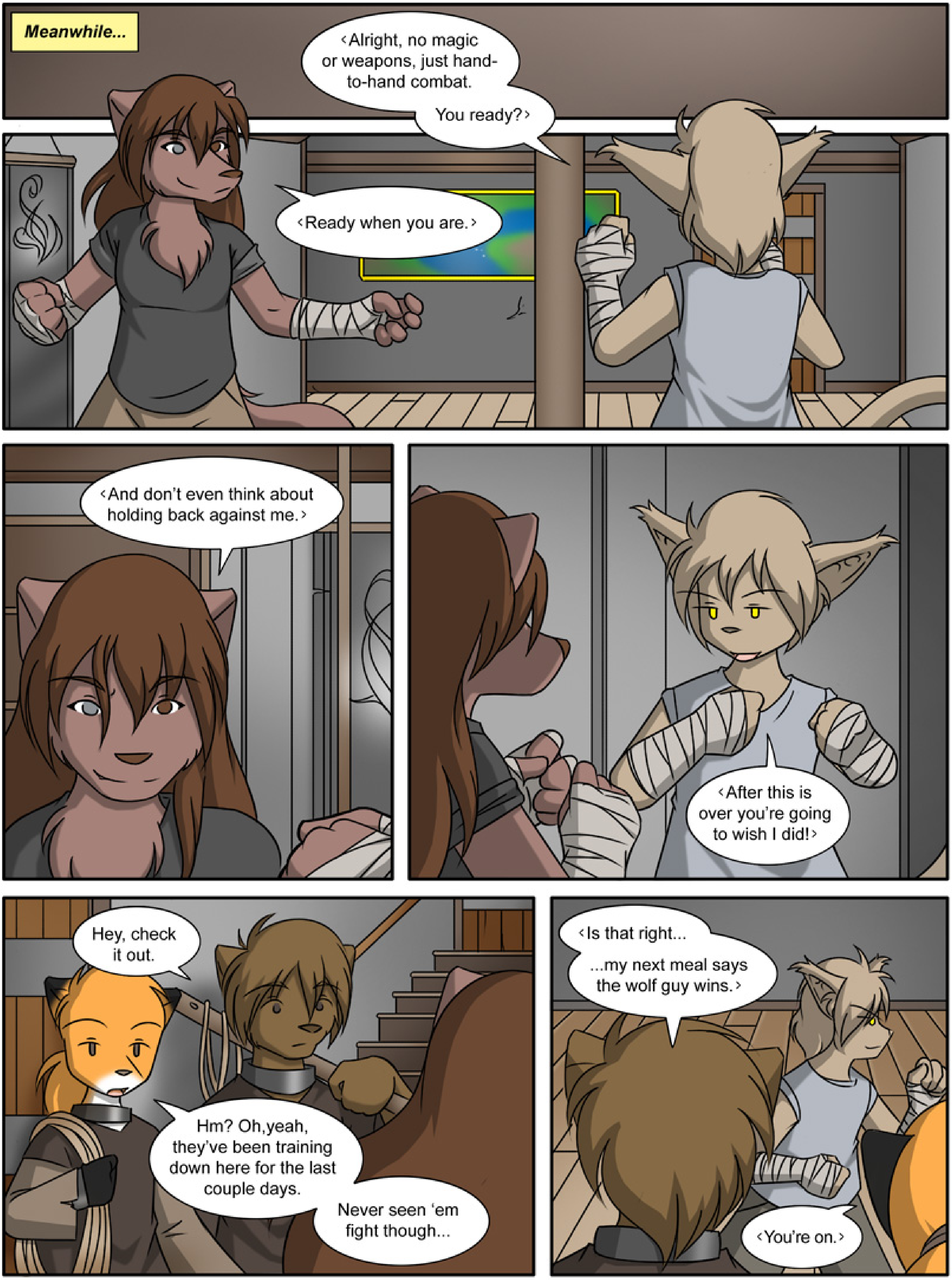

Erm, Eric?
I'm here for the, uh, paintings...
Ah, Flora!
Good to see you! Come in, come in. Close the door behind you.
How are you feeling?
I'm... good...
There's no reason to be nervous, Flora.
I know we haven't talked much in the last week, but we're all friends here, right? You can trust me.
Now here, put this on.
You... want me to change.. right here?
Why not...?
Well, ah... I don't know... it's just embarrassing!
Embarrassing? Aw, don't be ridiculous!
I've never heard of a modest Keidran.
Come on, just take it off.
I'll turn around if it makes you feel better.

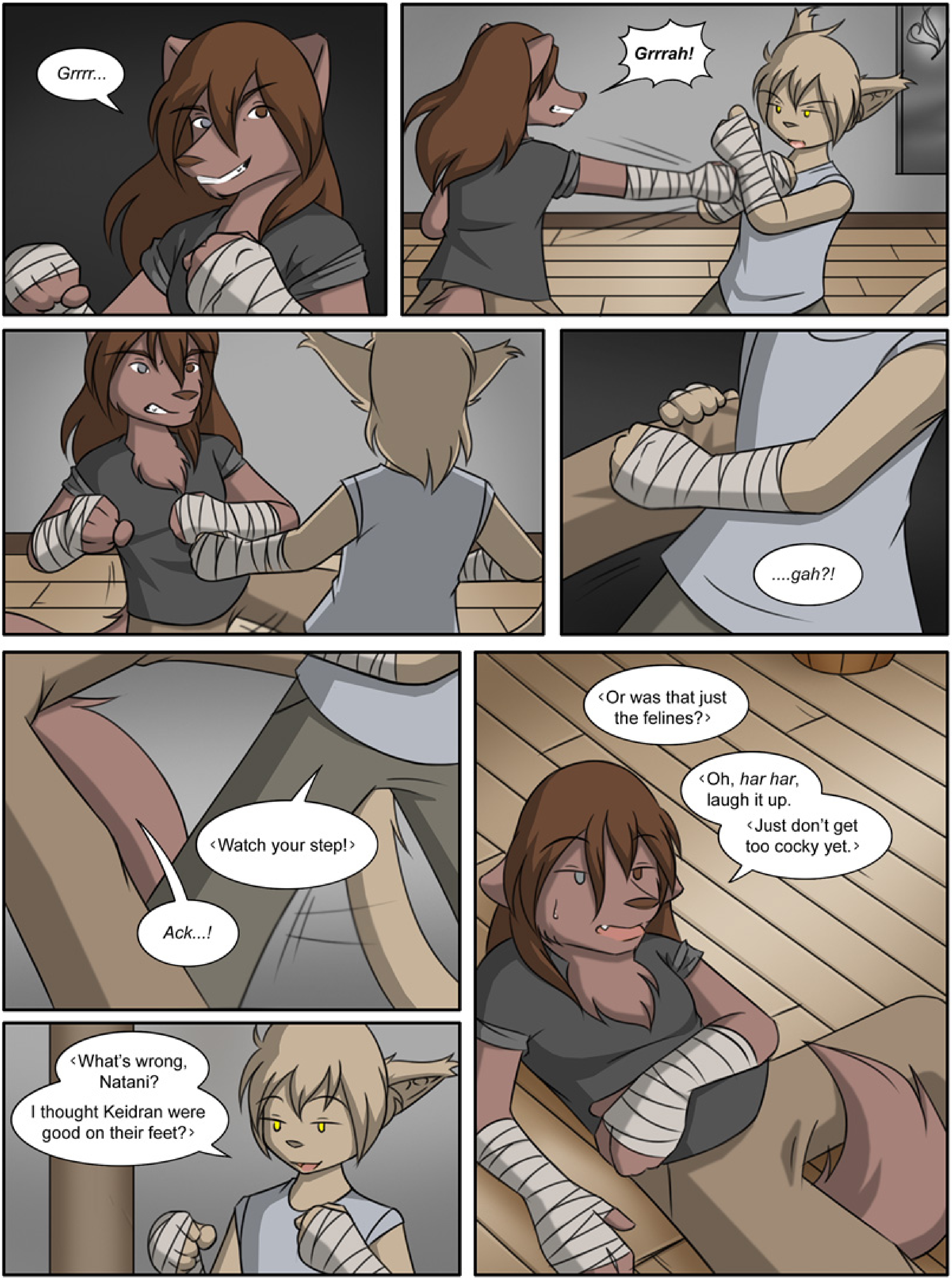

You're turned around, right?
Yeah, yeah, I'm not looking...
Directly, anyways...
...eh?
Hey!!
SMACK!
SLASH!
Kidding, kidding! Ow, ow, hey!
Already, let's get this over with.
Flora, what's the big deal, anyways? I've seen you naked many times in the last week.
Sigh... It's not the nude thing, I don't care.
It's just... it makes me nervous when you're watching me undress.
You really come across as a creepy pervert sometimes.
Especially with that... sex slave of yours.
What are you talking about? Kathrin? She's not like that...
I've never taken advantage of her.
Wait, you've... never...
No, not at all.
But... you sleep in the same cabin!

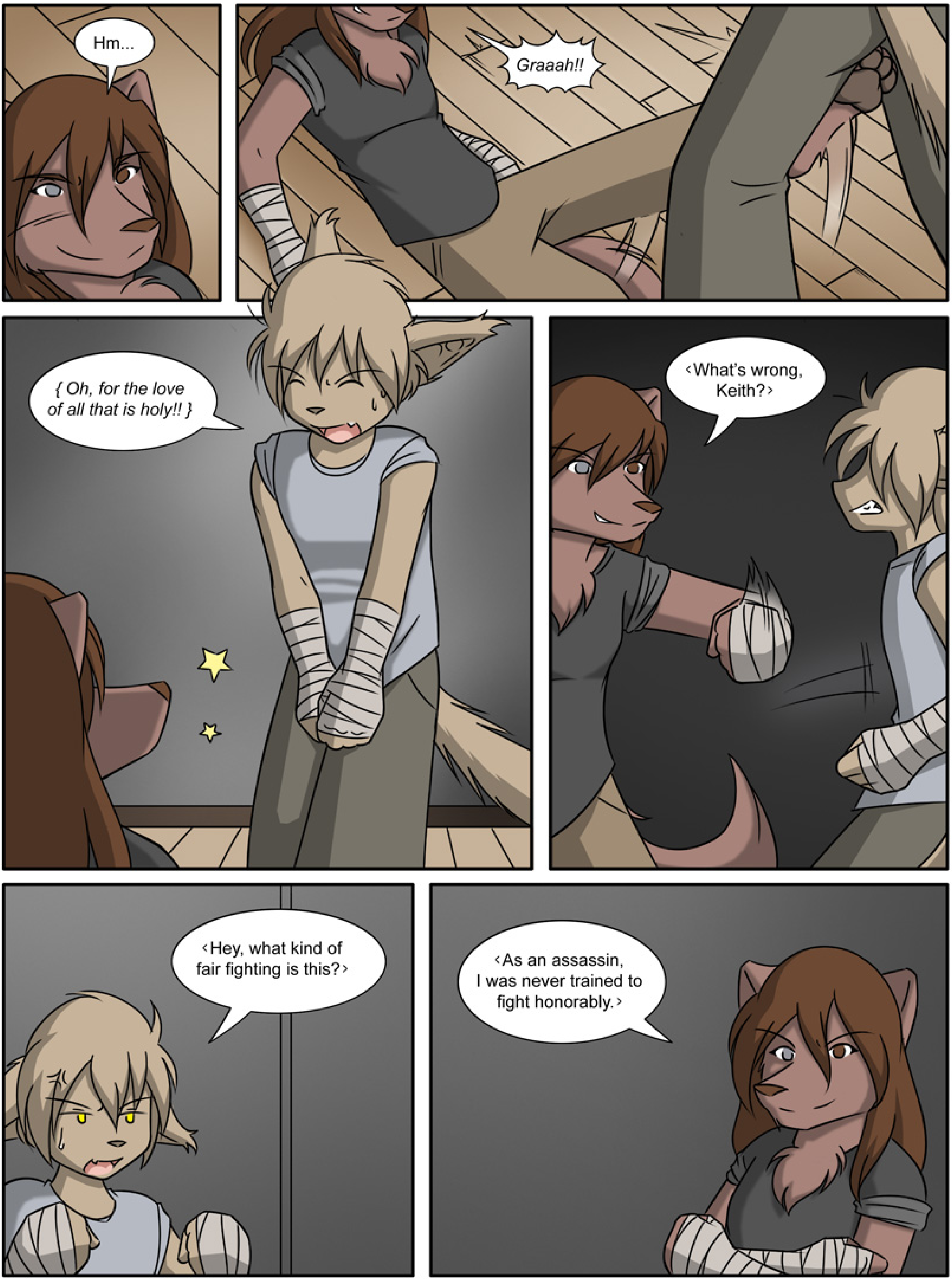

Now, don't get me wrong, Flora. I have spent...
"quality time" with several of the servants I own.
But... when our family acquired Kathrin, she was just a kitten.
I was only ten at the time.
At first she was almost like a pet. But we got older...
I wont deny that we fooled around occasionally, we were kids after all. We were curious.
But...
I guess I just respect her too much to do that.
She really means a lot to me...
...I usually spend our nights teaching her how to read.
Huh... maybe I had this guy all wrong.
Maybe he isn't such a pervert after all...
Well, enough about my past...
Hm... I think this is a good enough warm up...
Now please take off your robes and bend over against that pole over there.

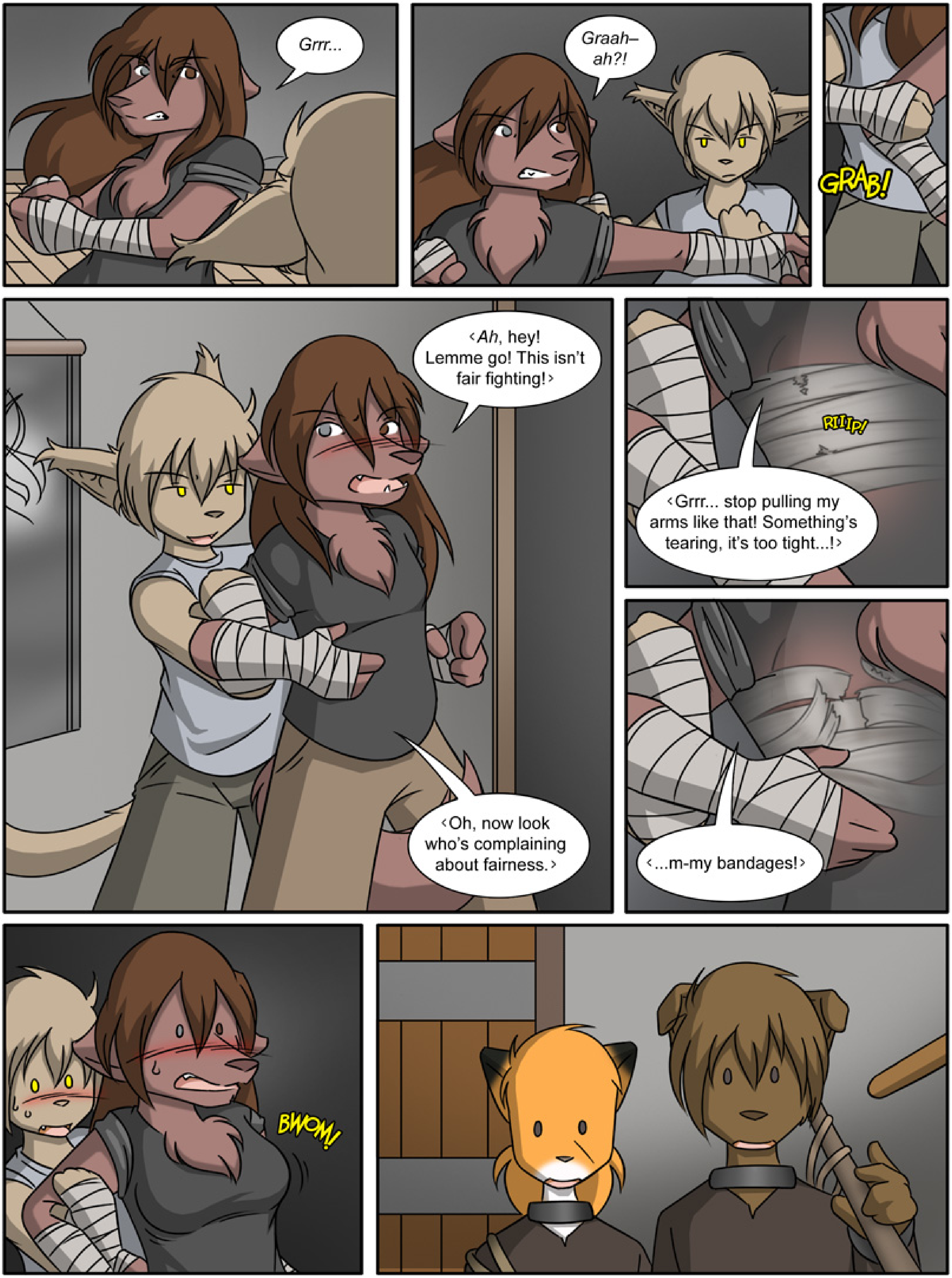

I don't know about this...
I knew this was bound to happen when I agreed...
Aw, come on, there's nothing perverted about posing nude...
This is purely for artistic purposes.
...you promise?
I swear.
There's no reason to be nervous.
Look at you... Your tail is plastered between your legs.
Come on, loosen up.
Uh, how's that?
Well... you could lift it a bit more...
...a little more...
Maybe... a *little*—
What kind of painting are you planning on making?!
Okay, okay!
Tail down is fine too...

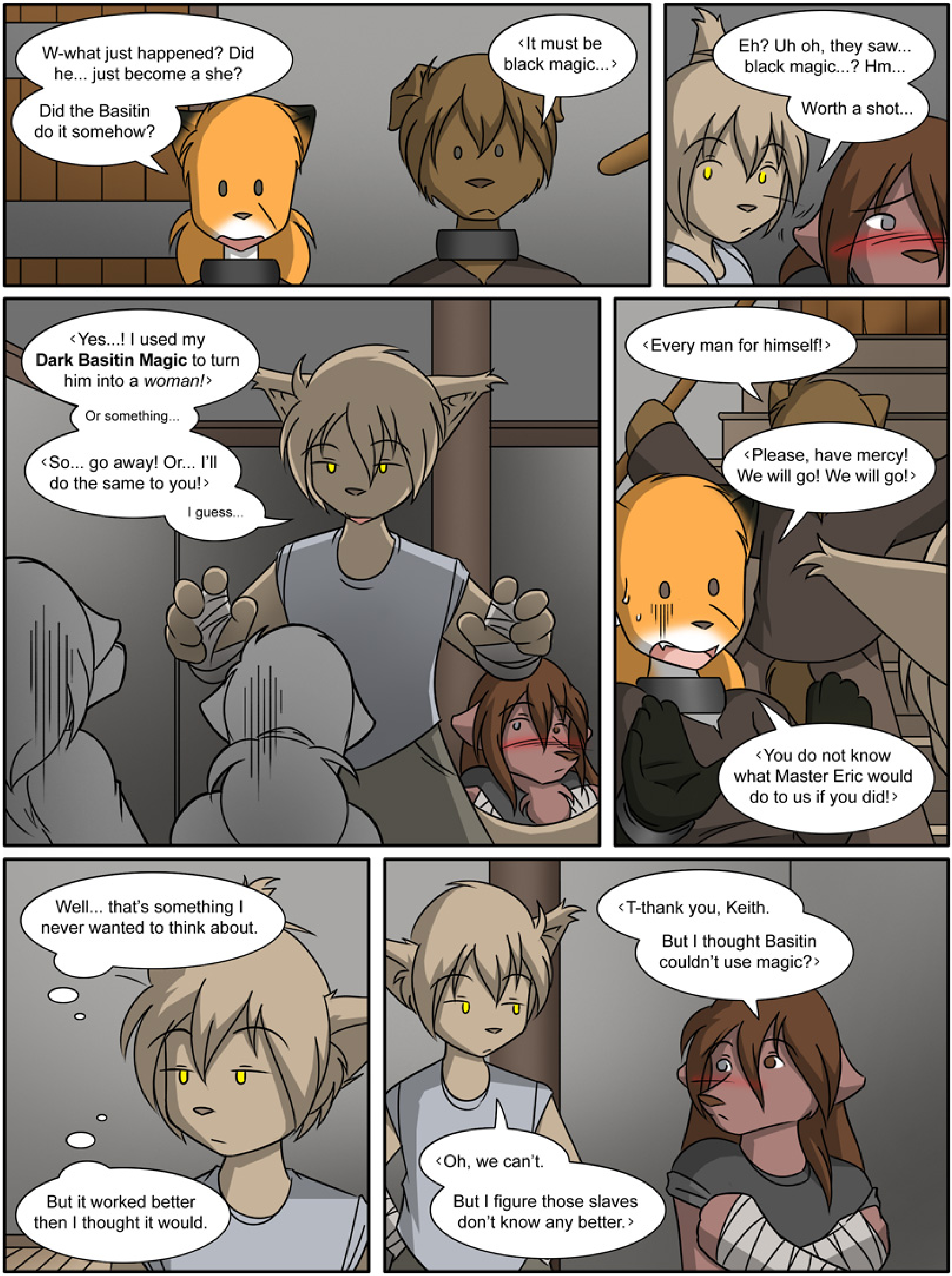

Hm... so tell me, Flora...
How did a Keidran like yourself end up traveling with Trace, a Human?
What do you mean...?
Well, it's highly unusual for a Human and Keidran to be traveling together.
Especially now that... well.. war is so close.
It's pretty obvious you two are a couple.
How did that happen?
Huh... it's been so long...
Trace... he saved my life, when we first met.
I was a runaway.
I was scared of him at first, too. I feared he would turn me in. But he never did.
And... I guess I loved him for that.
We've been traveling together ever since.
Eventually one thing led to another and we... uh... did as all animals do... *ahem*.
Hm, Flora's more attached to Trace than I first thought. I wonder if Trace feels the same way?
...well, at least I got her tail up again. This is going to be a good painting...

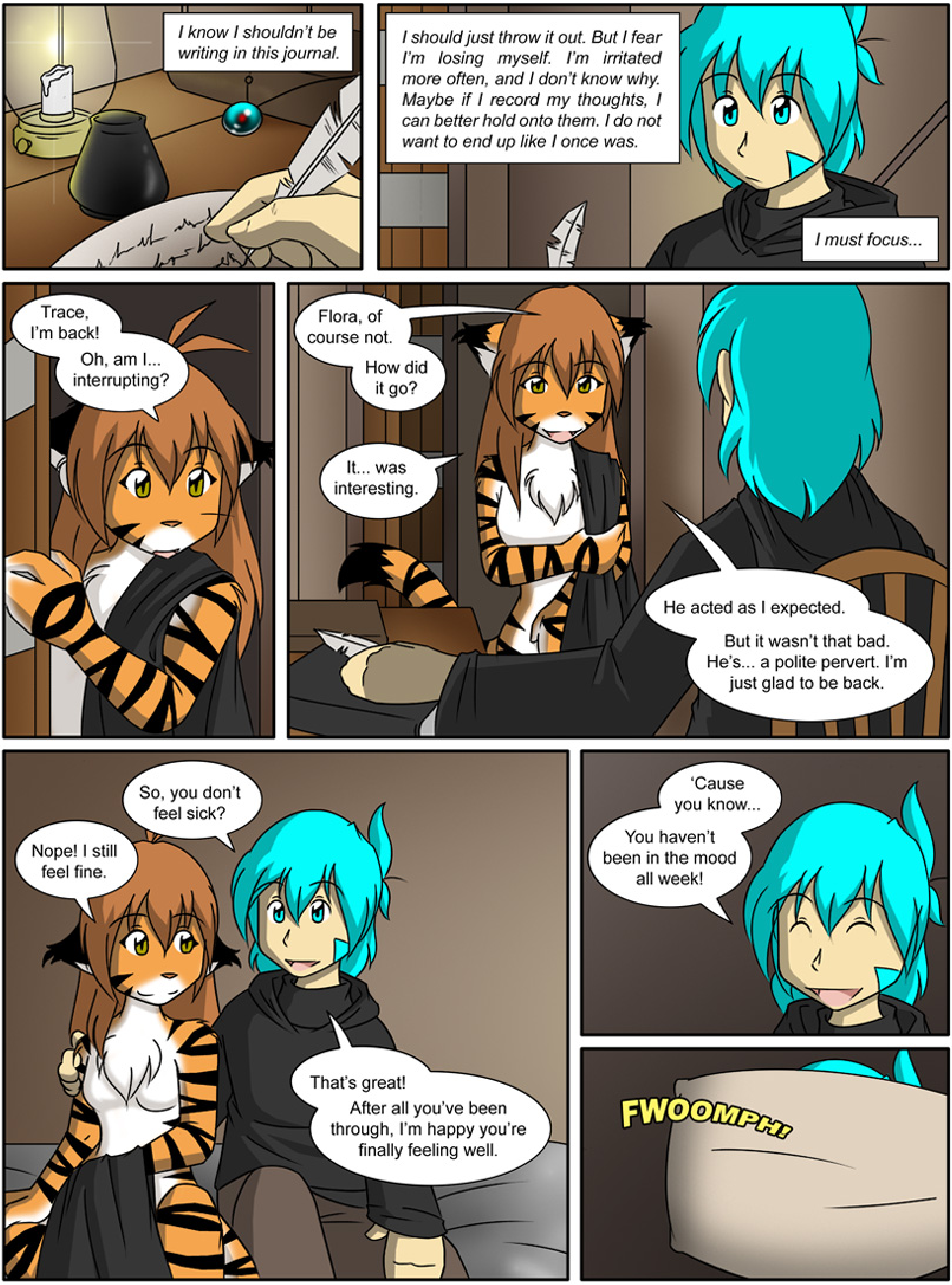

Meanwhile...
‹Alright, no magic or weapons, just hand-to-hand combat.
You ready?›
‹Ready when you are.›
‹And don't even think about holding back against me.›
‹After this is over you're going to wish I did!›
Hey, check it out.
Hm? Oh,yeah, they've been training down here for the last couple days.
Never seen 'em fight though...
‹Is that right...
...my next meal says the wolf guy wins.›
‹You're on.›

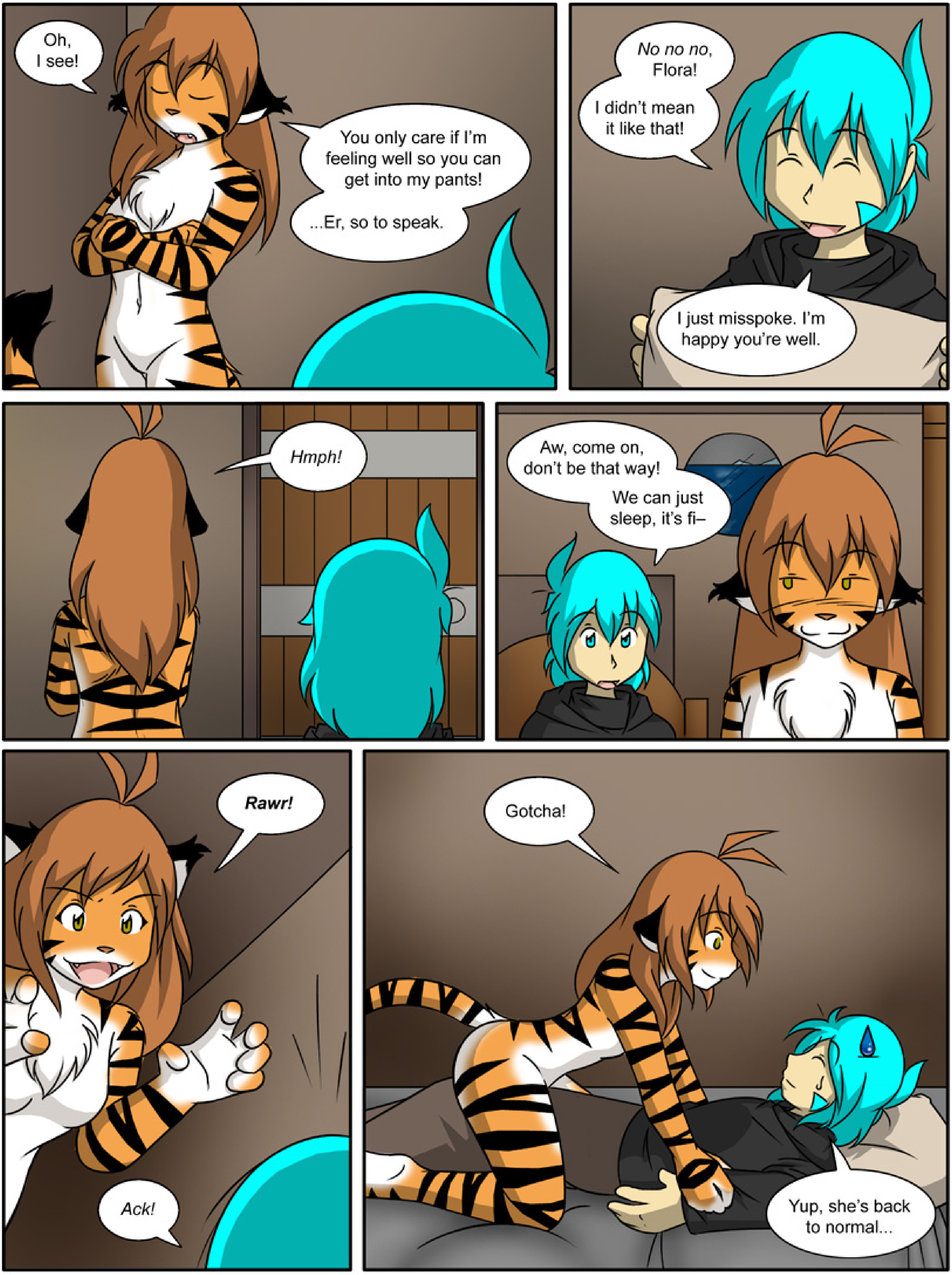

Grrrr...
Grrrah!
....gah?!
‹Watch your step!›
Ack...!
‹What's wrong, Natani?
I thought Keidran were good on their feet?›
‹Or was that just the felines?›
‹Oh, *har har*, laugh it up.
‹Just don't get too cocky yet.›

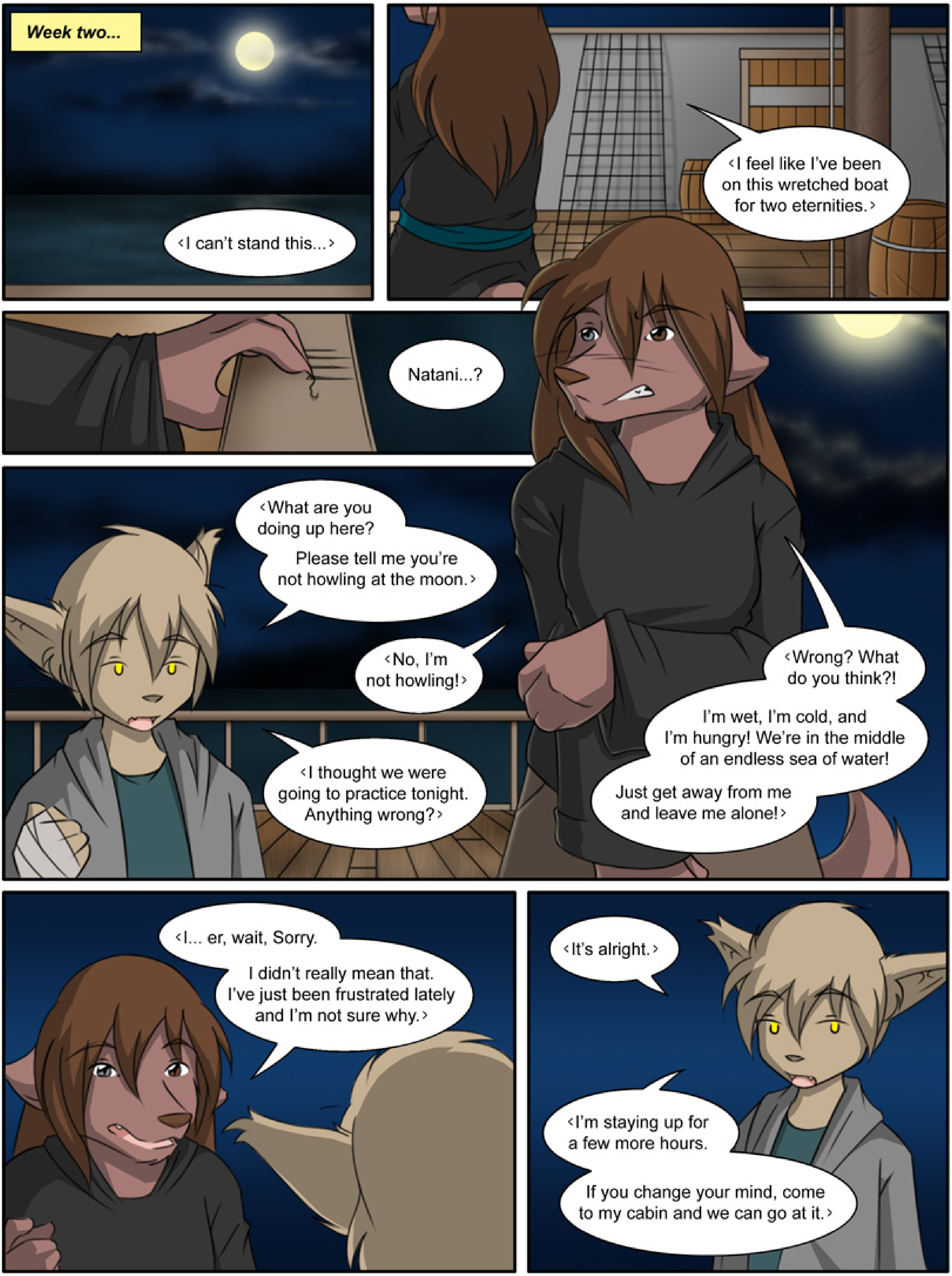

Hm...
Graaah!!
{ Oh, for the love of all that is holy!! }
‹What's wrong, Keith?›
‹Hey, what kind of fair fighting is this?›
‹As an assassin, I was never trained to fight honorably.›

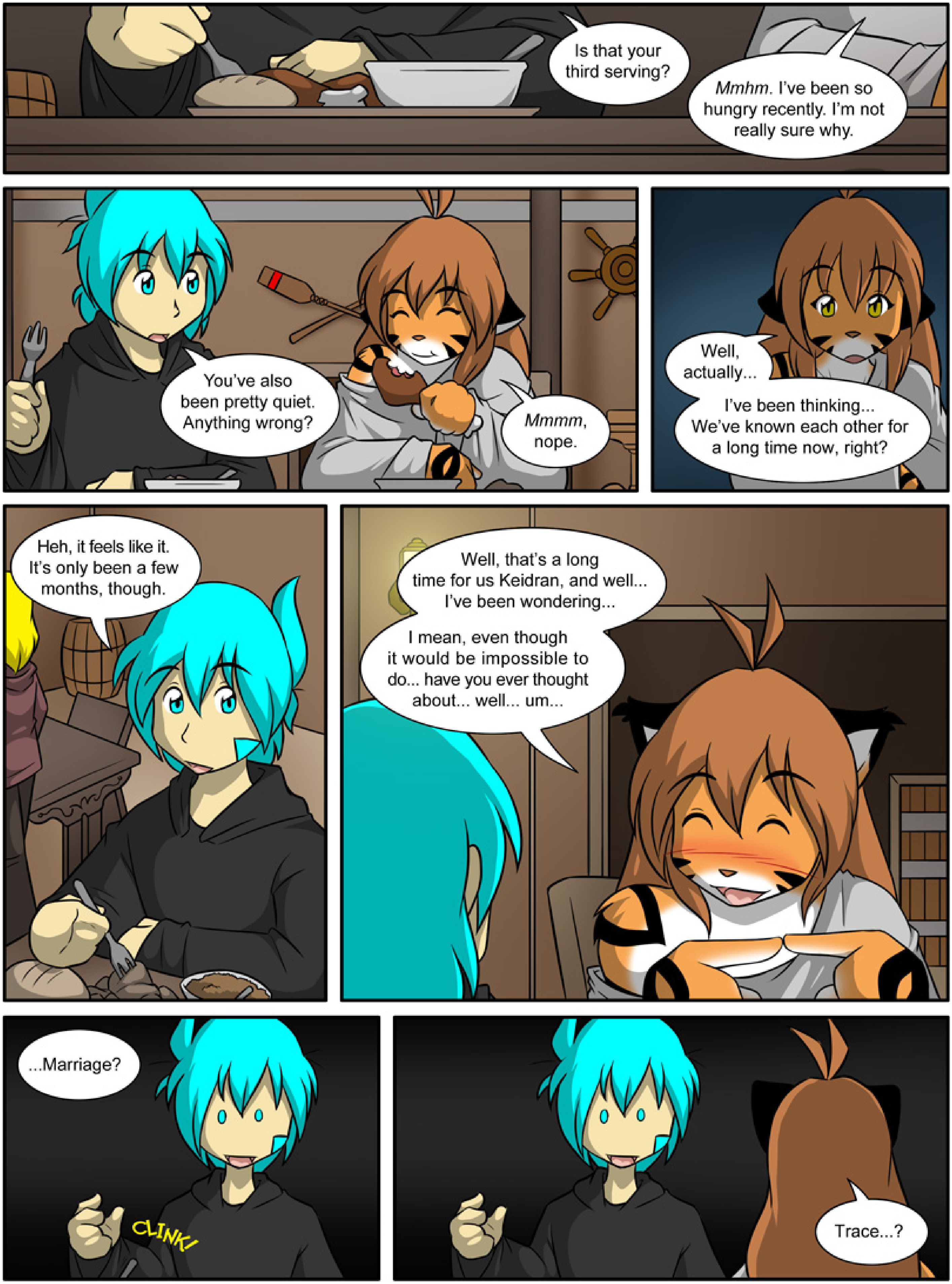

Grrr...
Graah–ah?!
GRAB!
‹Ah, hey! Lemme go! This isn't fair fighting!›
‹Oh, now look who's complaining about fairness.›
RIIIP!
‹Grrr... stop pulling my arms like that! Something's tearing, it's too tight...!›
‹...m-my bandages!›
BWOM!

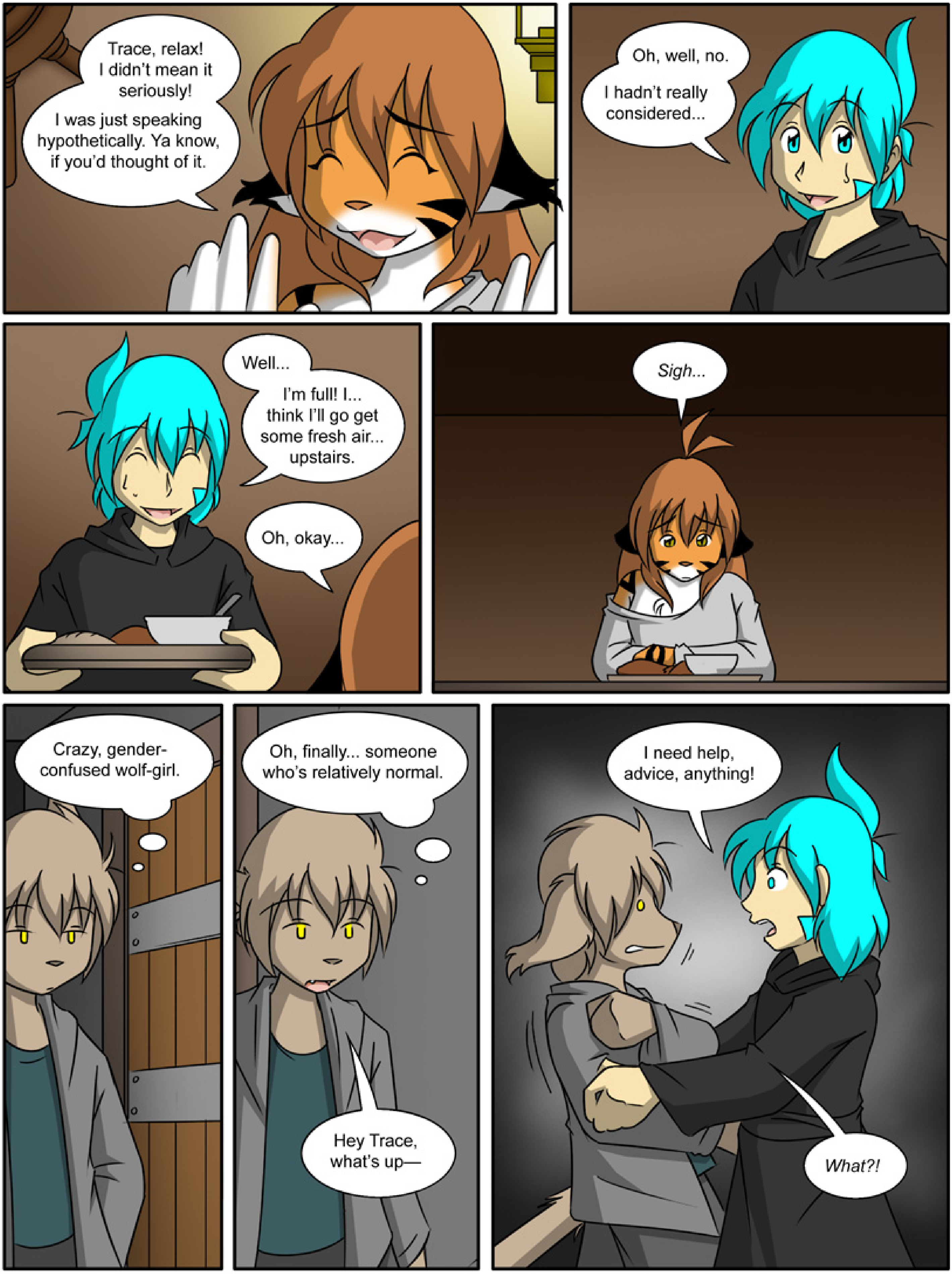

W-what just happened? Did he... just become a she?
Did the Basitin do it somehow?
‹It must be black magic...›
Eh? Uh oh, they saw... black magic...? Hm...
Worth a shot...
‹Yes...! I used my **Dark Basitin Magic** to turn him into a *woman!*›
Or something...
‹So... go away! Or... I'll do the same to you!›
I guess...
‹Every man for himself!›
‹Please, have mercy! We will go! We will go!›
‹You do not know what Master Eric would do to us if you did!›
Well... that's something I never wanted to think about.
But it worked better then I thought it would.
‹T-thank you, Keith.
But I thought Basitin couldn't use magic?›
‹Oh, we can't.
But I figure those slaves don't know any better.›

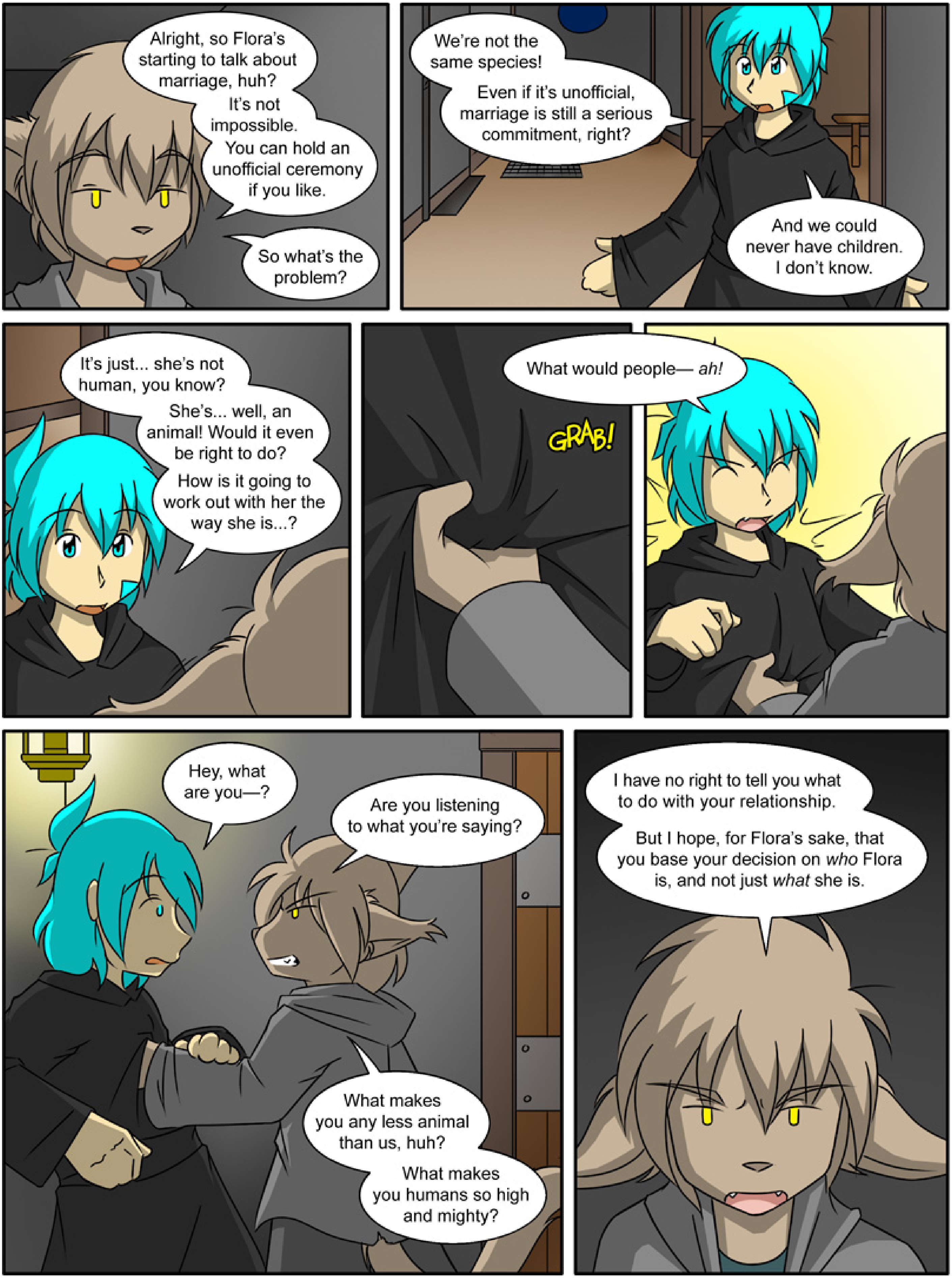

I know I shouldn't be writing in this journal.
I should just throw it out. But I fear I'm losing myself. I'm irritated more often, and I don't know why. Maybe if I record my thoughts, I can better hold onto them. I do not want to end up like I once was.
I must focus...
Trace, I'm back!
Oh, am I... interrupting?
Flora, of course not.
How did it go?
It... was interesting.
He acted as I expected.
But it wasn't that bad. He's... a polite pervert. I'm just glad to be back.
So, you don't feel sick?
Nope! I still feel fine.
That's great!
After all you've been through, I'm happy you're finally feeling well.
'Cause you know...
You haven't been in the mood all week!
FWOOMPH!

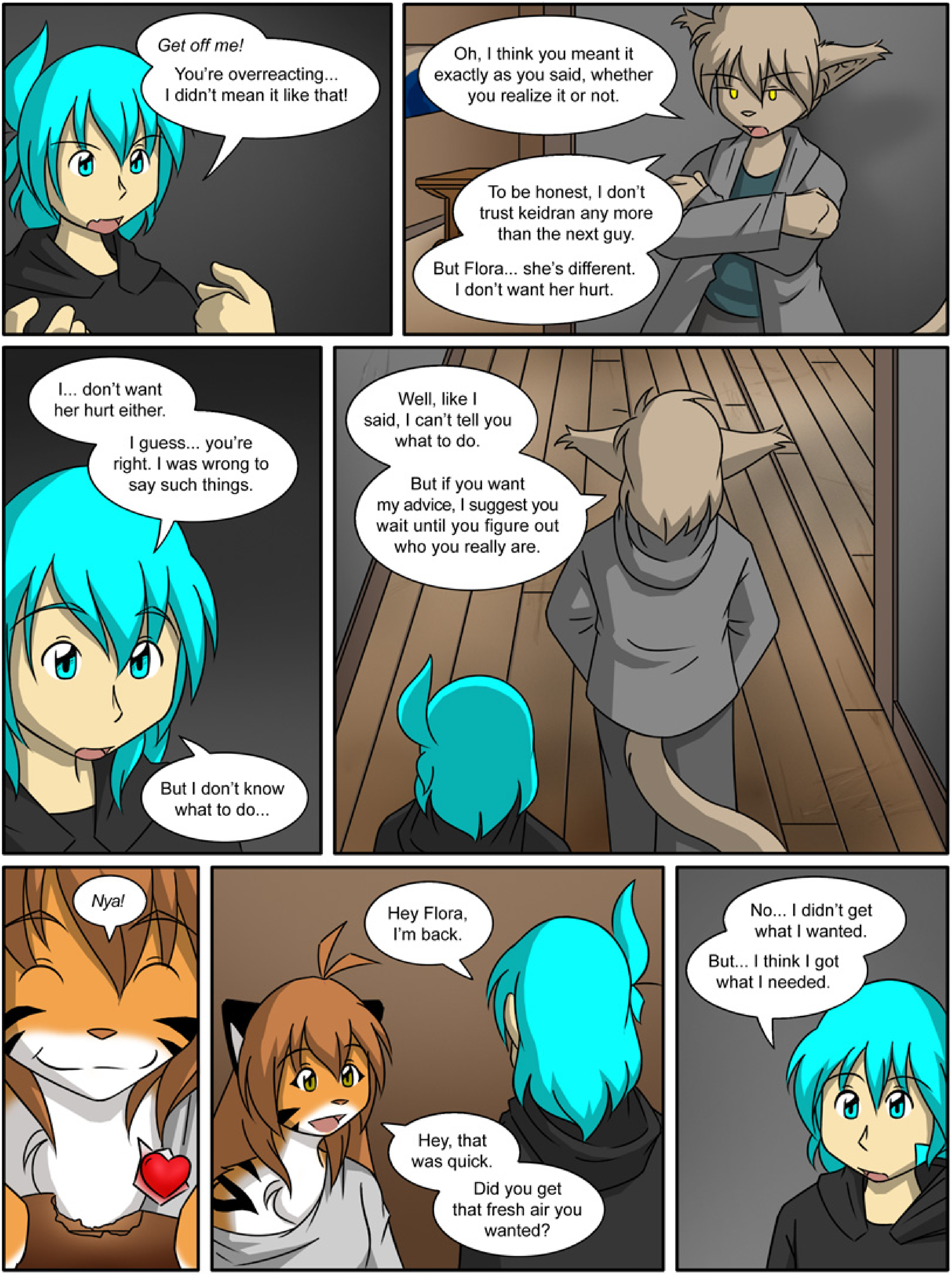

Oh, I see!
You only care if I'm feeling well so you can get into my pants!
...Er, so to speak.
No no no, Flora!
I didn't mean it like that!
I just misspoke. I'm happy you're well.
Hmph!
Aw, come on, don't be that way!
We can just sleep, it's fi–
Rawr!
Ack!
Gotcha!
Yup, she's back to normal...

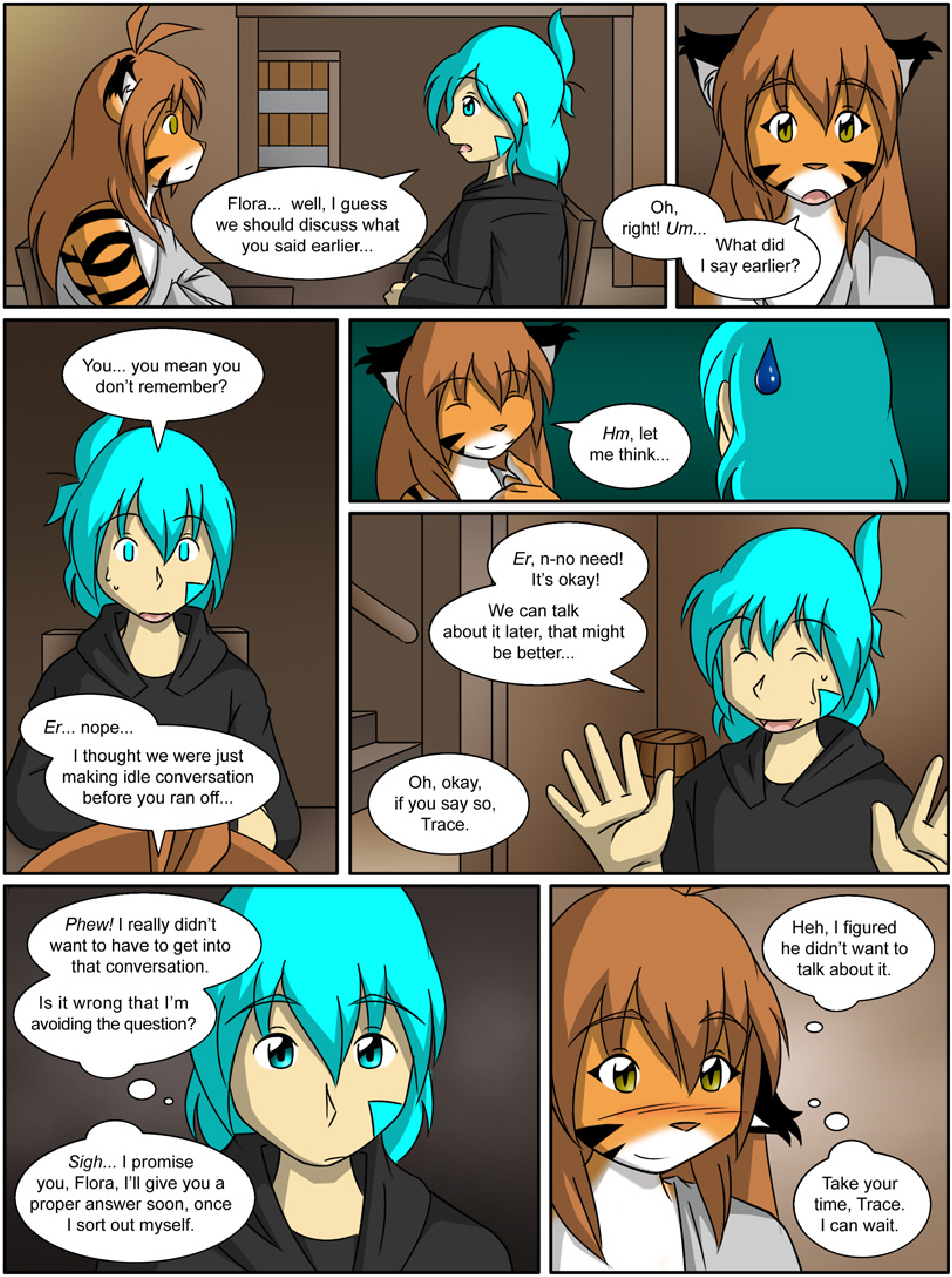

Week two...
<I can't stand this...>
<I feel like I've been on this wretched boat for two eternities.>
Natani...?
<What are you doing up here?
Please tell me you're not howling at the moon.>
<No, I'm not howling!>
<I thought we were going to practice tonight. Anything wrong?>
<Wrong? What do you think?!
I'm wet, I'm cold, and I'm hungry! We're in the middle of an endless sea of water!
Just get away from me and leave me alone!>
<I... er, wait, Sorry.
I didn't really mean that. I've just been frustrated lately and I'm not sure why.>
<It's alright.>
<I'm staying up for a few more hours.
If you change your mind, come to my cabin and we can go at it.>

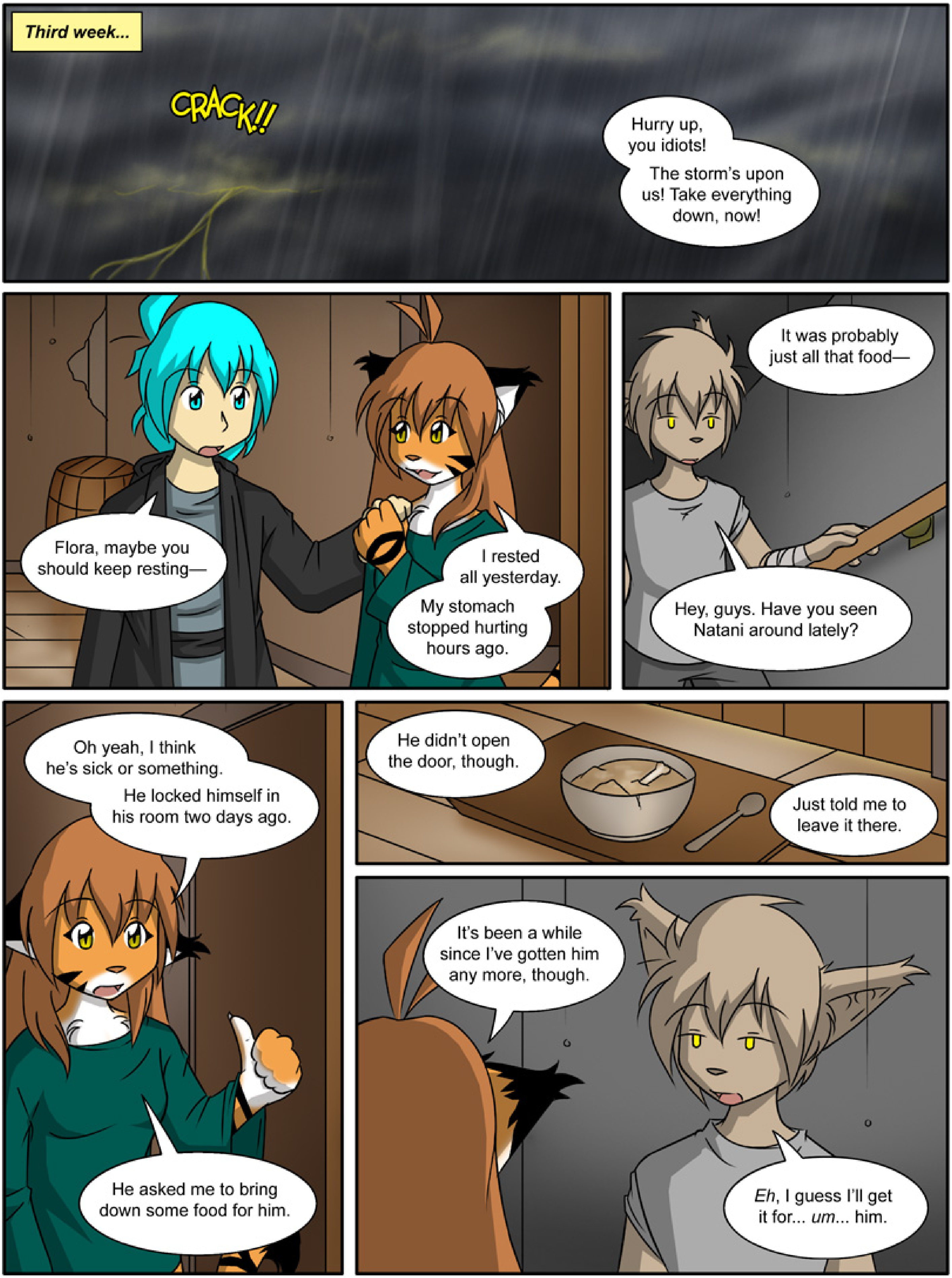

Is that your third serving?
Mmhm. I've been so hungry recently. I'm not really sure why.
You've also been pretty quiet. Anything wrong?
Mmmm, nope.
Well, actually...
I've been thinking... We've known each other for a long time now, right?
Heh, it feels like it. It's only been a few months, though.
Well, that's a long time for us Keidran, and well... I've been wondering...
I mean, even though it would be impossible to do... have you ever thought about... well... um...
...Marriage?
CLINK!
Trace...?

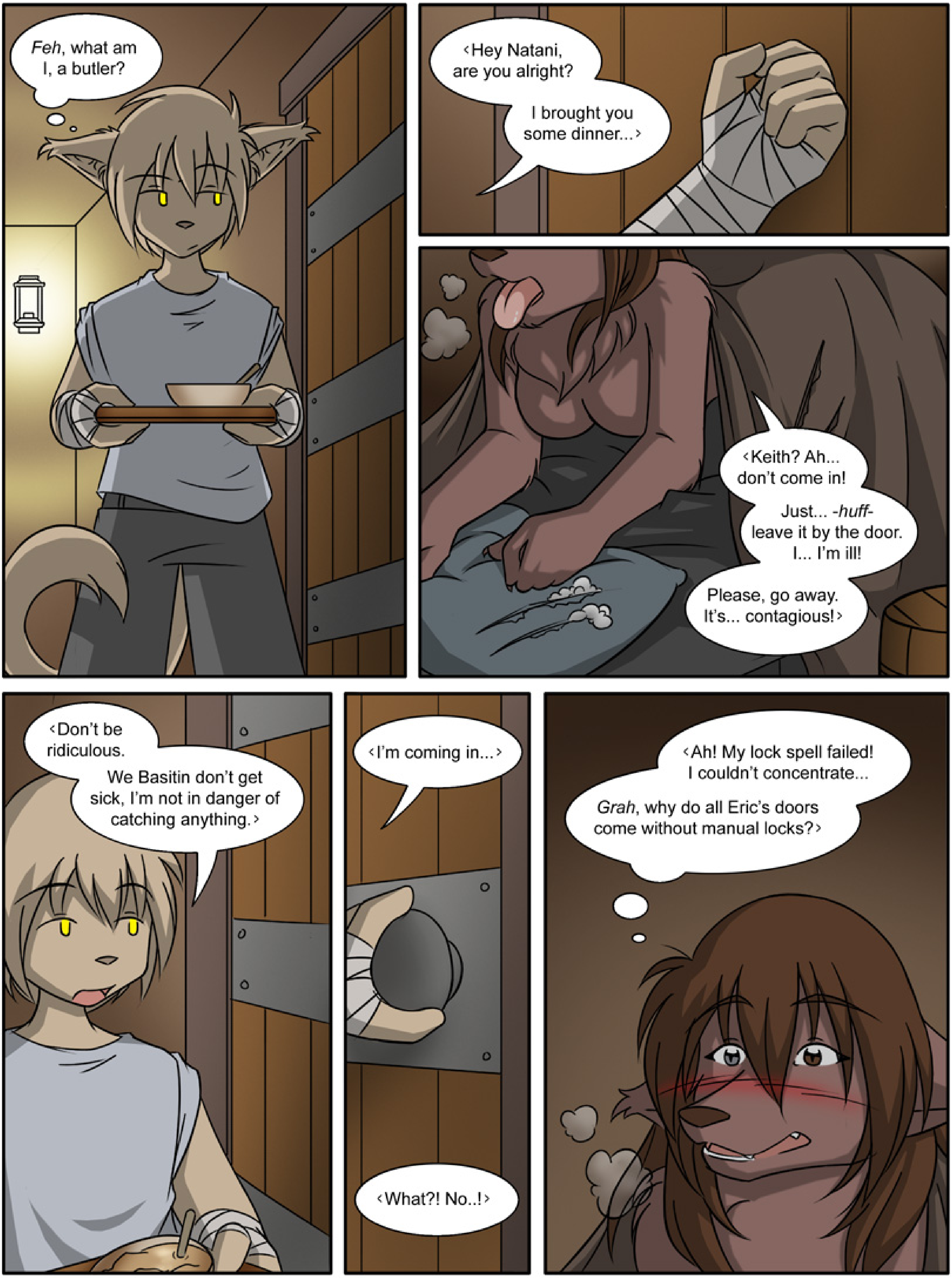

Trace, relax! I didn't mean it seriously!
I was just speaking hypothetically. Ya know, if you'd thought of it.
Oh, well, no.
I hadn't really considered...
Well...
I'm full! I... think I'll go get some fresh air... upstairs.
Oh, okay...
Sigh...
Crazy, gender-confused wolf-girl.
Oh, finally... someone who's relatively normal.
Hey Trace, what's up—
I need help, advice, anything!
What?!

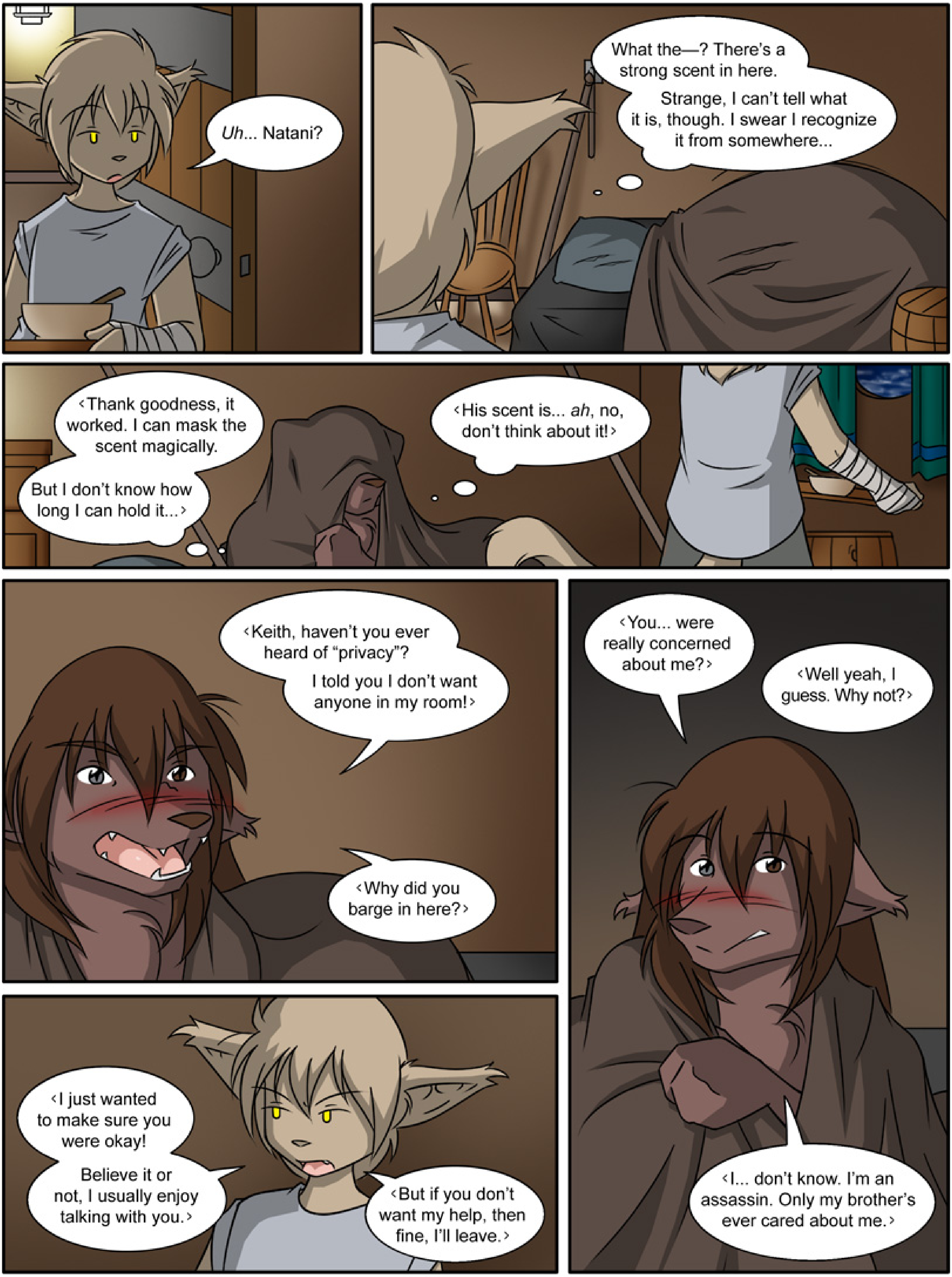

Alright, so Flora's starting to talk about marriage, huh?
It's not impossible.
You can hold an unofficial ceremony if you like.
So what's the problem?
We're not the same species!
Even if it's unofficial, marriage is still a serious commitment, right?
And we could never have children. I don't know.
It's just... she's not human, you know?
She's... well, an animal! Would it even be right to do?
How is it going to work out with her the way she is...?
What would people— *ah!*
GRAB!
Hey, what are you—?
Are you listening to what you're saying?
What makes you any less animal than us, huh?
What makes you humans so high and mighty?
I have no right to tell you what to do with your relationship.
But I hope, for Flora's sake, that you base your decision on *who* Flora is, and not just *what* she is.

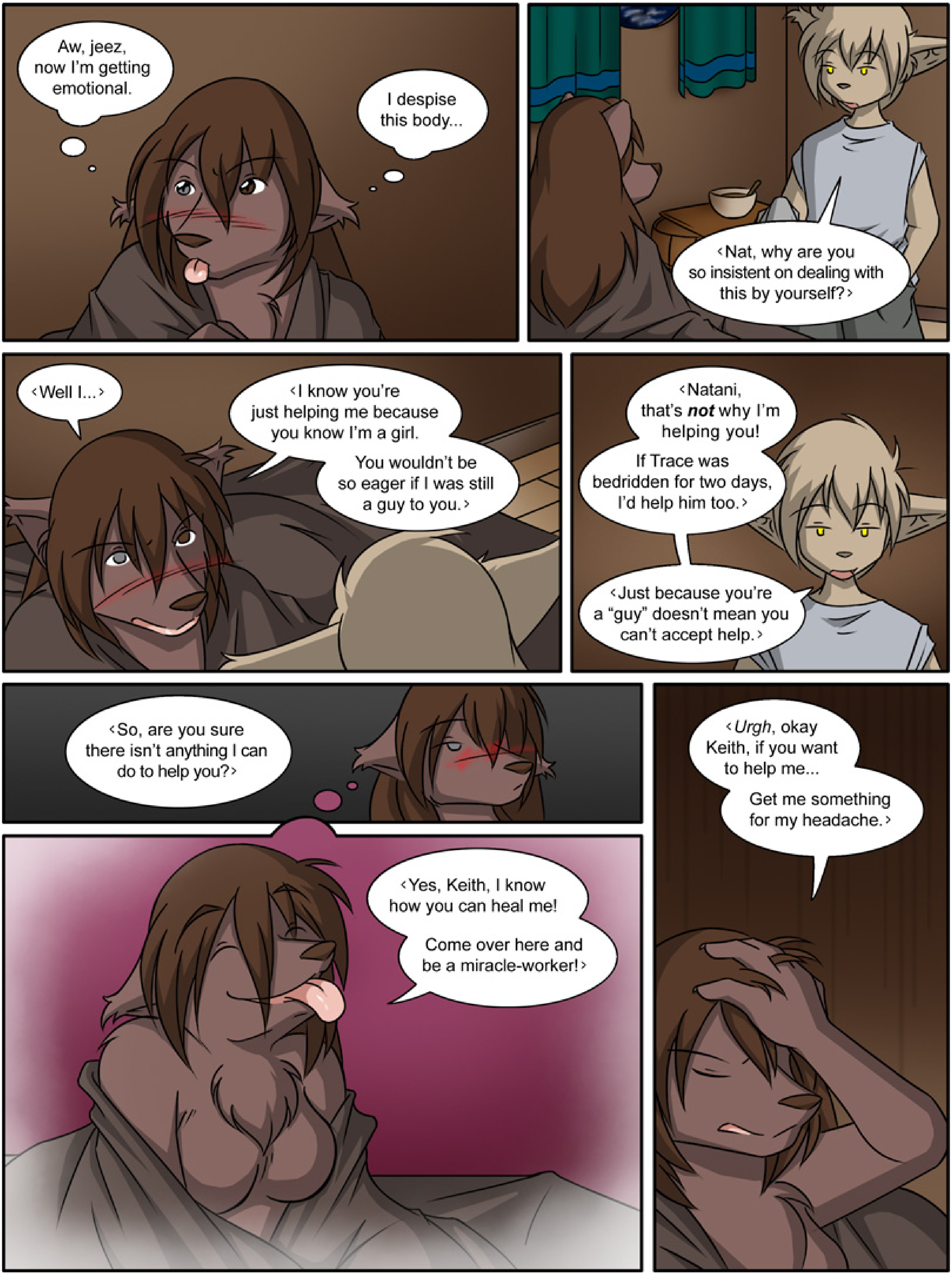

Get off me!
You're overreacting... I didn't mean it like that!
Oh, I think you meant it exactly as you said, whether you realize it or not.
To be honest, I don't trust keidran any more than the next guy.
But Flora... she's different. I don't want her hurt.
I... don't want her hurt either.
I guess... you're right. I was wrong to say such things.
But I don't know what to do...
Well, like I said, I can't tell you what to do.
But if you want my advice, I suggest you wait until you figure out who you really are.
Nya!
Hey Flora, I'm back.
Hey, that was quick.
Did you get that fresh air you wanted?
No... I didn't get what I wanted.
But... I think I got what I needed.

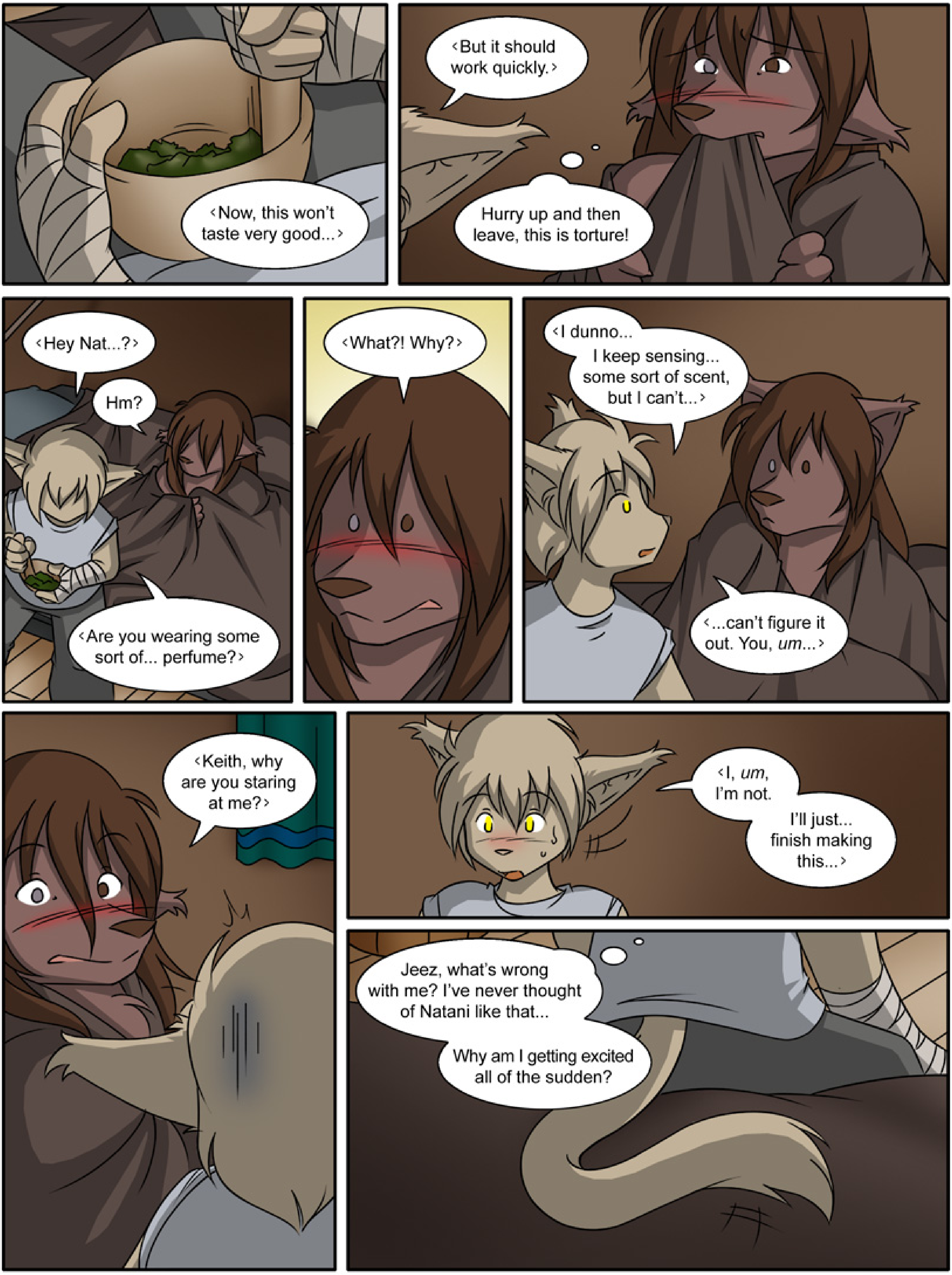

Flora... well, I guess we should discuss what you said earlier...
Oh, right! *Um...*
What did I say earlier?
You... you mean you don't remember?
Er... nope...
I thought we were just making idle conversation before you ran off...
Hm, let me think...
Er, n-no need! It's okay!
We can talk about it later, that might be better...
Oh, okay, if you say so, Trace.
Phew! I really didn't want to have to get into that conversation.
Is it wrong that I'm avoiding the question?
Sigh... I promise you, Flora, I'll give you a proper answer soon, once I sort out myself.
Heh, I figured he didn't want to talk about it.
Take your time, Trace. I can wait.

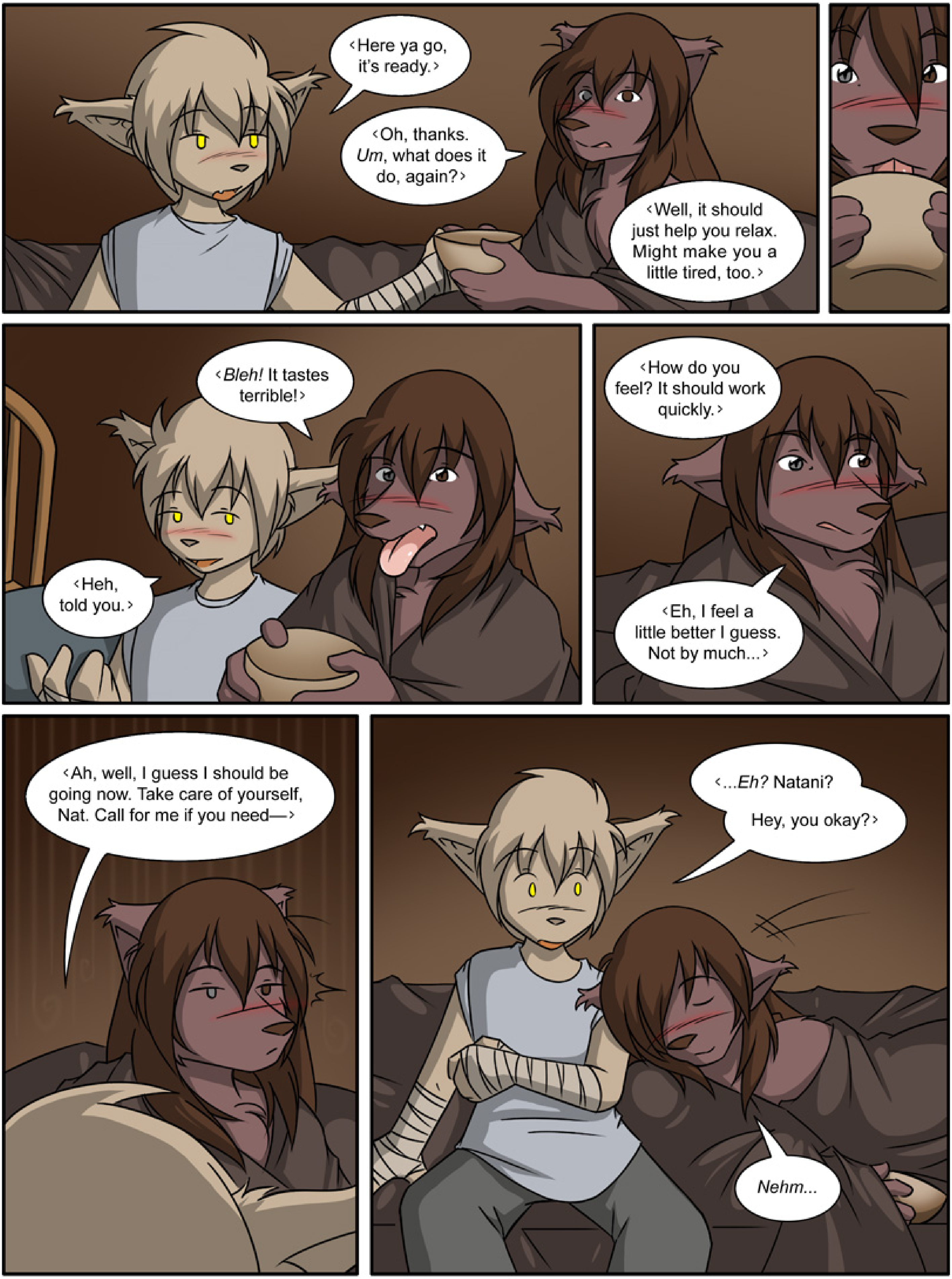

Third week...
CRACK!!
Hurry up, you idiots!
The storm's upon us! Take everything down, now!
Flora, maybe you should keep resting—
I rested all yesterday.
My stomach stopped hurting hours ago.
It was probably just all that food—
Hey, guys. Have you seen Natani around lately?
Oh yeah, I think he's sick or something.
He locked himself in his room two days ago.
He asked me to bring down some food for him.
He didn't open the door, though.
Just told me to leave it there.
It's been a while since I've gotten him any more, though.
Eh, I guess I'll get it for... *um*... him.

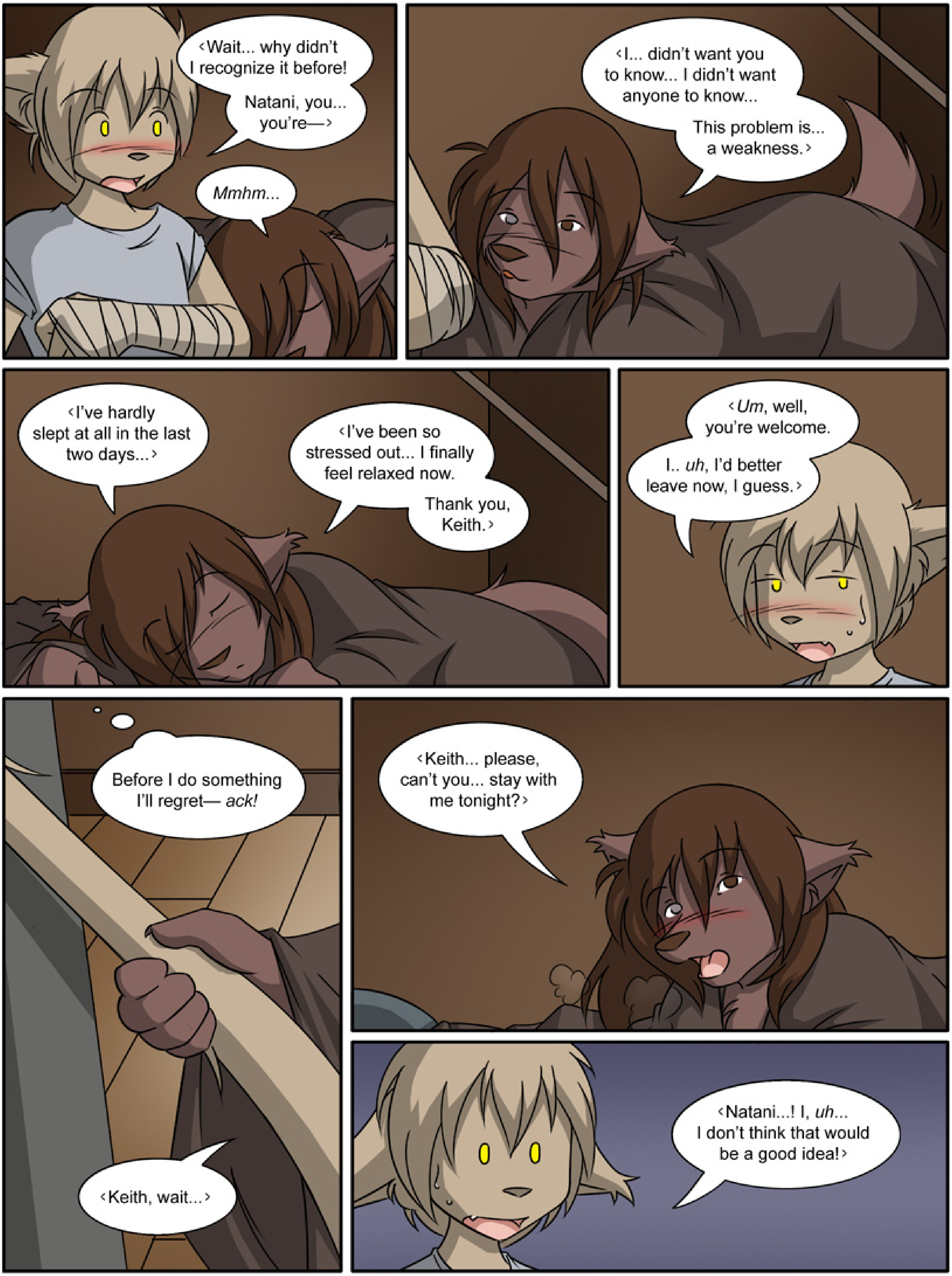

Feh, what am I, a butler?
‹Hey Natani, are you alright?
I brought you some dinner...›
‹Keith? Ah... don't come in!
Just... *-huff-* leave it by the door. I... I'm ill!
Please, go away. It's... contagious!›
‹Don't be ridiculous.
We Basitin don't get sick, I'm not in danger of catching anything.›
‹I'm coming in...›
‹What?! No..!›
‹Ah! My lock spell failed! I couldn't concentrate...
Grah, why do all Eric's doors come without manual locks?›

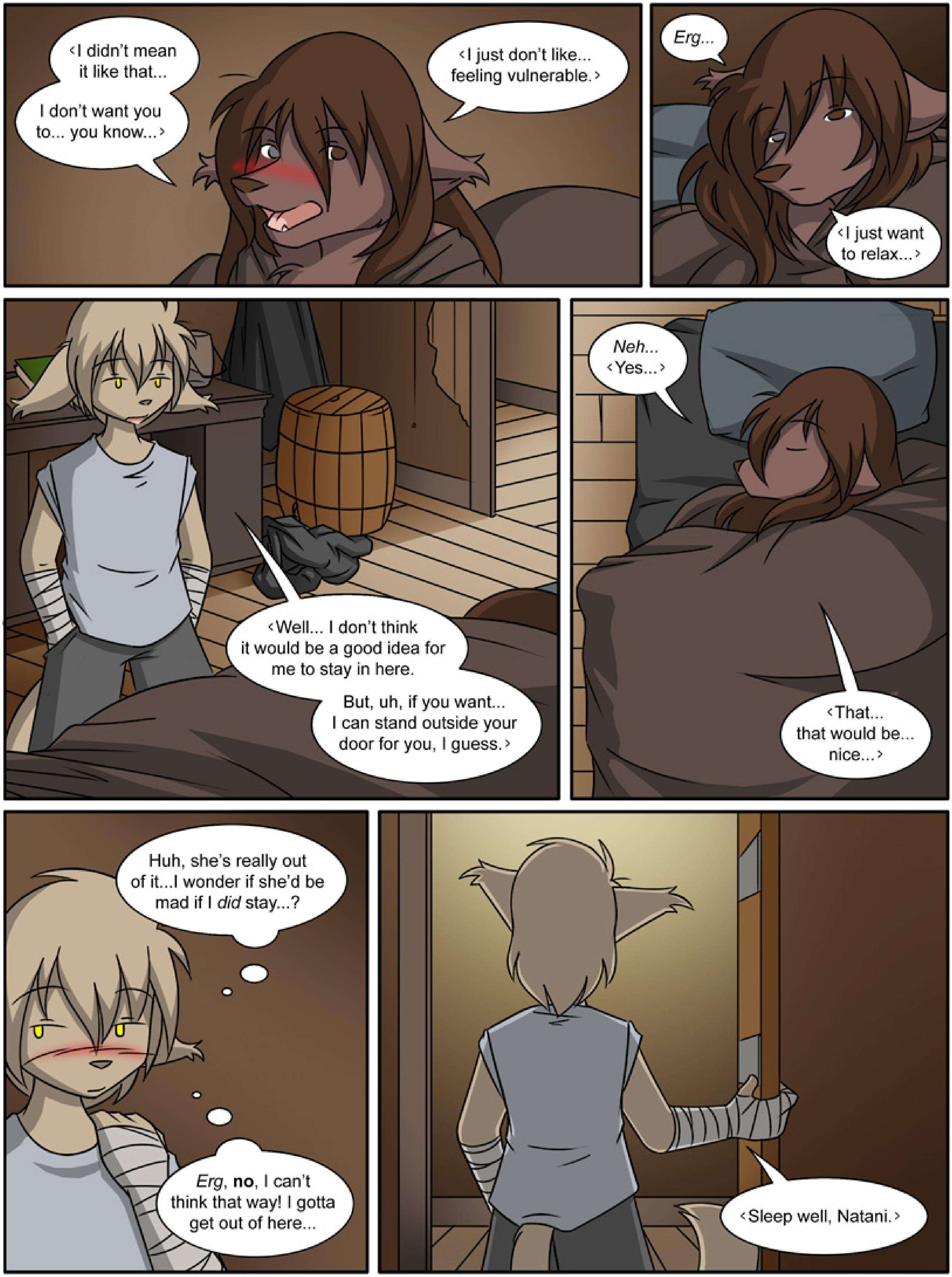

Uh... Natani?
What the—? There's a strong scent in here.
Strange, I can't tell what it is, though. I swear I recognize it from somewhere...
‹Thank goodness, it worked. I can mask the scent magically.
But I don't know how long I can hold it...›
‹His scent is... *ah*, no, don't think about it!›
‹Keith, haven't you ever heard of "privacy"?
I told you I don't want anyone in my room!›
‹Why did you barge in here?›
‹I just wanted to make sure you were okay!
Believe it or not, I usually enjoy talking with you.›
‹But if you don't want my help, then fine, I'll leave.›
‹You... were really concerned about me?›
‹Well yeah, I guess. Why not?›
‹I... don't know. I'm an assassin. Only my brother's ever cared about me.›

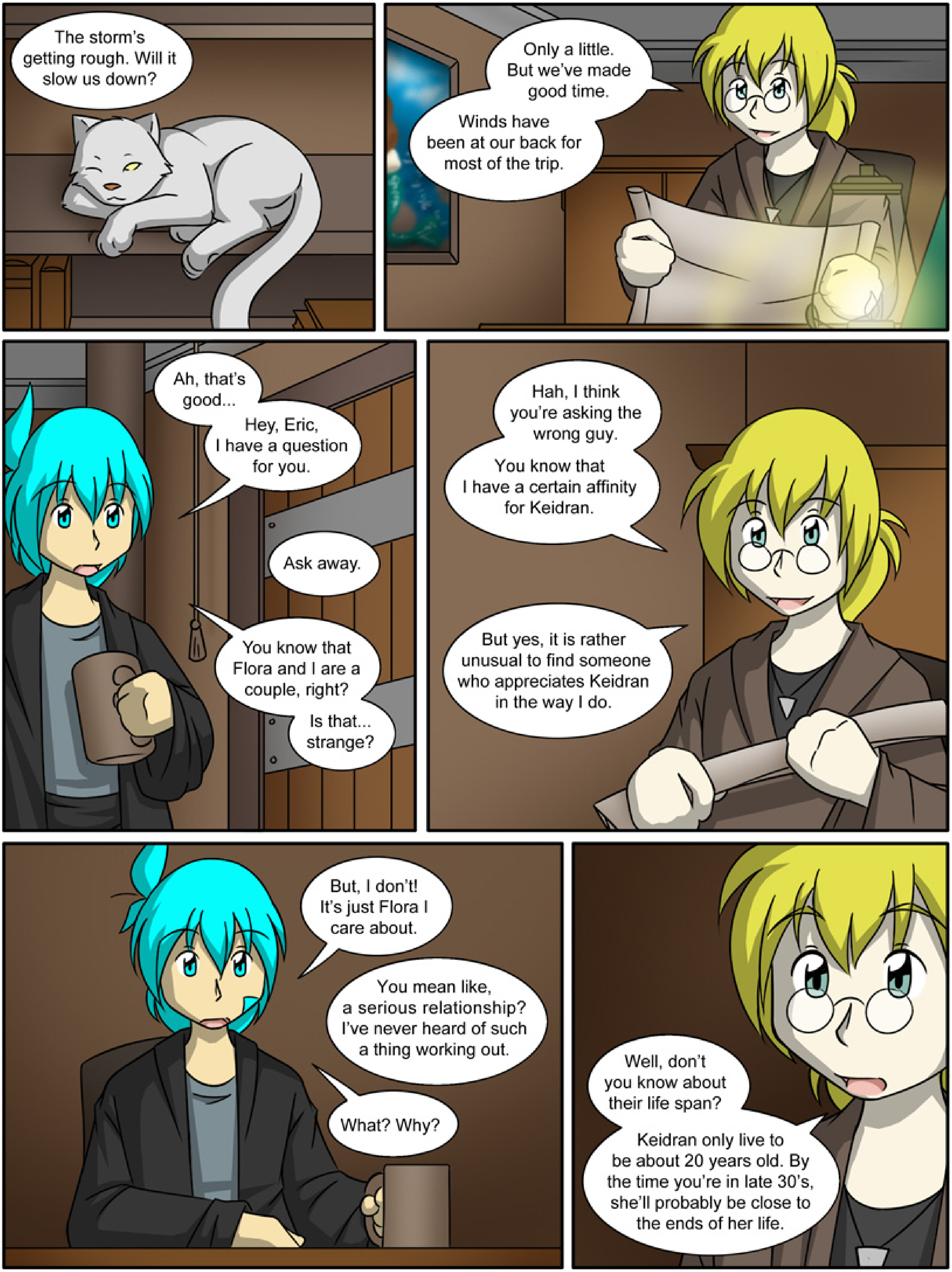

Aw, jeez, now I'm getting emotional.
I despise this body...
‹Nat, why are you so insistent on dealing with this by yourself?›
‹Well I...›
‹I know you're just helping me because you know I'm a girl.
You wouldn't be so eager if I was still a guy to you.›
‹Natani, that's *not* why I'm helping you!
If Trace was bedridden for two days, I'd help him too.›
‹Just because you're a "guy" doesn't mean you can't accept help.›
‹So, are you sure there isn't anything I can do to help you?›
‹Yes, Keith, I know how you can heal me!
Come over here and be a miracle-worker!›
‹*Urgh*, okay Keith, if you want to help me...
Get me something for my headache.›

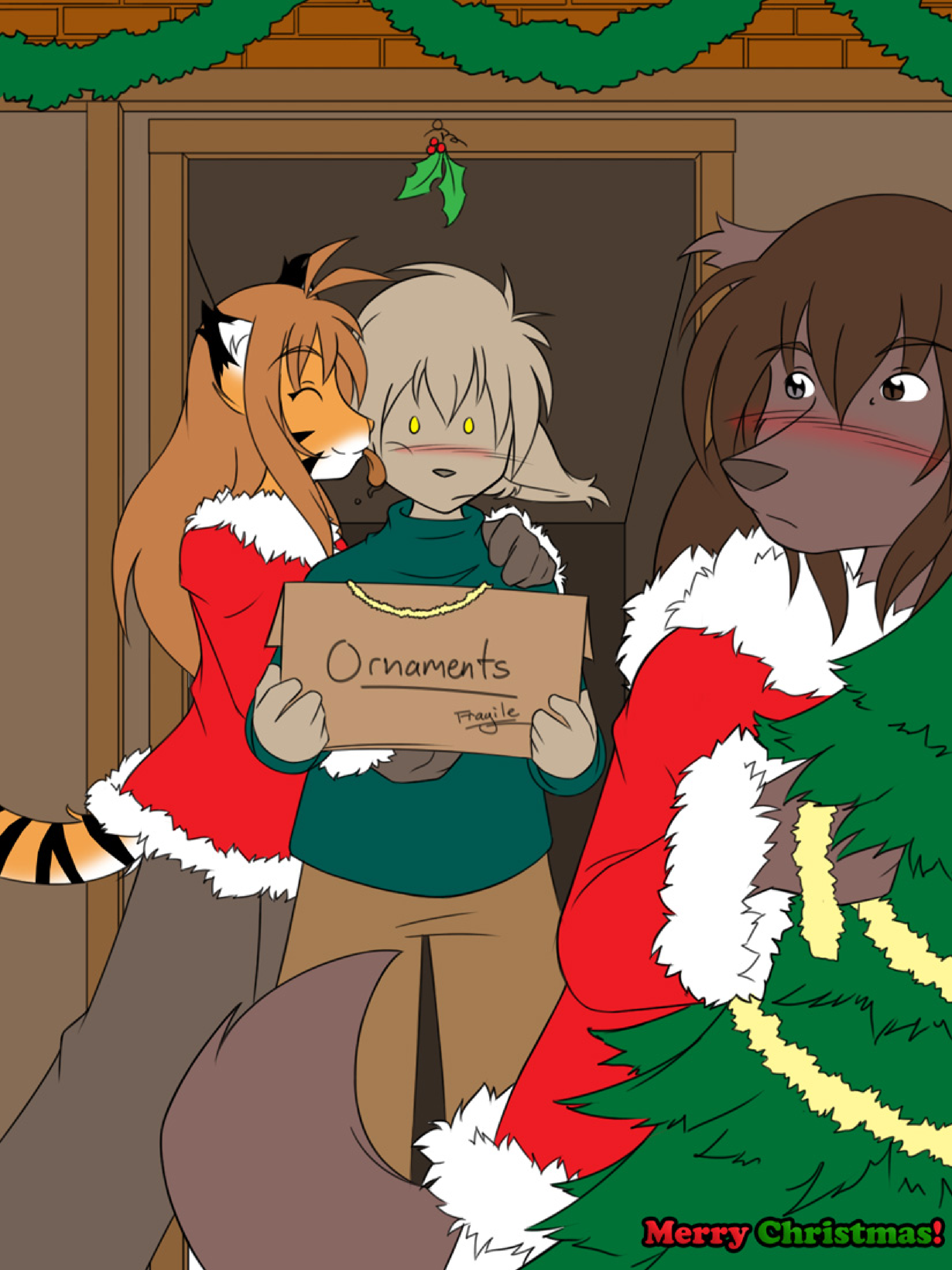

‹Now, this won't taste very good...›
‹But it should work quickly.›
Hurry up and then leave, this is torture!
‹Hey Nat...?›
Hm?
‹Are you wearing some sort of... perfume?›
‹What?! Why?›
‹I dunno... I keep sensing... some sort of scent, but I can't...›
‹...can't figure it out. You, *um*...›
‹Keith, why are you staring at me?›
‹I, *um*, I'm not. I'll just... finish making this...›
Jeez, what's wrong with me? I've never thought of Natani like that...
Why am I getting excited all of the sudden?


‹Here ya go, it's ready.›
‹Oh, thanks. *Um*, what does it do, again?›
‹Well, it should just help you relax. Might make you a little tired, too.›
‹*Bleh!* It tastes terrible!›
‹Heh, told you.›
‹How do you feel? It should work quickly.›
‹Eh, I feel a little better I guess. Not by much...›
‹Ah, well, I guess I should be going now. Take care of yourself, Nat. Call for me if you need—›
‹...*Eh?* Natani?
Hey, you okay?›
Nehm...

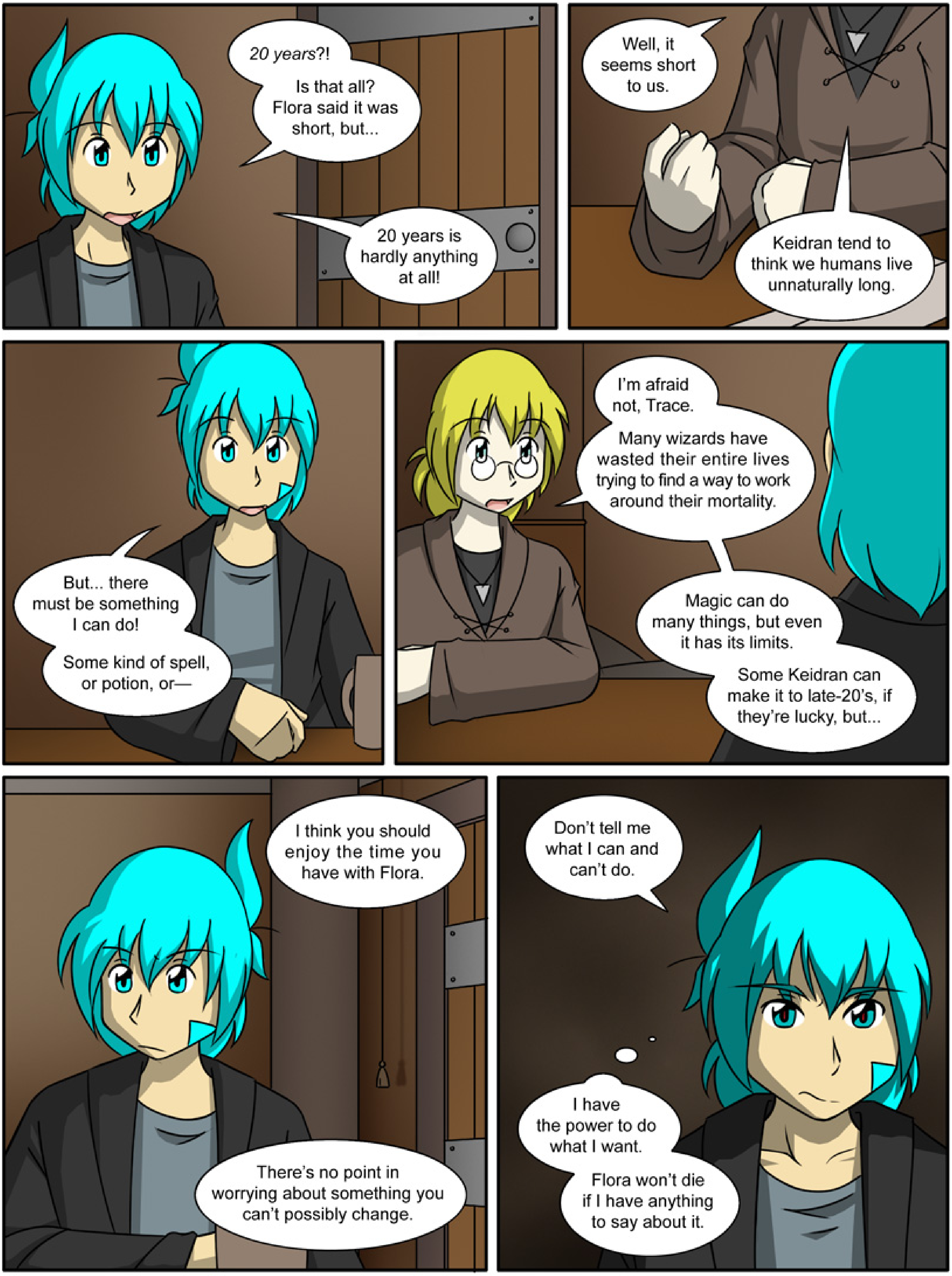

‹Wait... why didn't I recognize it before!
Natani, you... you're—›
Mmhm...
‹I... didn't want you to know... I didn't want anyone to know...
This problem is... a weakness.›
‹I've hardly slept at all in the last two days...›
‹I've been so stressed out... I finally feel relaxed now.
Thank you, Keith.›
‹*Um*, well, you're welcome.
I.. *uh*, I'd better leave now, I guess.›
Before I do something I'll regret— *ack!*
‹Keith, wait...›
‹Keith... please, can't you... stay with me tonight?›
‹Natani...! I, *uh*... I don't think that would be a good idea!›

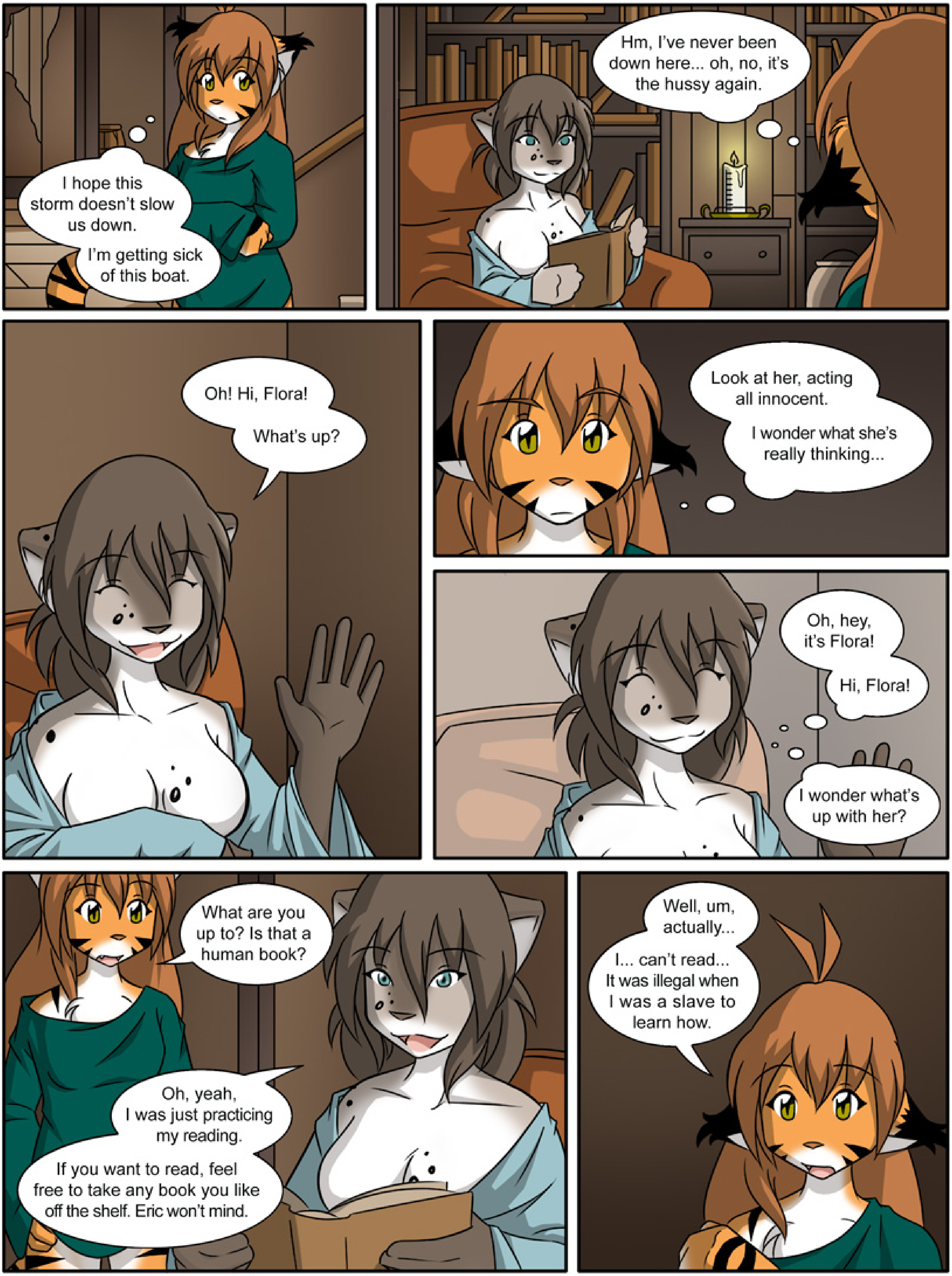

‹I didn't mean it like that...
I don't want you to... you know...›
‹I just don't like... feeling vulnerable.›
Erg...
‹I just want to relax...›
‹Well... I don't think it would be a good idea for me to stay in here.
But, uh, if you want... I can stand outside your door for you, I guess.›
Neh... ‹Yes...›
‹That... that would be... nice...›
Huh, she's really out of it...I wonder if she'd be mad if I *did* stay...?
Erg, **no**, I can't think that way! I gotta get out of here...
‹Sleep well, Natani.›

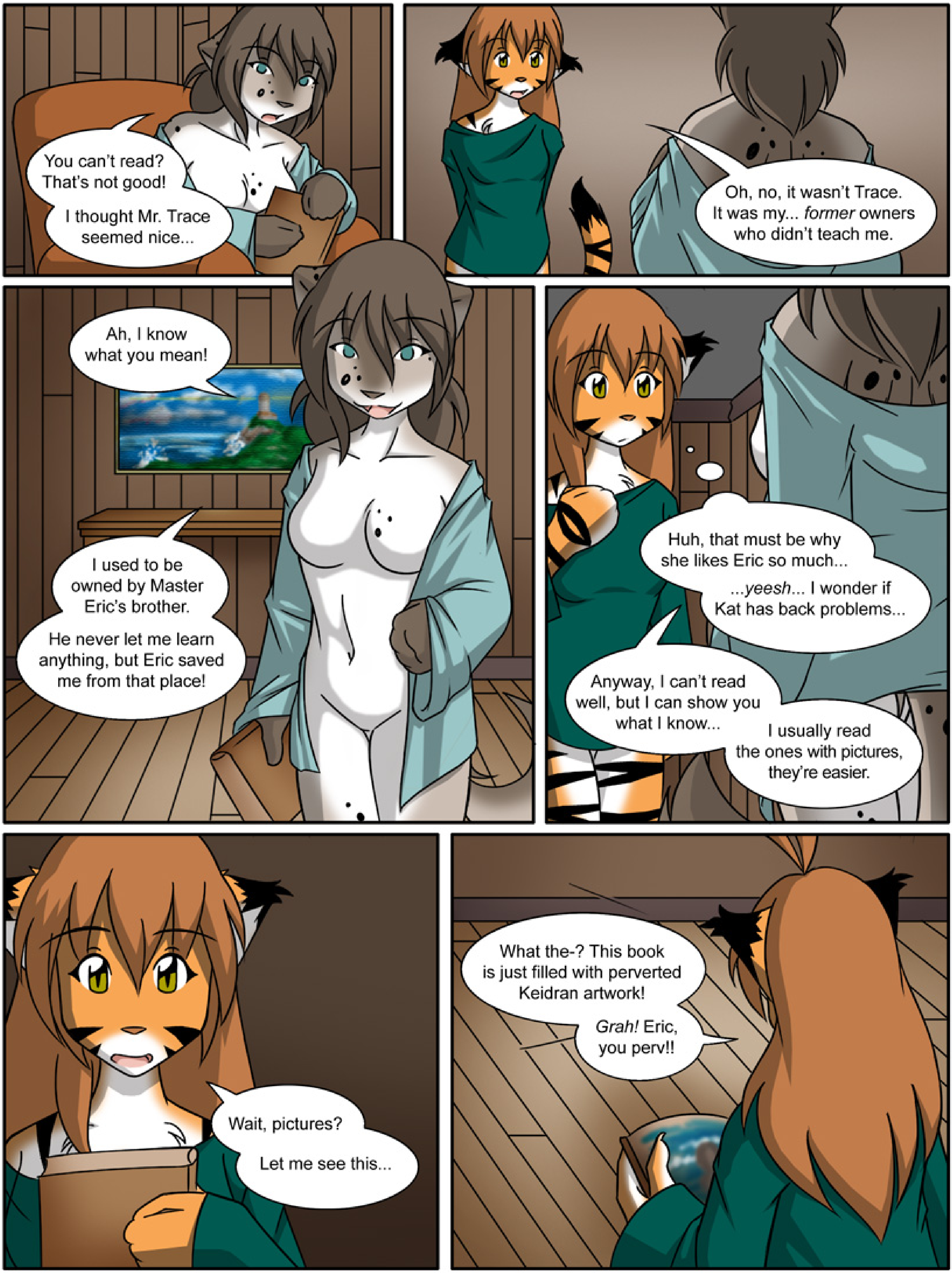

The storm's getting rough. Will it slow us down?
Only a little. But we've made good time.
Winds have been at our back for most of the trip.
Ah, that's good...
Hey, Eric, I have a question for you.
Ask away.
You know that Flora and I are a couple, right?
Is that... strange?
Hah, I think you're asking the wrong guy.
You know that I have a certain affinity for Keidran.
But yes, it is rather unusual to find someone who appreciates Keidran in the way I do.
But, I don't! It's just Flora I care about.
You mean like, a serious relationship? I've never heard of such a thing working out.
What? Why?
Well, don't you know about their life span?
Keidran only live to be about 20 years old. By the time you're in late 30's, she'll probably be close to the ends of her life.

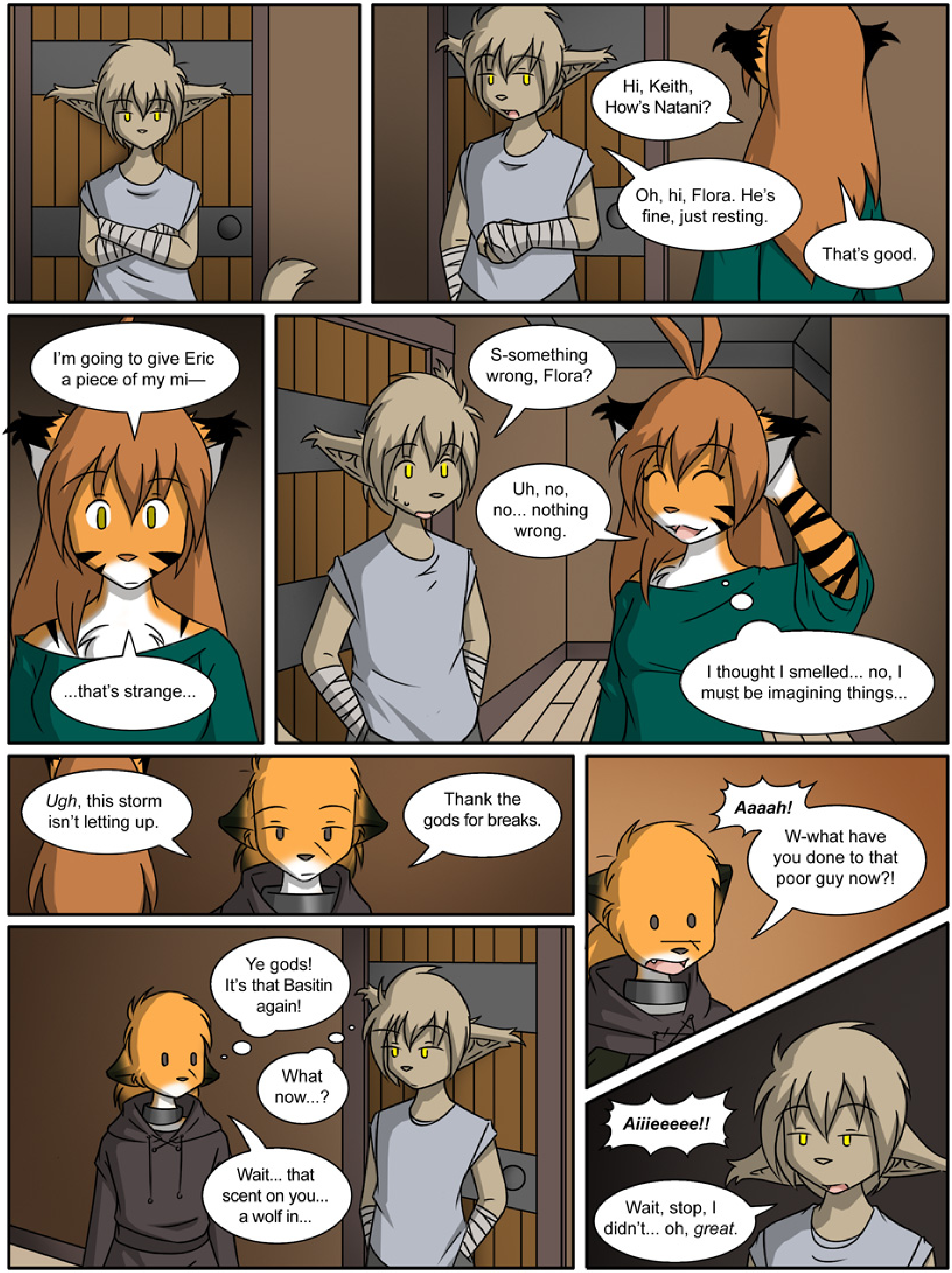

Ornaments
Fragile

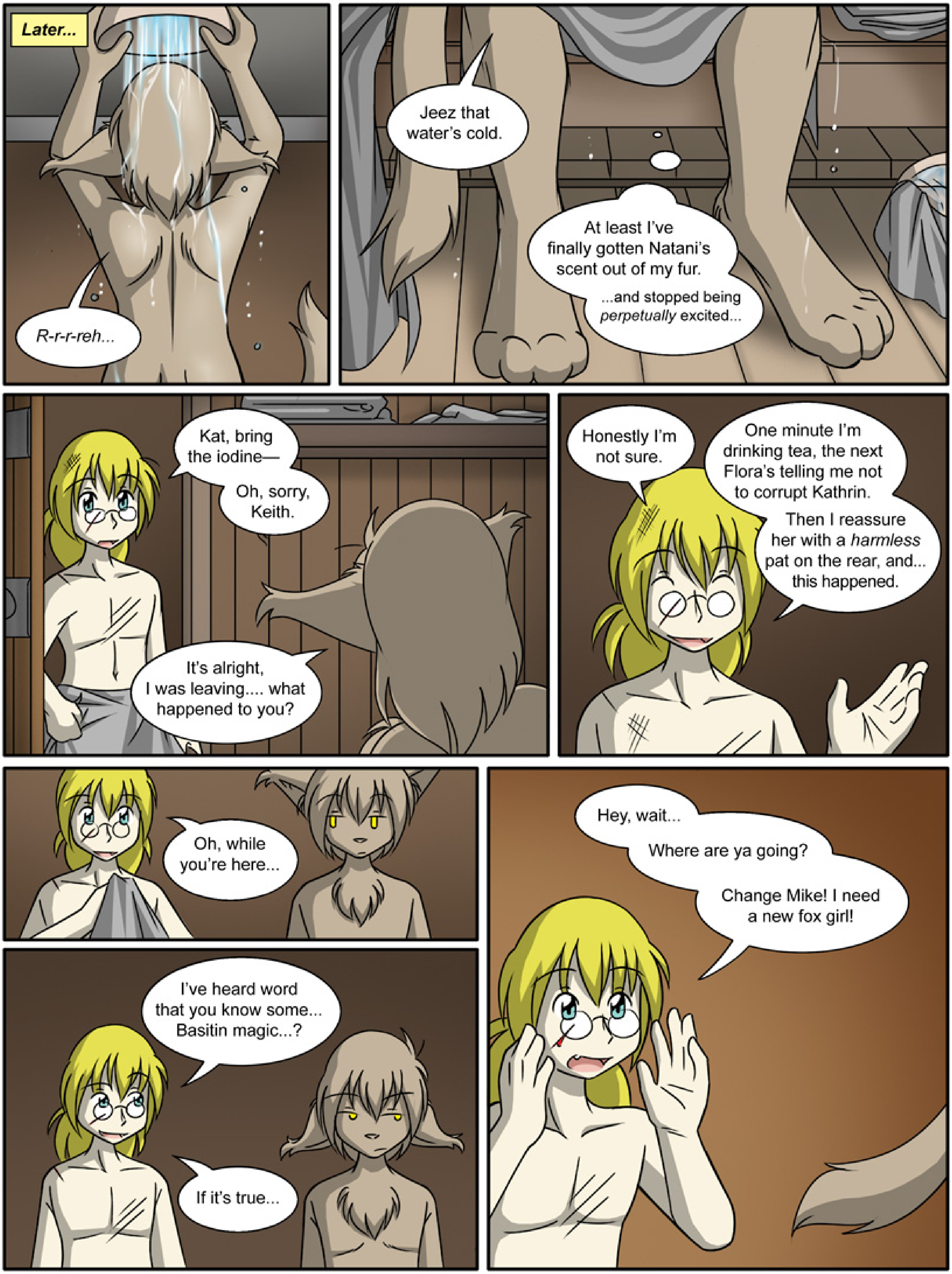
Merry Christmas!

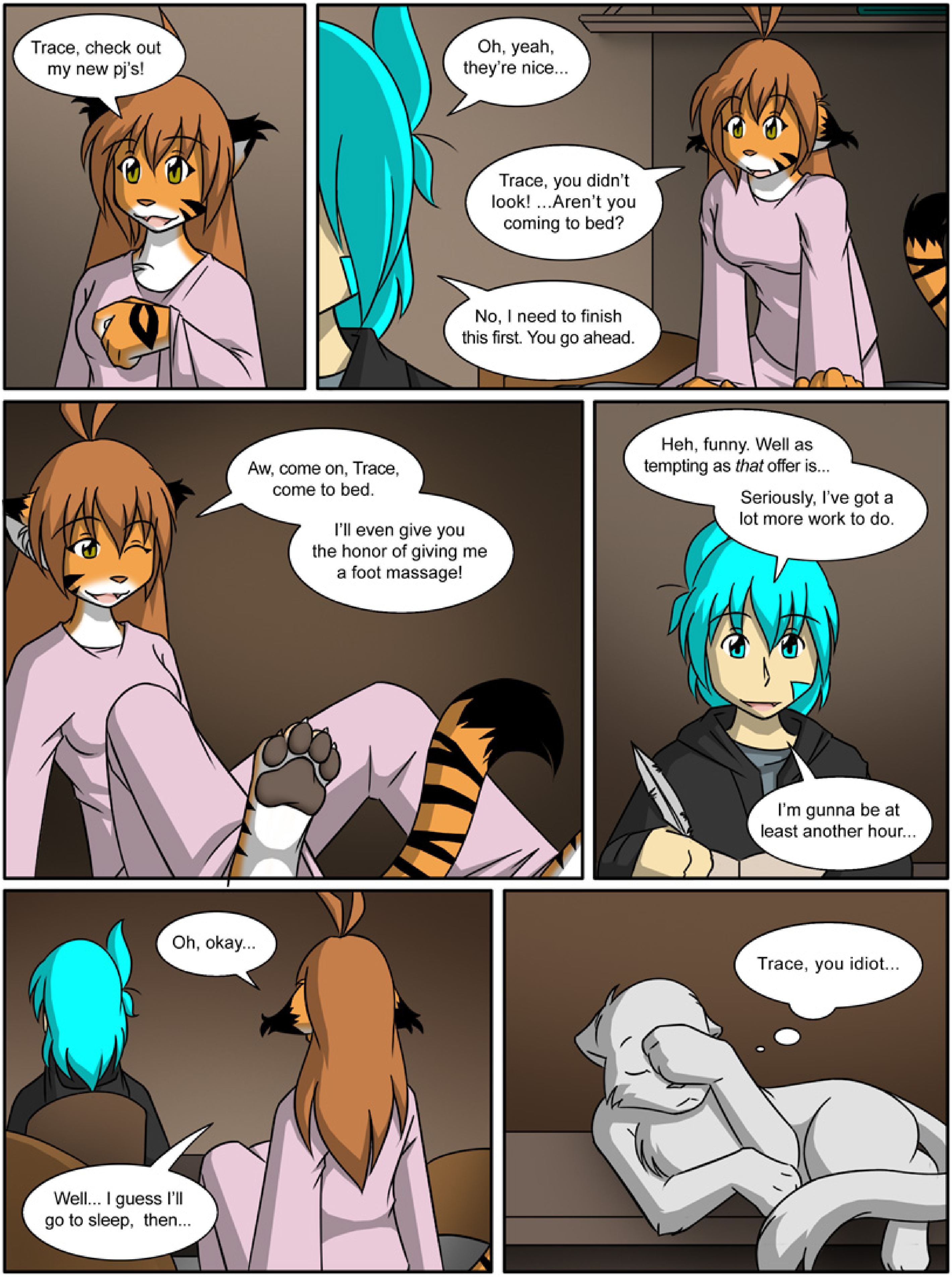

20 years?!
Is that all? Flora said it was short, but...
20 years is hardly anything at all!
Well, it seems short to us.
Keidran tend to think we humans live unnaturally long.
But... there must be something I can do!
Some kind of spell, or potion, or—
I'm afraid not, Trace.
Many wizards have wasted their entire lives trying to find a way to work around their mortality.
Magic can do many things, but even it has its limits.
Some Keidran can make it to late-20's, if they're lucky, but...
I think you should enjoy the time you have with Flora.
There's no point in worrying about something you can't possibly change.
Don't tell me what I can and can't do.
I have the power to do what I want.
Flora won't die if I have anything to say about it.

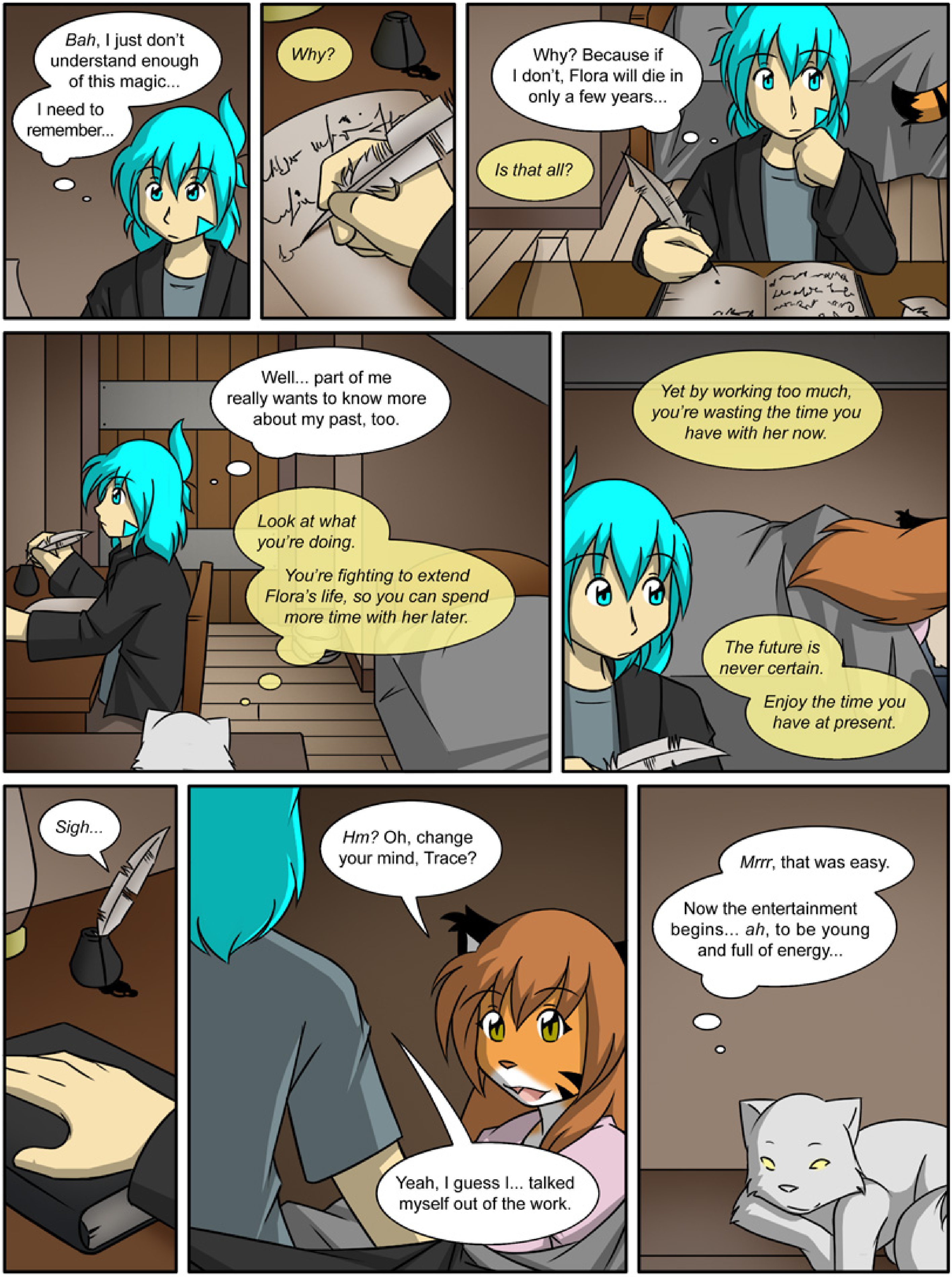

I hope this storm doesn't slow us down.
I'm getting sick of this boat.
Hm, I've never been down here... oh, no, it's the hussy again.
Oh! Hi, Flora!
What's up?
Look at her, acting all innocent.
I wonder what she's really thinking...
Oh, hey, it's Flora!
Hi, Flora!
I wonder what's up with her?
What are you up to? Is that a human book?
Oh, yeah, I was just practicing my reading.
If you want to read, feel free to take any book you like off the shelf. Eric won't mind.
Well, um, actually...
I... can't read... It was illegal when I was a slave to learn how.

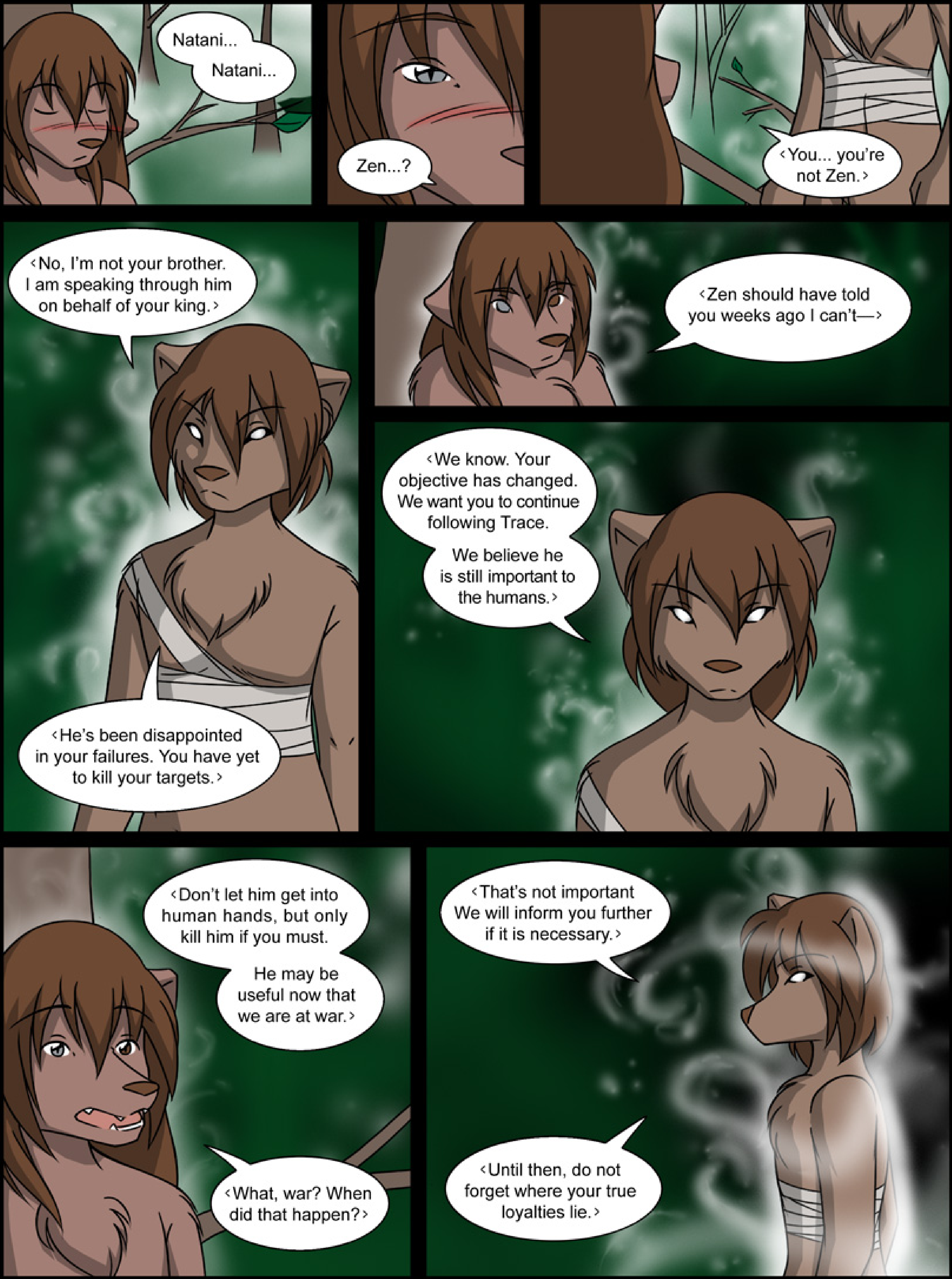

You can't read? That's not good!
I thought Mr. Trace seemed nice...
Oh, no, it wasn't Trace. It was my... *former* owners who didn't teach me.
Ah, I know what you mean!
I used to be owned by Master Eric's brother.
He never let me learn anything, but Eric saved me from that place!
Huh, that must be why she likes Eric so much...
...*yeesh*... I wonder if Kat has back problems...
Anyway, I can't read well, but I can show you what I know...
I usually read the ones with pictures, they're easier.
Wait, pictures?
Let me see this...
What the-? This book is just filled with perverted Keidran artwork!
Grah! Eric, you perv!!

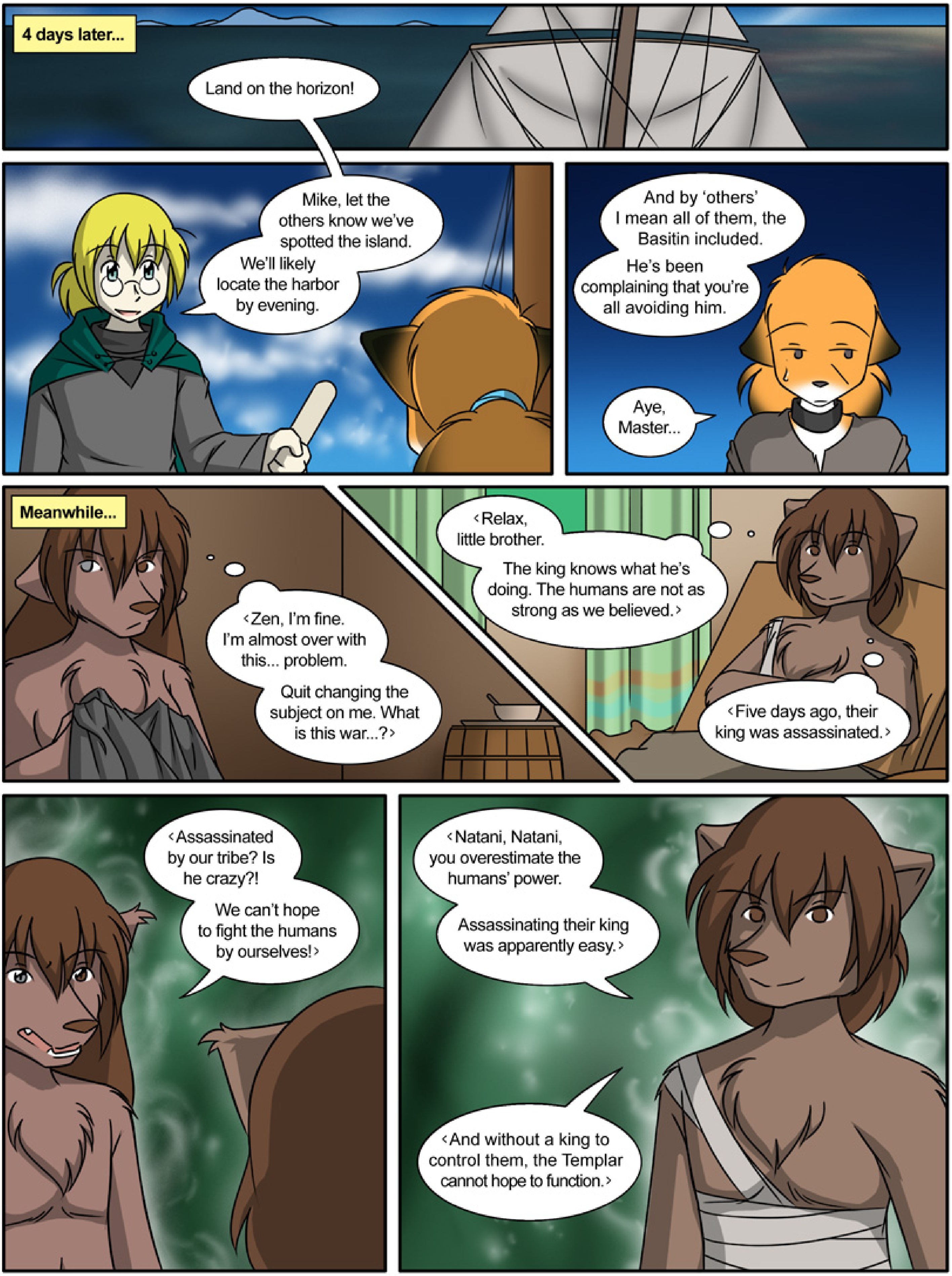

Hi, Keith, How's Natani?
Oh, hi, Flora. He's fine, just resting.
That's good.
I'm going to give Eric a piece of my mi—
...that's strange...
S-something wrong, Flora?
Uh, no, no... nothing wrong.
I thought I smelled... no, I must be imagining things...
Ugh, this storm isn't letting up.
Thank the gods for breaks.
Ye gods! It's that Basitin again!
What now...?
Wait... that scent on you... a wolf in...
Aaaah!
W-what have you done to that poor guy now?!
Aiiieeeee!!
Wait, stop, I didn't... oh, *great*.

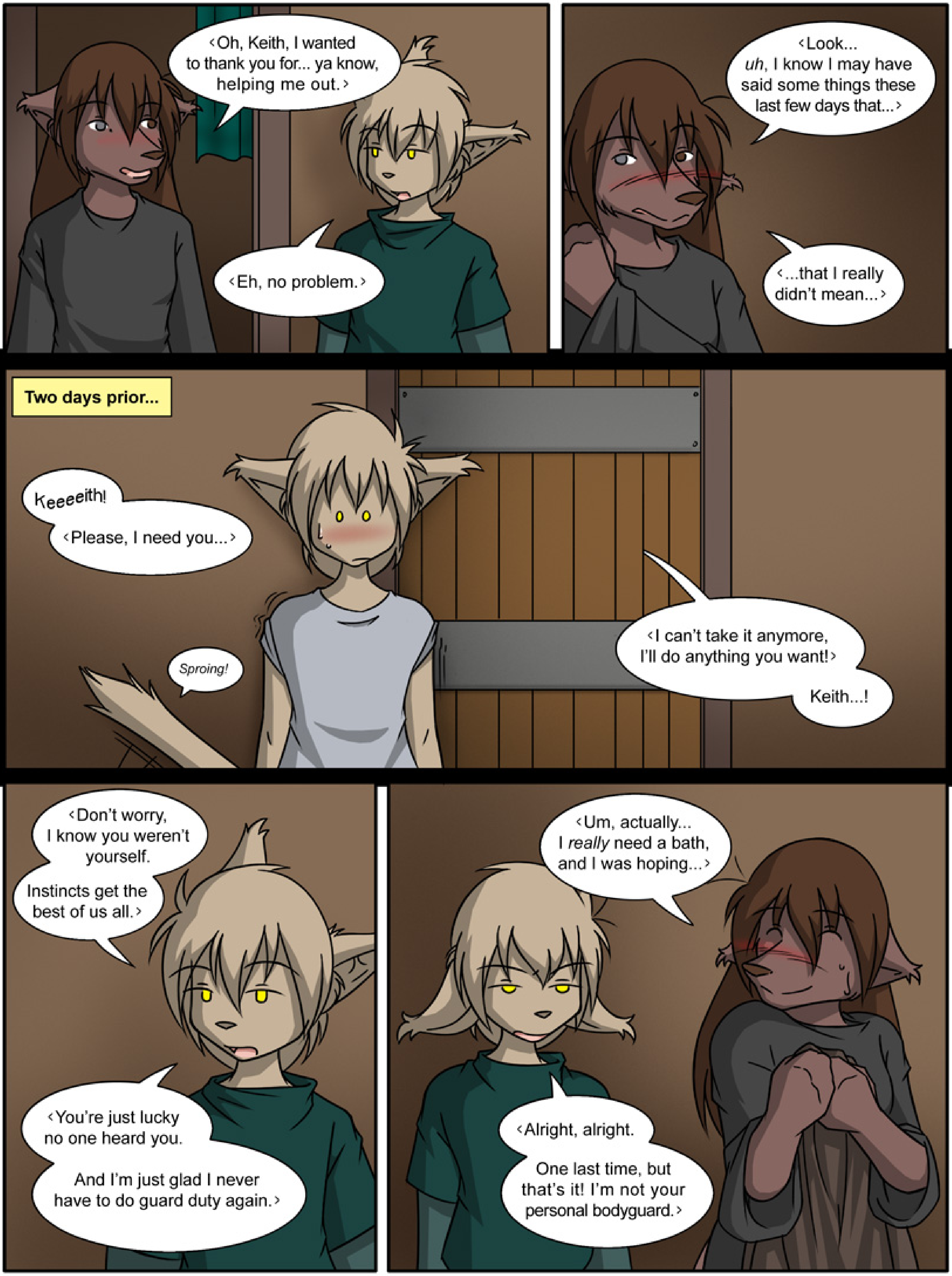

Later...
R-r-r-reh...
Jeez that water's cold.
At least I've finally gotten Natani's scent out of my fur.
...and stopped being *perpetually* excited...
Kat, bring the iodine—
Oh, sorry, Keith.
It's alright, I was leaving.... what happened to you?
Honestly I'm not sure.
One minute I'm drinking tea, the next Flora's telling me not to corrupt Kathrin.
Then I reassure her with a *harmless* pat on the rear, and... this happened.
Oh, while you're here...
I've heard word that you know some... Basitin magic...?
If it's true...
Hey, wait...
Where are ya going?
Change Mike! I need a new fox girl!


Trace, check out my new pj's!
Oh, yeah, they're nice...
Trace, you didn't look! ...Aren't you coming to bed?
No, I need to finish this first. You go ahead.
Aw, come on, Trace, come to bed.
I'll even give you the honor of giving me a foot massage!
Heh, funny. Well as tempting as *that* offer is...
Seriously, I've got a lot more work to do.
I'm gunna be at least another hour...
Oh, okay...
Well... I guess I'll go to sleep, then...
Trace, you idiot...

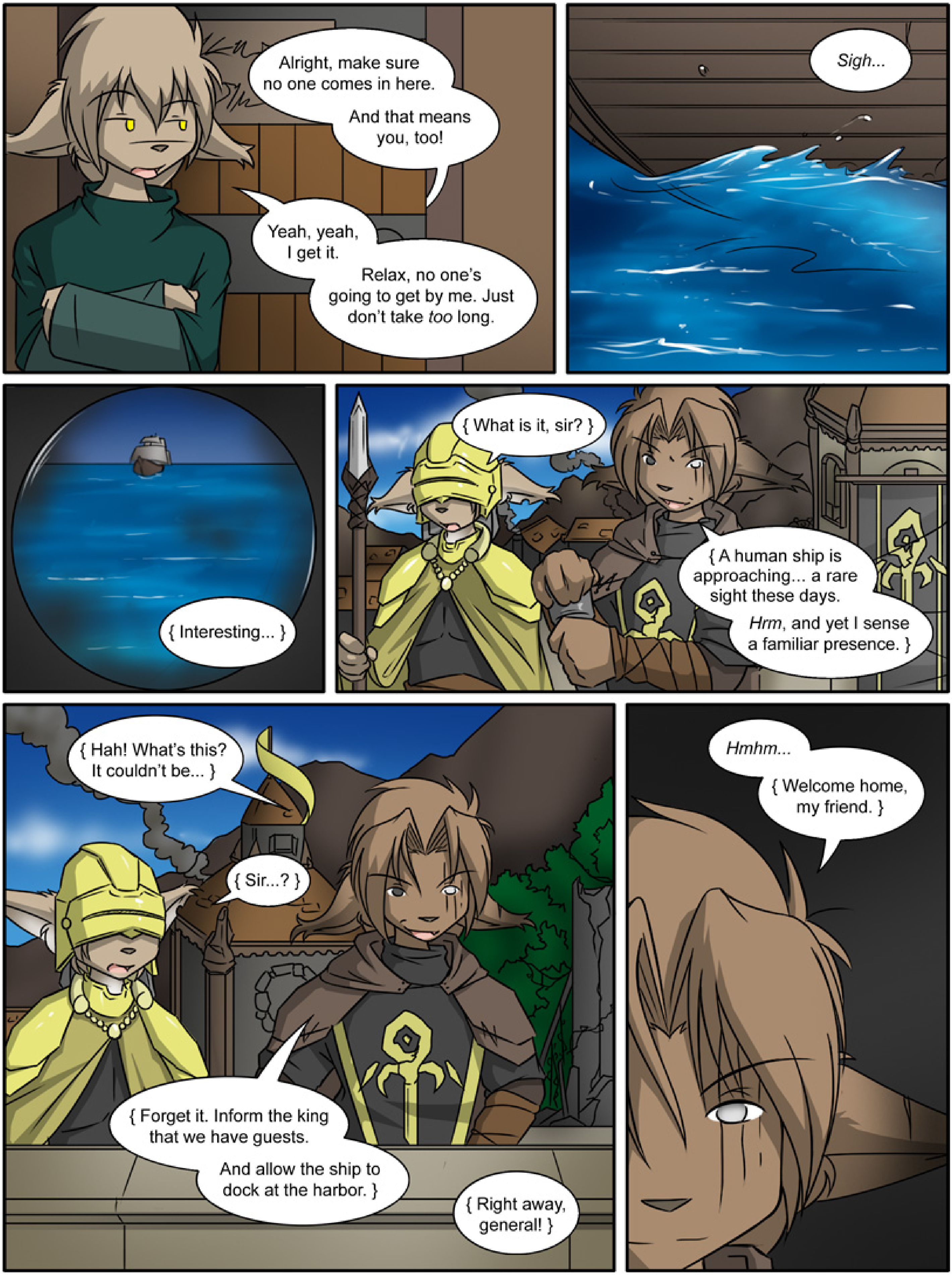

Bah, I just don't understand enough of this magic...
I need to remember...
Why?
Why? Because if I don't, Flora will die in only a few years...
Is that all?
Well... part of me really wants to know more about my past, too.
Look at what you're doing.
You're fighting to extend Flora's life, so you can spend more time with her later.
Yet by working too much, you're wasting the time you have with her now.
The future is never certain.
Enjoy the time you have at present.
Sigh...
Hm? Oh, change your mind, Trace?
Yeah, I guess I... talked myself out of the work.
Mrrr, that was easy.
Now the entertainment begins... ah, to be young and full of energy...

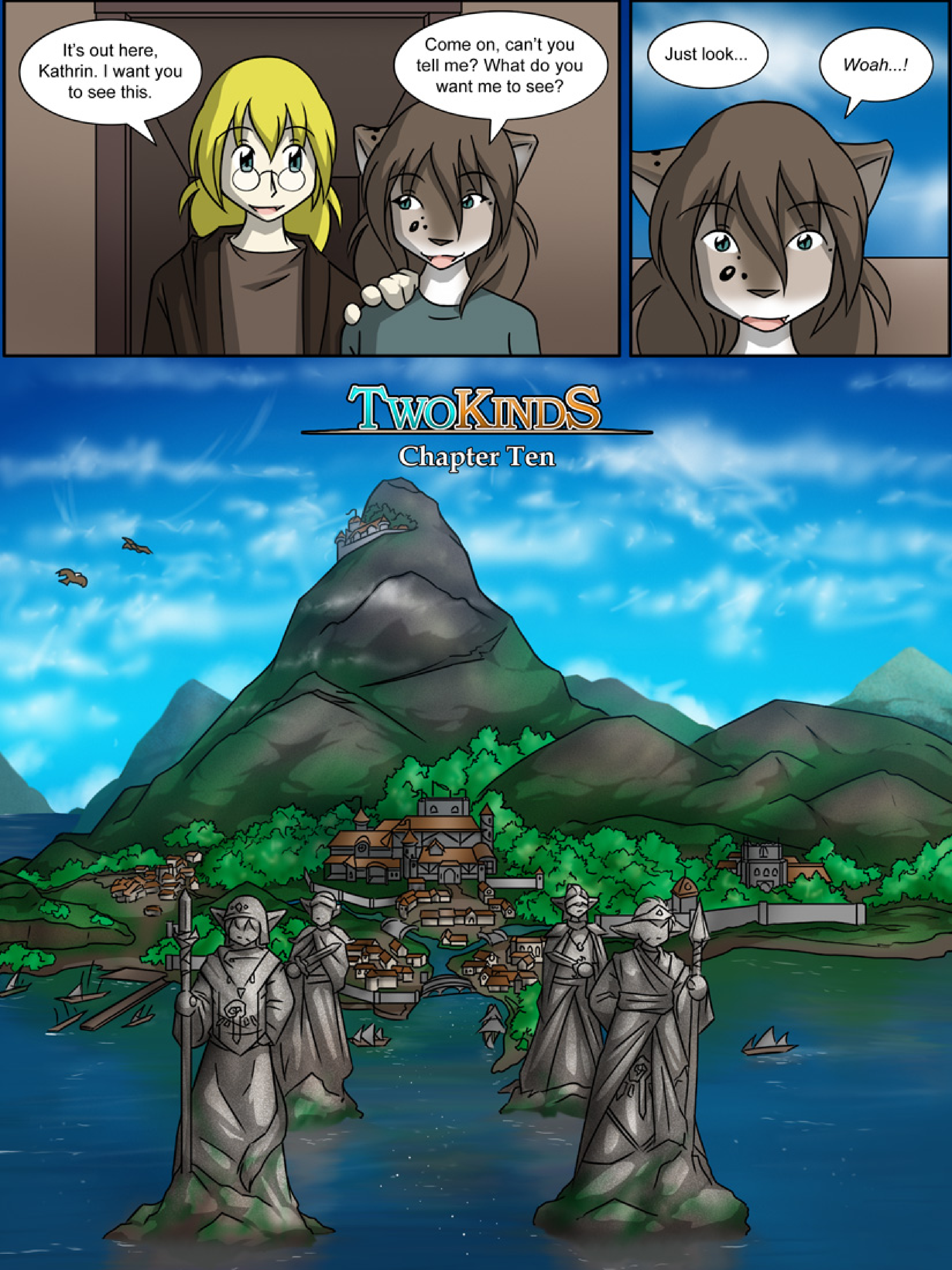

Natani...
Natani...
Zen...?
<You... you're not Zen.>
<No, I'm not your brother. I am speaking through him on behalf of your king.>
<He's been disappointed in your failures. You have yet to kill your targets.>
<Zen should have told you weeks ago I can't—>
<We know. Your objective has changed. We want you to continue following Trace.
We believe he is still important to the humans.>
<Don't let him get into human hands, but only kill him if you must.
He may be useful now that we are at war.>
<What, war? When did that happen?>
<That's not important We will inform you further if it is necessary.>
<Until then, do not forget where your true loyalties lie.>

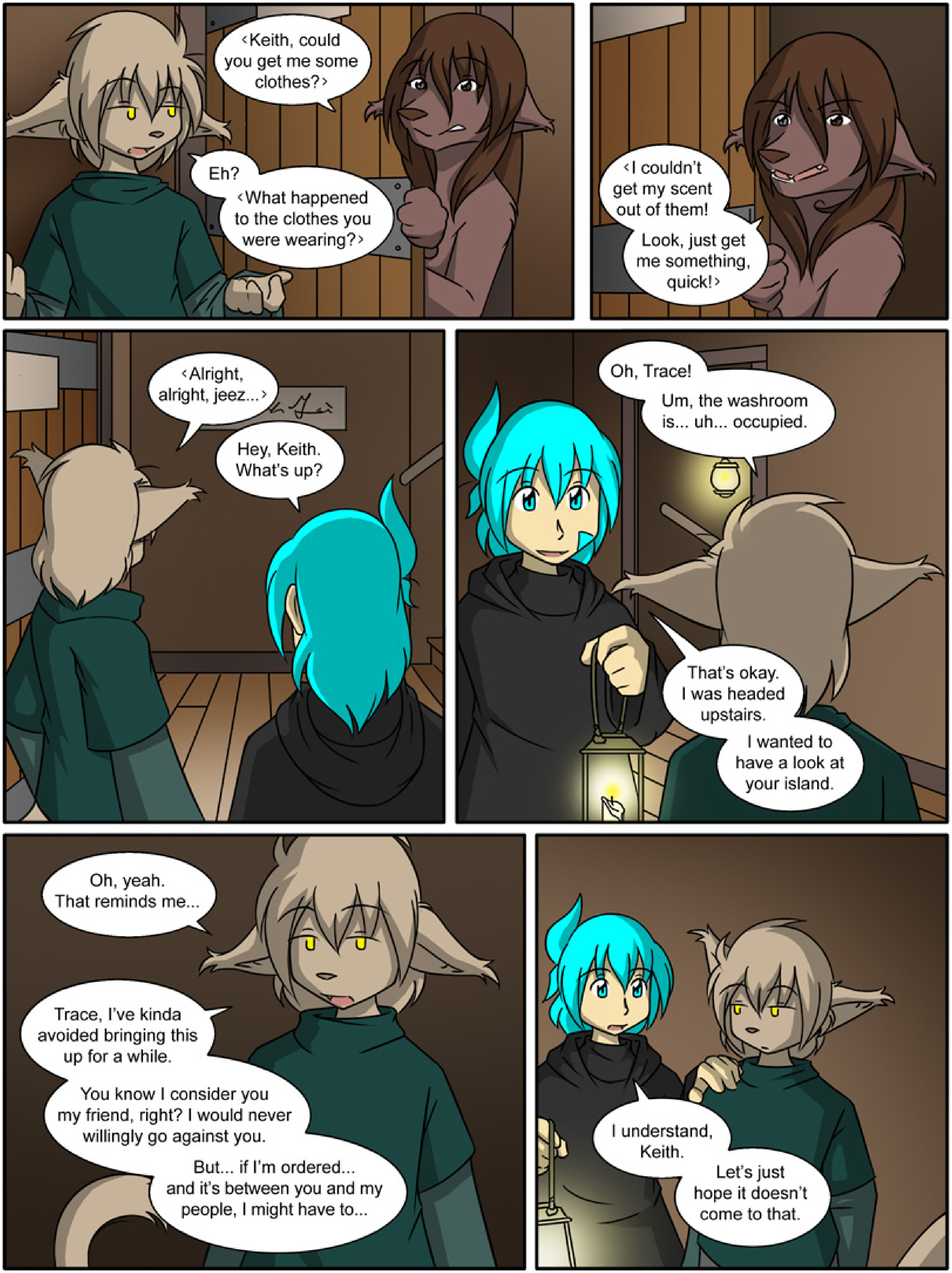

4 days later...
Land on the horizon!
Mike, let the others know we've spotted the island.
We'll likely locate the harbor by evening.
And by 'others' I mean all of them, the Basitin included.
He's been complaining that you're all avoiding him.
Aye, Master...
Meanwhile...
<Zen, I'm fine. I'm almost over with this... problem.
Quit changing the subject on me. What is this war...?>
<Relax, little brother.
The king knows what he's doing. The humans are not as strong as we believed.>
<Five days ago, their king was assassinated.>
<Assassinated by our tribe? Is he crazy?!
We can't hope to fight the humans by ourselves!>
<Natani, Natani, you overestimate the humans' power.
Assassinating their king was apparently easy.>
<And without a king to control them, the Templar cannot hope to function.>

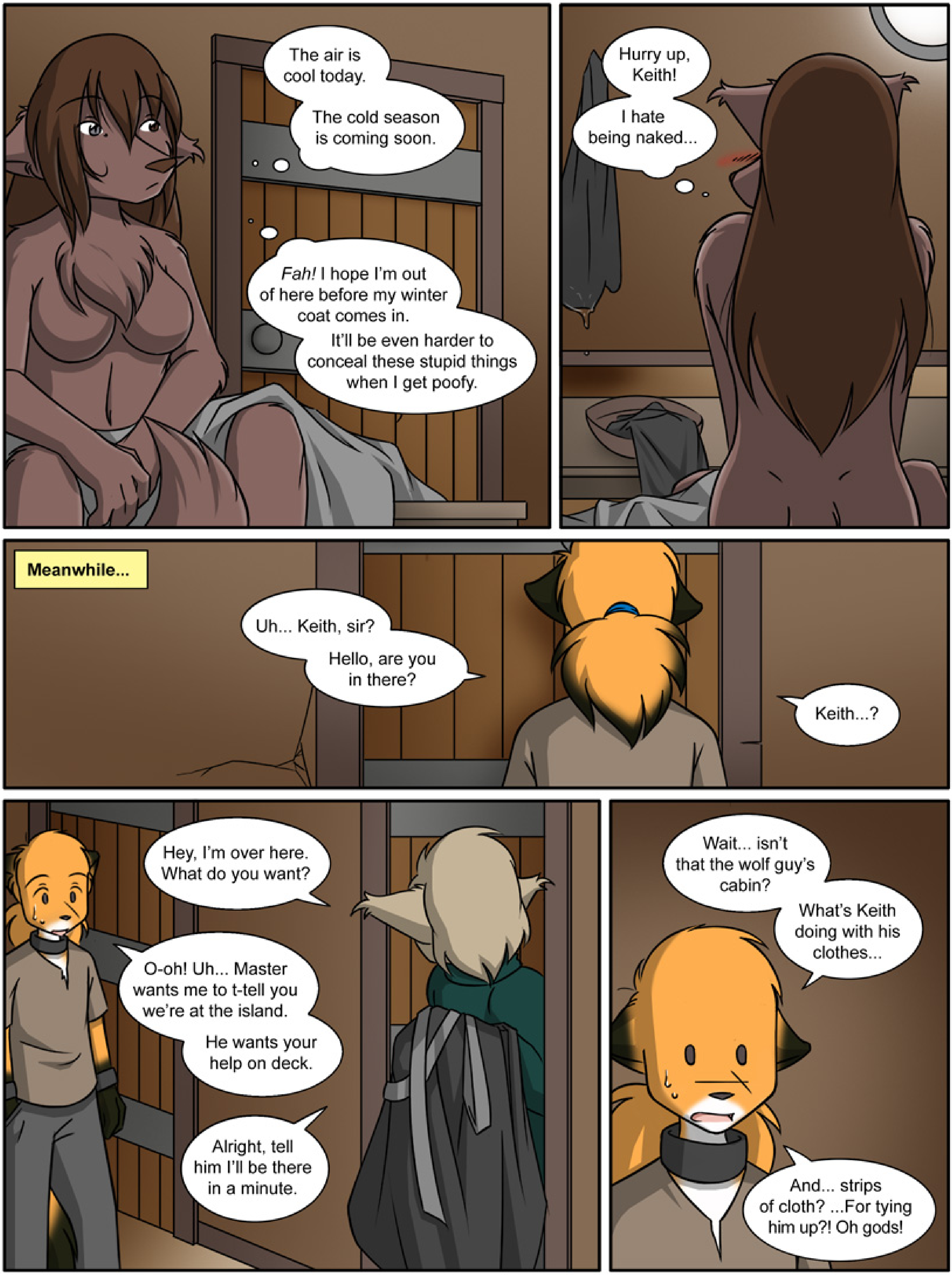

‹Oh, Keith, I wanted to thank you for... ya know, helping me out.›
‹Eh, no problem.›
‹Look... *uh*, I know I may have said some things these last few days that...›
‹...that I really didn't mean...›
Two days prior...
Keeeeith!
‹Please, I need you...›
Sproing!
‹I can't take it anymore, I'll do anything you want!›
Keith...!
‹Don't worry, I know you weren't yourself.
Instincts get the best of us all.›
‹You're just lucky no one heard you.
And I'm just glad I never have to do guard duty again.›
‹Um, actually... I *really* need a bath, and I was hoping...›
‹Alright, alright.
One last time, but that's it! I'm not your personal bodyguard.›

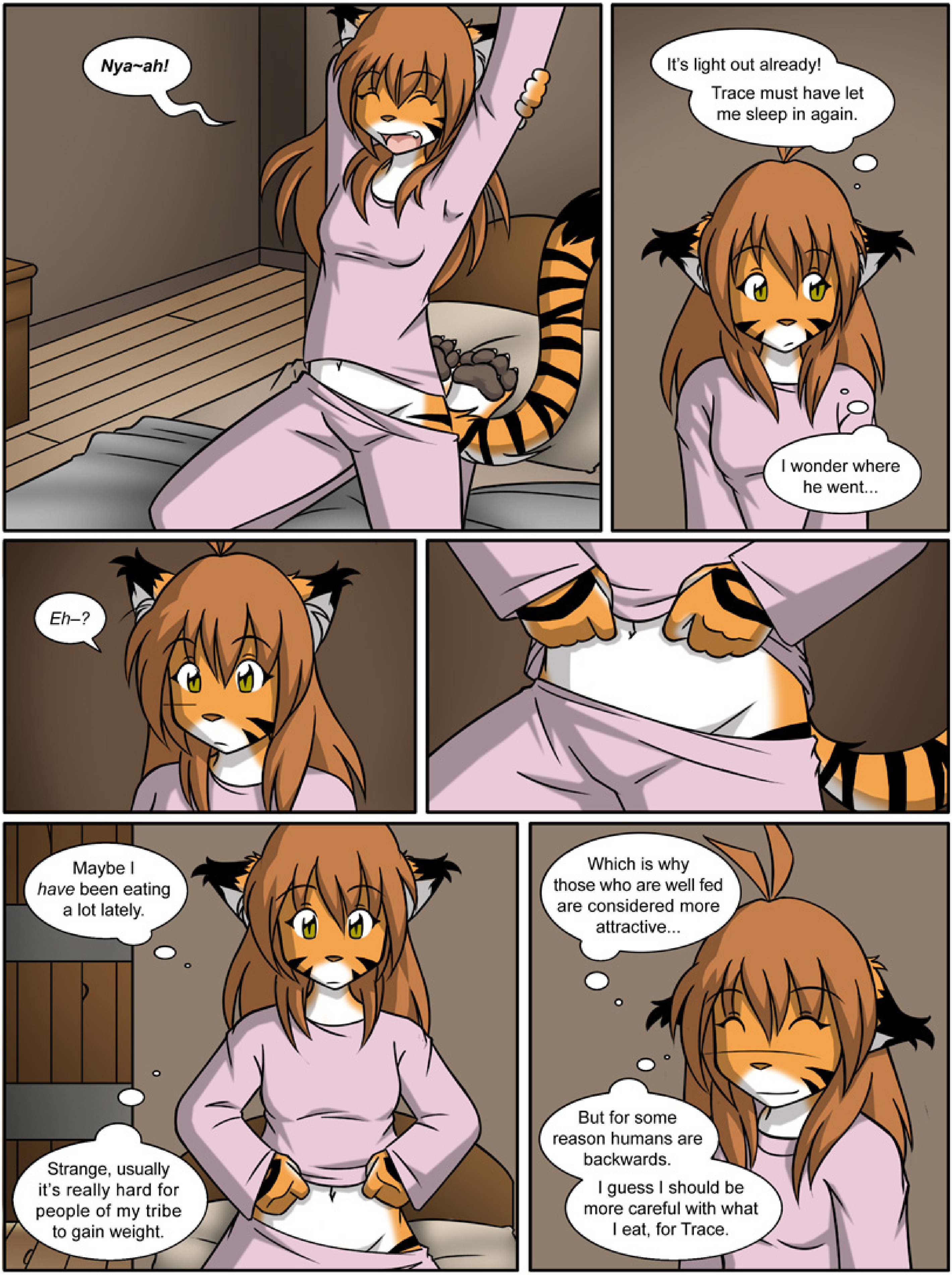
Updated News Below
▼

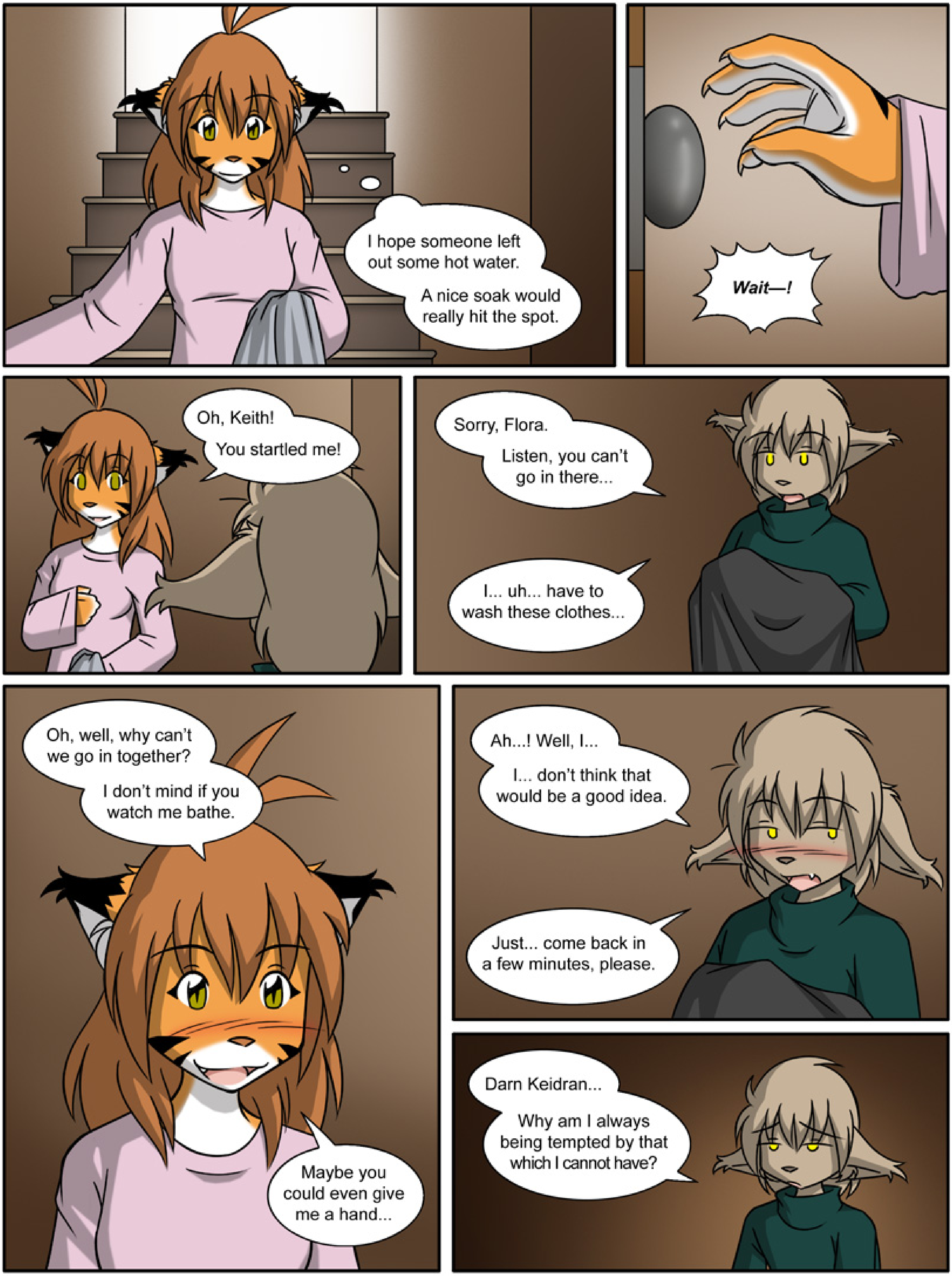

Alright, make sure no one comes in here.
And that means you, too!
Yeah, yeah, I get it.
Relax, no one's going to get by me. Just don't take *too* long.
Sigh...
{ Interesting... }
{ What is it, sir? }
{ A human ship is approaching... a rare sight these days.
Hrm, and yet I sense a familiar presence. }
{ Hah! What's this? It couldn't be... }
{ Sir...? }
{ Forget it. Inform the king that we have guests.
And allow the ship to dock at the harbor. }
{ Right away, general! }
Hmhm...
{ Welcome home, my friend. }

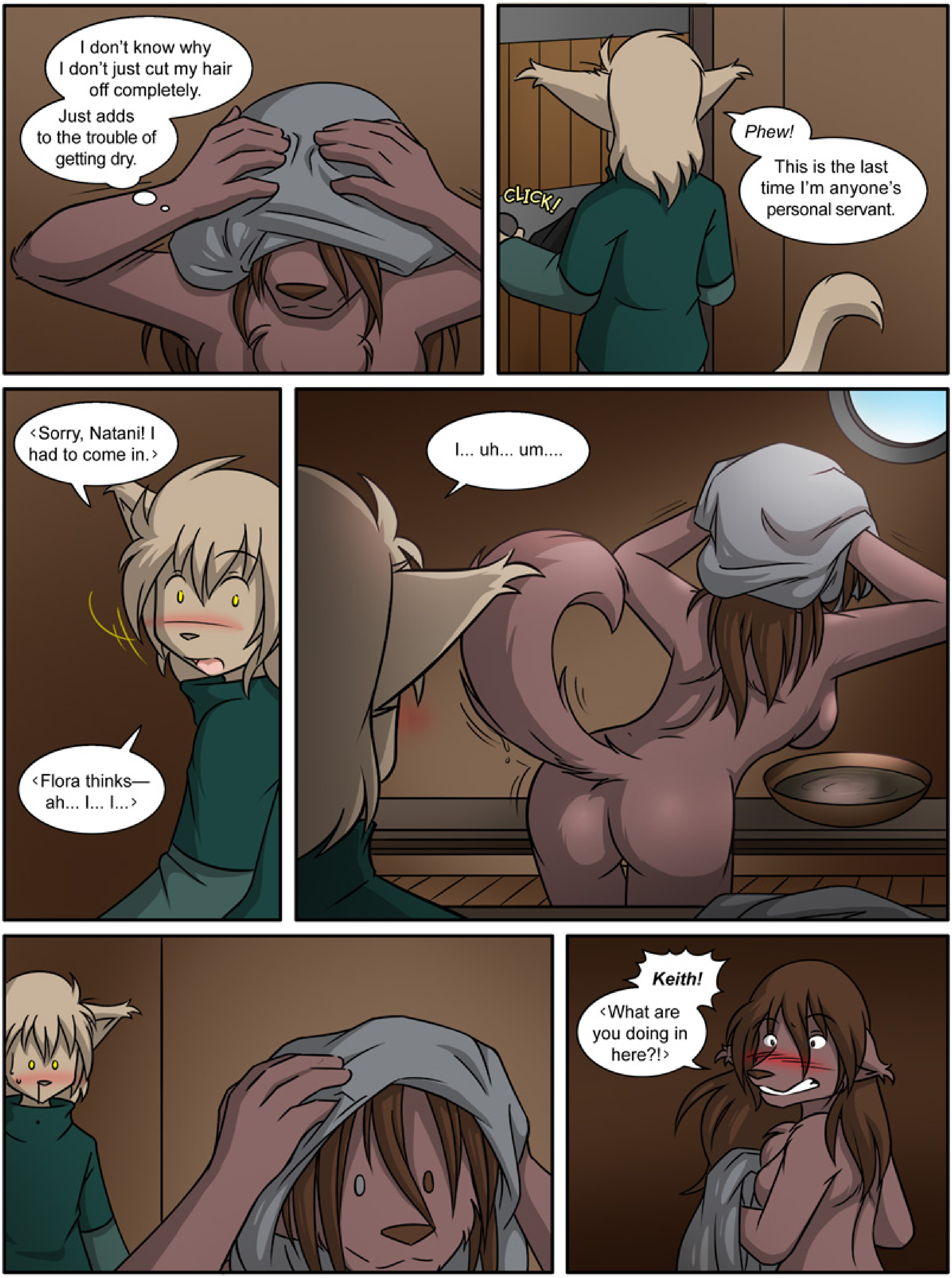

It's out here, Kathrin. I want you to see this.
Come on, can't you tell me? What do you want me to see?
Just look...
Woah...!
TwoKinds
Chapter Ten

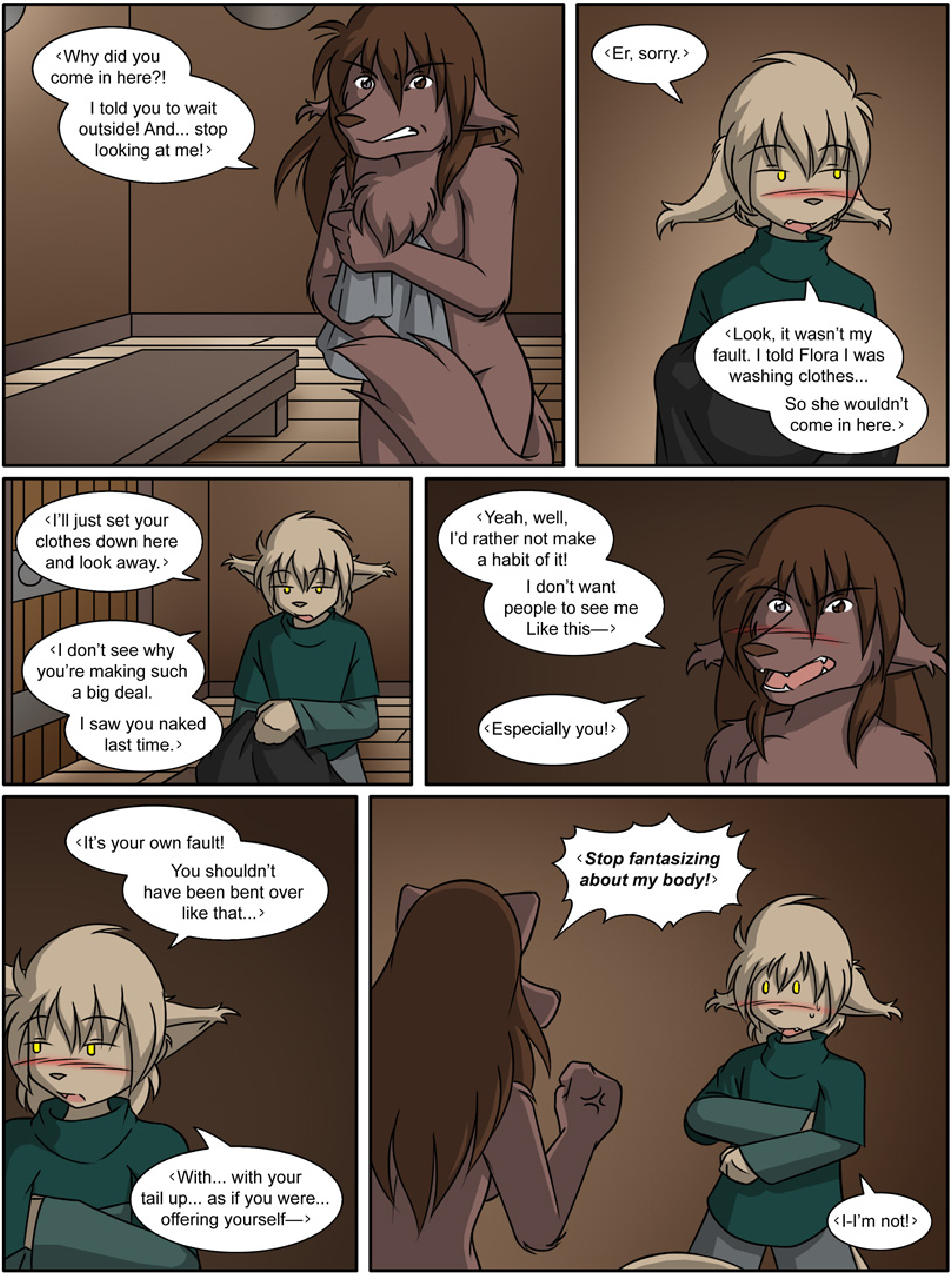

‹Keith, could you get me some clothes?›
Eh?
‹What happened to the clothes you were wearing?›
‹I couldn't get my scent out of them!
Look, just get me something, quick!›
‹Alright, alright, jeez...›
Hey, Keith. What's up?
Oh, Trace!
Um, the washroom is... uh... occupied.
That's okay. I was headed upstairs.
I wanted to have a look at your island.
Oh, yeah. That reminds me...
Trace, I've kinda avoided bringing this up for a while.
You know I consider you my friend, right? I would never willingly go against you.
But... if I'm ordered... and it's between you and my people, I might have to...
I understand, Keith.
Let's just hope it doesn't come to that.

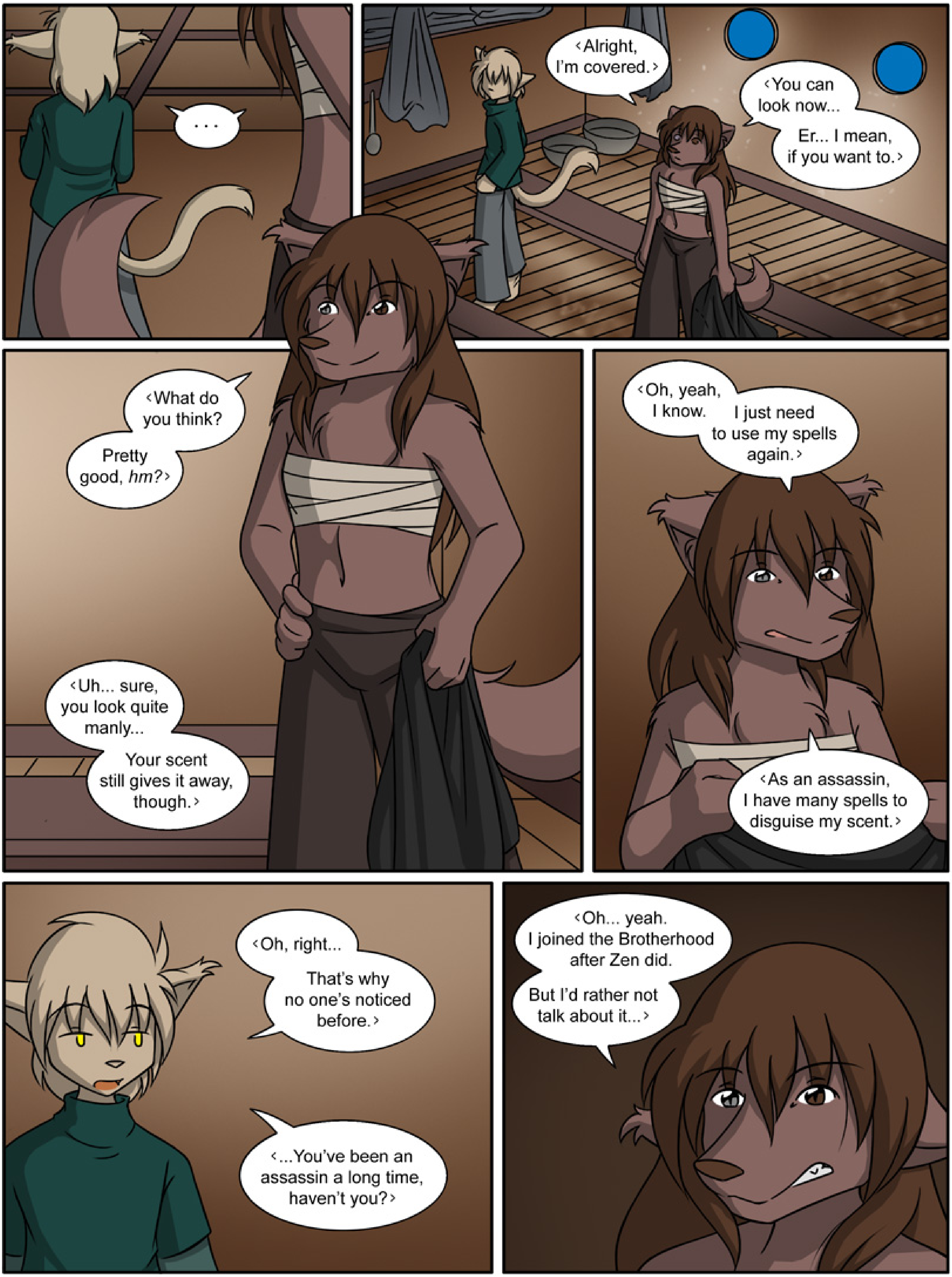

The air is cool today.
The cold season is coming soon.
Fah! I hope I'm out of here before my winter coat comes in.
It'll be even harder to conceal these stupid things when I get poofy.
Hurry up, Keith!
I hate being naked...
Meanwhile...
Uh... Keith, sir?
Hello, are you in there?
Keith...?
Hey, I'm over here. What do you want?
O-oh! Uh... Master wants me to t-tell you we're at the island.
He wants your help on deck.
Alright, tell him I'll be there in a minute.
Wait... isn't that the wolf guy's cabin?
What's Keith doing with his clothes...
And... strips of cloth? ...For tying him up?! Oh gods!

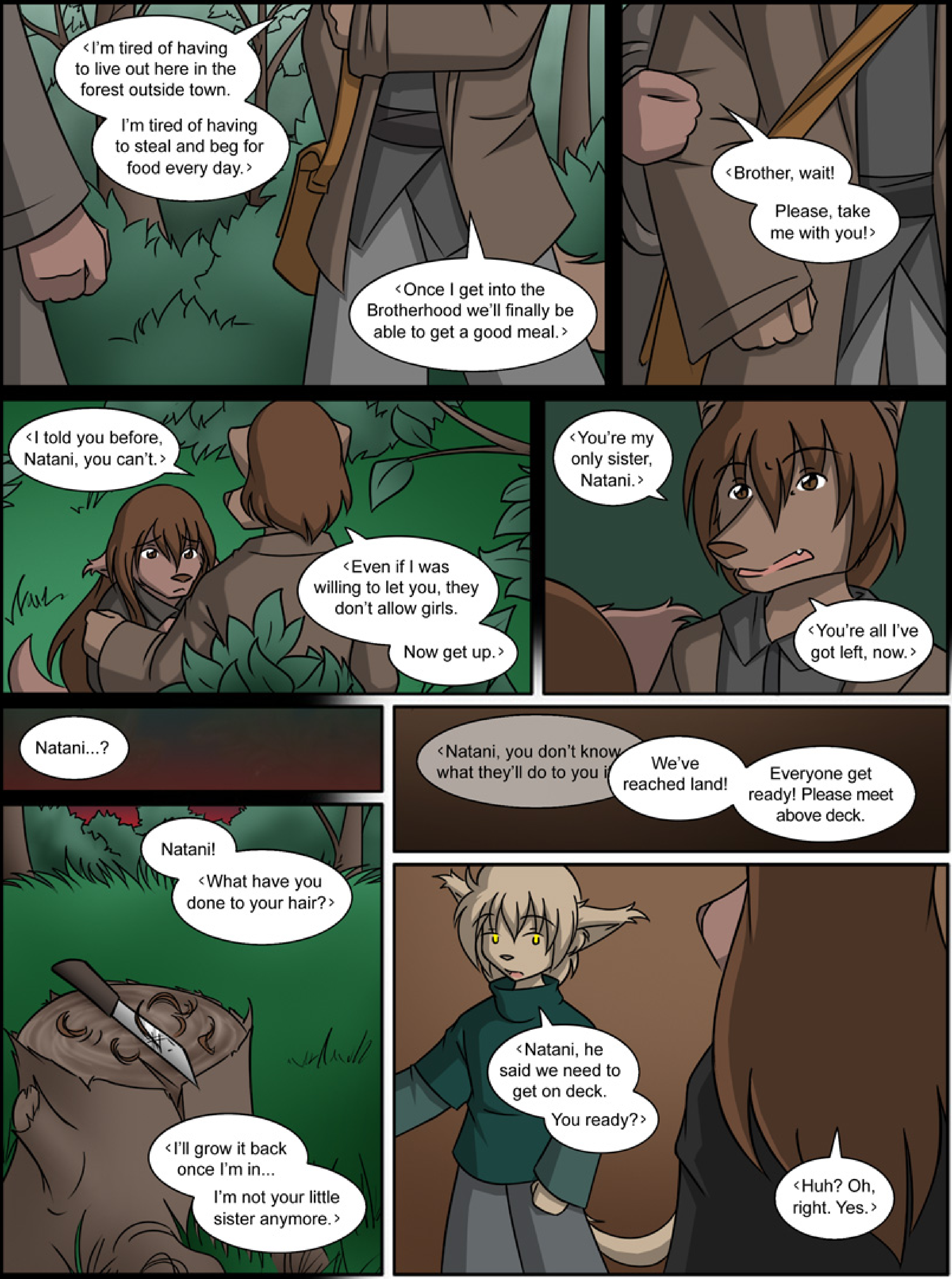

Nya~ah!
It's light out already!
Trace must have let me sleep in again.
I wonder where he went...
Eh–?
Maybe I *have* been eating a lot lately.
Strange, usually it's really hard for people of my tribe to gain weight.
Which is why those who are well fed are considered more attractive...
But for some reason humans are backwards.
I guess I should be more careful with what I eat, for Trace.

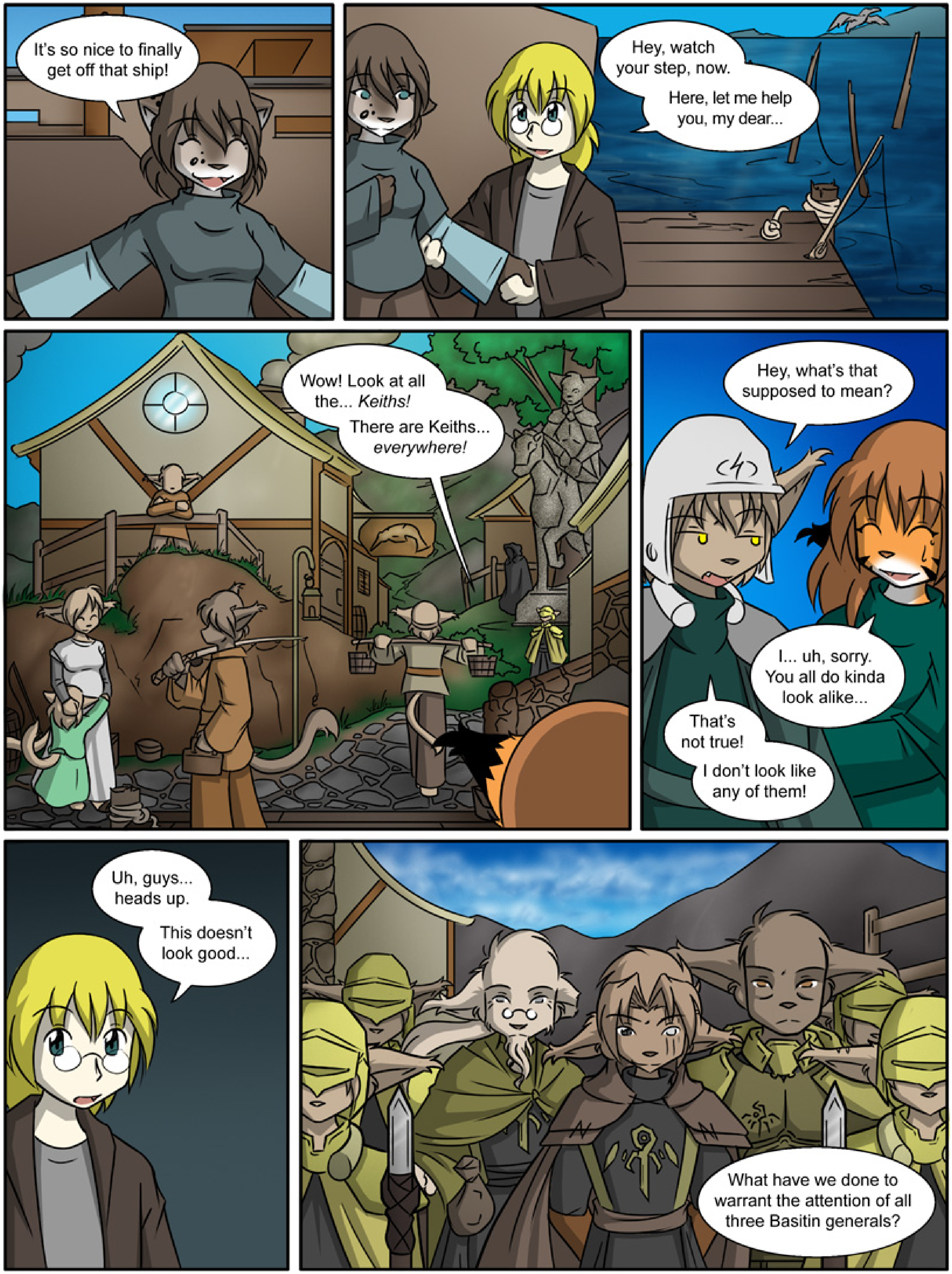

I hope someone left out some hot water.
A nice soak would really hit the spot.
Wait—!
Oh, Keith!
You startled me!
Sorry, Flora.
Listen, you can't go in there...
I... uh... have to wash these clothes...
Oh, well, why can't we go in together?
I don't mind if you watch me bathe.
Maybe you could even give me a hand...
Ah...! Well, I...
I... don't think that would be a good idea.
Just... come back in a few minutes, please.
Darn Keidran...
Why am I always being tempted by that which I cannot have?

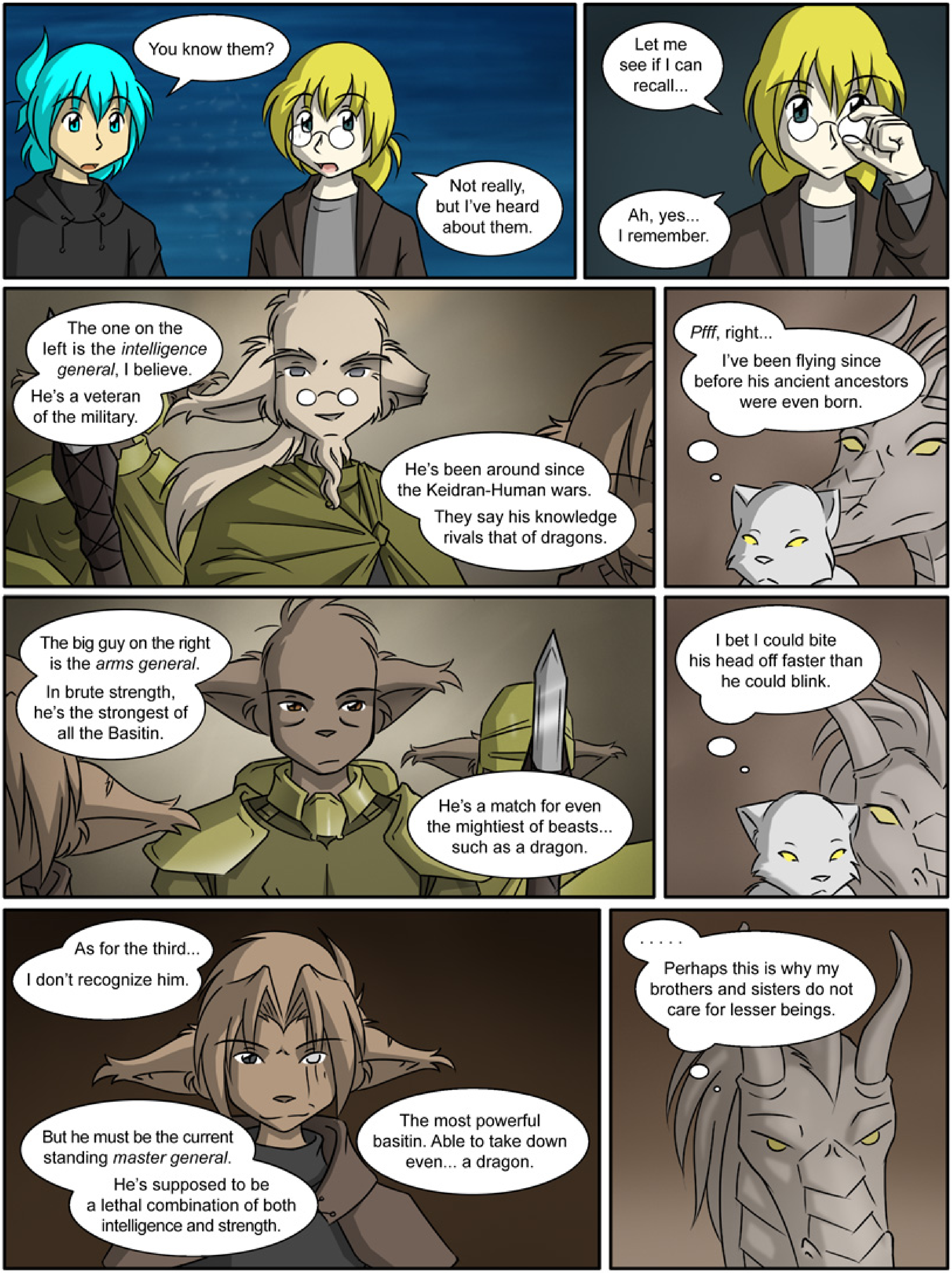

I don't know why I don't just cut my hair off completely.
Just adds to the trouble of getting dry.
CLICK!
Phew!
This is the last time I'm anyone's personal servant.
‹Sorry, Natani! I had to come in.›
‹Flora thinks— ah... I... I...›
I... uh... um....
Keith!
‹What are you doing in here?!›

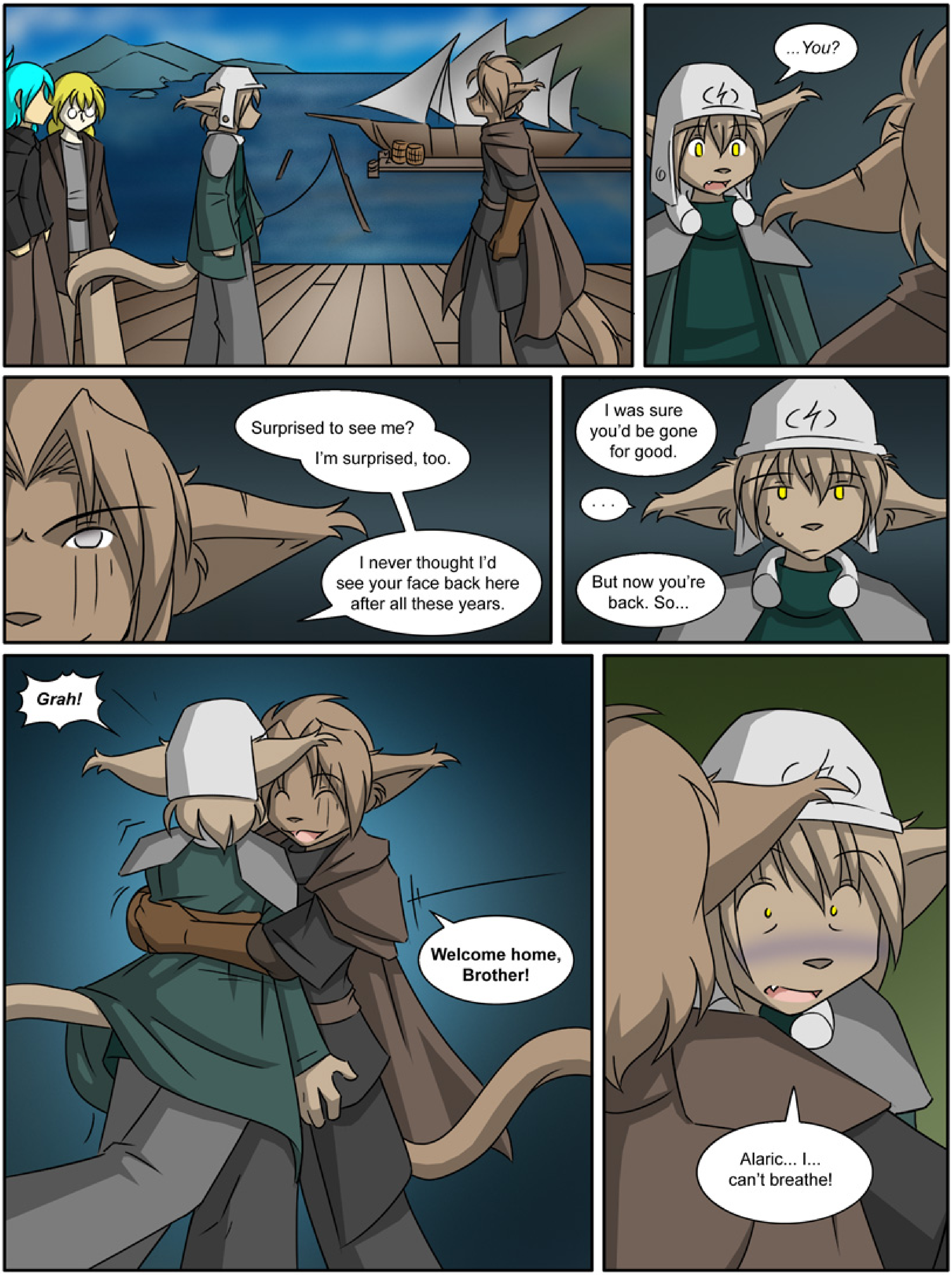

‹Why did you come in here?!
I told you to wait outside! And... stop looking at me!›
‹Er, sorry.›
‹Look, it wasn't my fault. I told Flora I was washing clothes...
So she wouldn't come in here.›
‹I'll just set your clothes down here and look away.›
‹I don't see why you're making such a big deal.
I saw you naked last time.›
‹Yeah, well, I'd rather not make a habit of it!
I don't want people to see me Like this—›
‹Especially you!›
‹It's your own fault!
You shouldn't have been bent over like that...›
‹With... with your tail up... as if you were... offering yourself—›
‹***Stop fantasizing about my body!***›
‹I-I'm not!›

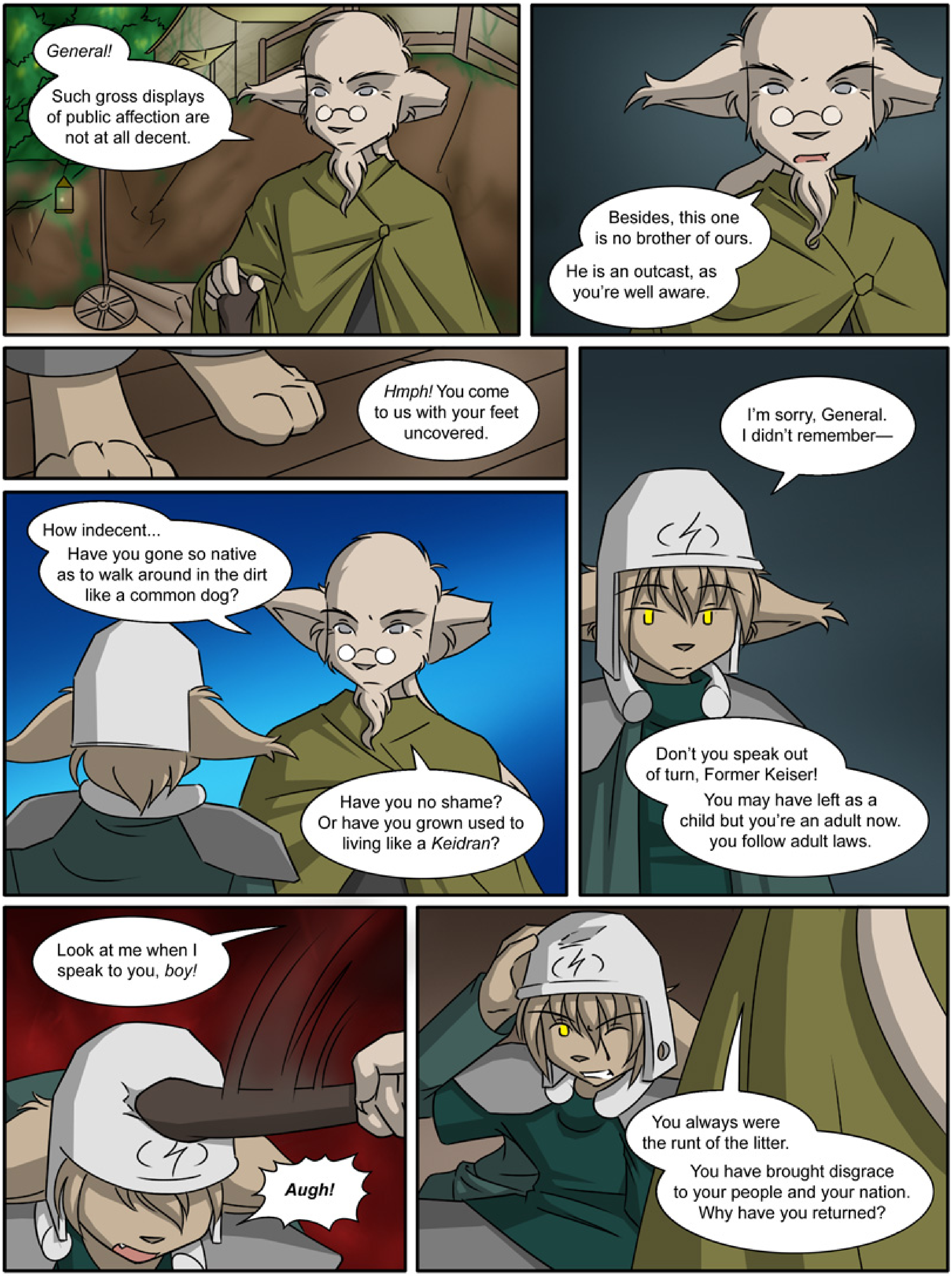

. . .
<Alright, I'm covered.>
<You can look now...
Er... I mean, if you want to.>
<What do you think?
Pretty good, *hm?*>
<Uh... sure, you look quite manly...
Your scent still gives it away, though.>
<Oh, yeah, I know. I just need to use my spells again.>
<As an assassin, I have many spells to disguise my scent.>
<Oh, right...
That's why no one's noticed before.>
<...You've been an assassin a long time, haven't you?>
<Oh... yeah. I joined the Brotherhood after Zen did.
But I'd rather not talk about it...>

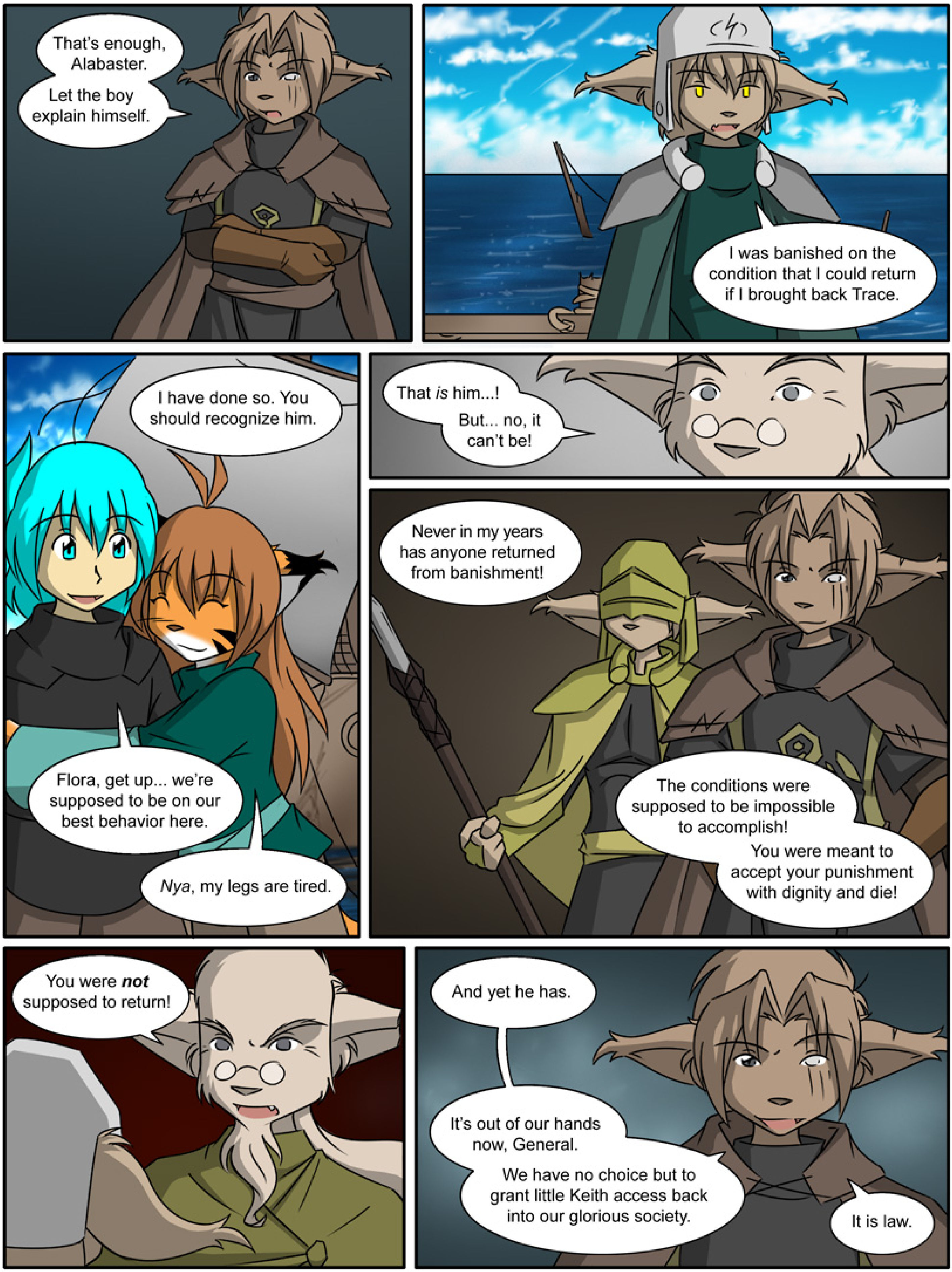

‹I'm tired of having to live out here in the forest outside town.
I'm tired of having to steal and beg for food every day.›
‹Once I get into the Brotherhood we'll finally be able to get a good meal.›
‹Brother, wait!
Please, take me with you!›
‹I told you before, Natani, you can't.›
‹Even if I was willing to let you, they don't allow girls.
Now get up.›
‹You're my only sister, Natani.›
‹You're all I've got left, now.›
Natani...?
‹Natani, you don't know what they'll do to you i
We've reached land!
Everyone get ready! Please meet above deck.
Natani!
‹What have you done to your hair?›
‹I'll grow it back once I'm in...
I'm not your little sister anymore.›
‹Natani, he said we need to get on deck.
You ready?›
‹Huh? Oh, right. Yes.›

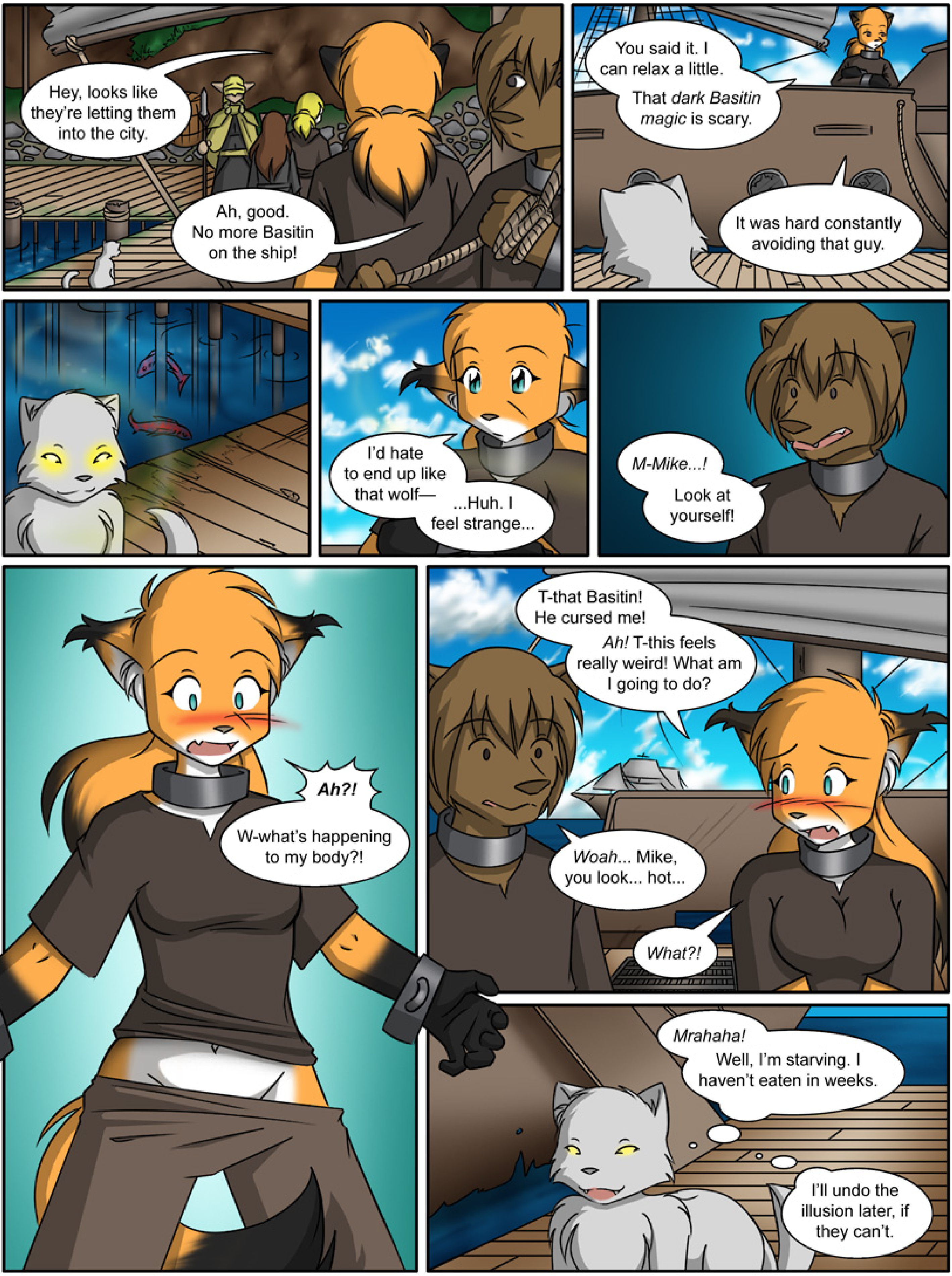

It's so nice to finally get off that ship!
Hey, watch your step, now.
Here, let me help you, my dear...
Wow! Look at all the... *Keiths!*
There are Keiths... *everywhere!*
Hey, what's that supposed to mean?
I... uh, sorry. You all do kinda look alike...
That's not true!
I don't look like any of them!
Uh, guys... heads up.
This doesn't look good...
What have we done to warrant the attention of all three Basitin generals?

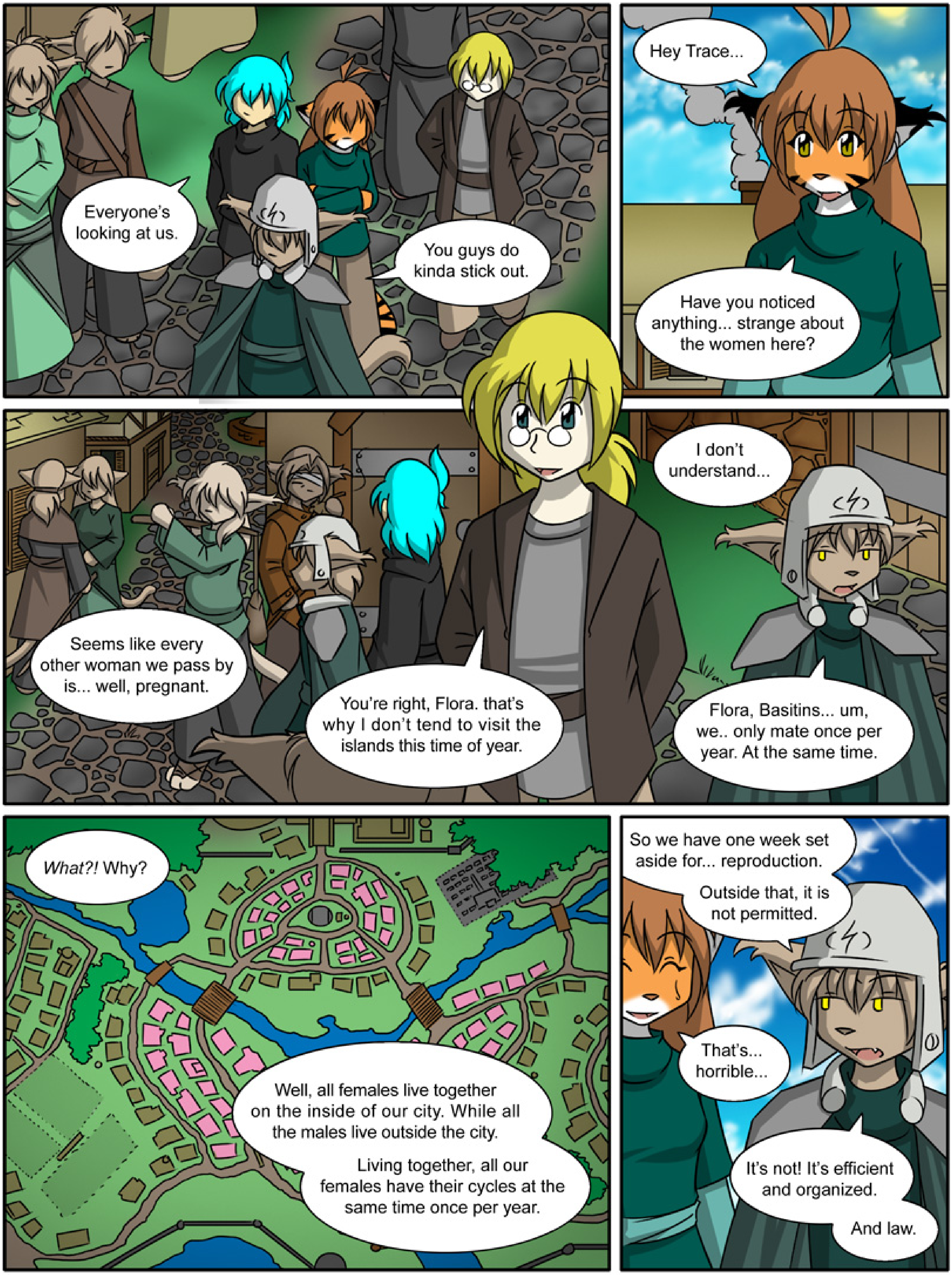

You know them?
Not really, but I've heard about them.
Let me see if I can recall...
Ah, yes... I remember.
The one on the left is the *intelligence general*, I believe.
He's a veteran of the military.
He's been around since the Keidran-Human wars.
They say his knowledge rivals that of dragons.
Pfff, right...
I've been flying since before his ancient ancestors were even born.
The big guy on the right is the *arms general*.
In brute strength, he's the strongest of all the Basitin.
He's a match for even the mightiest of beasts... such as a dragon.
I bet I could bite his head off faster than he could blink.
As for the third...
I don't recognize him.
But he must be the current standing *master general*.
He's supposed to be a lethal combination of both intelligence and strength.
The most powerful basitin. Able to take down even... a dragon.
. . . . .
Perhaps this is why my brothers and sisters do not care for lesser beings.

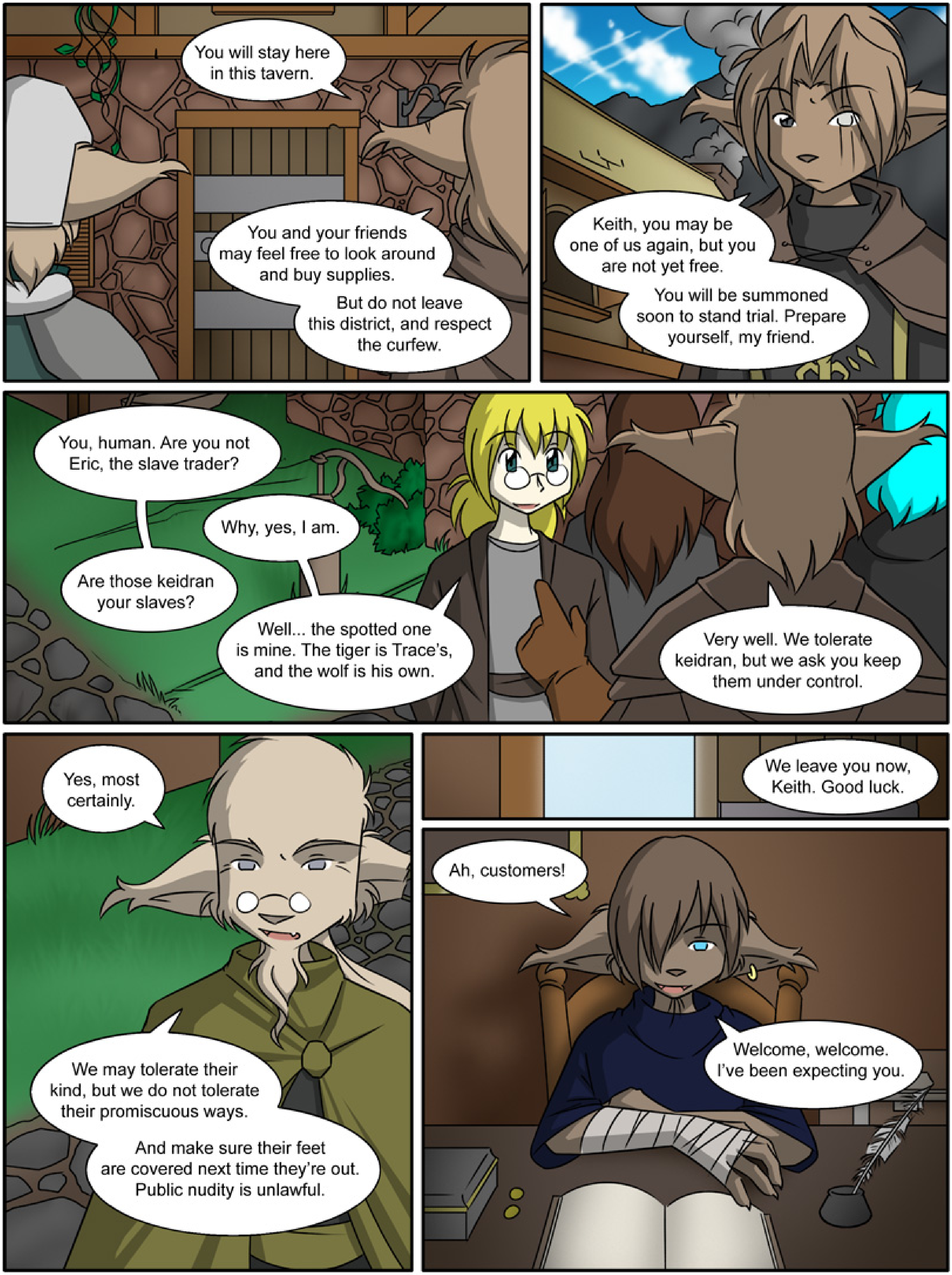

...You?
Surprised to see me?
I'm surprised, too.
I never thought I'd see your face back here after all these years.
I was sure you'd be gone for good.
. . .
But now you're back. So...
Grah!
Welcome home, Brother!
Alaric... I... can't breathe!

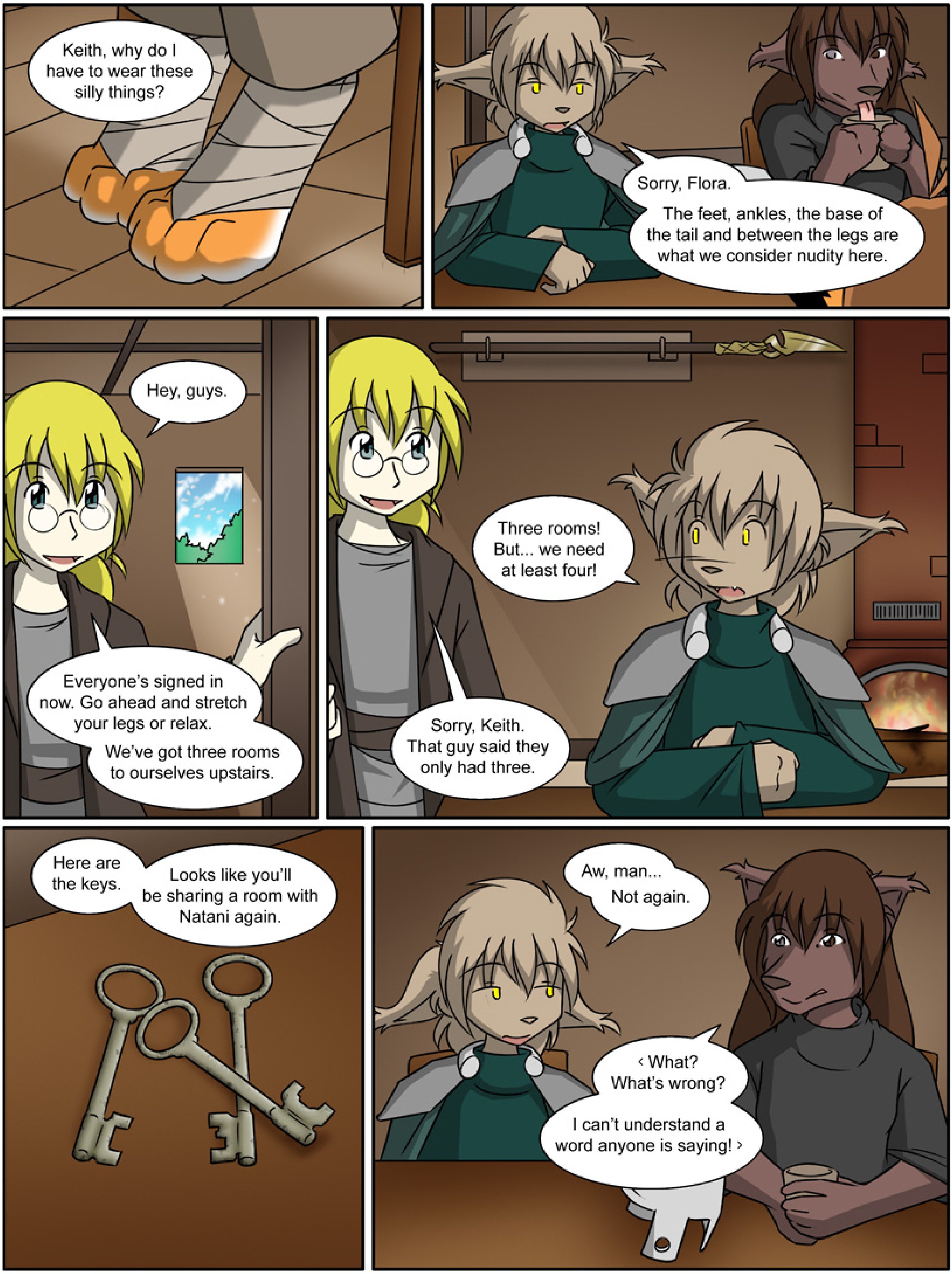

General!
Such gross displays of public affection are not at all decent.
Besides, this one is no brother of ours.
He is an outcast, as you're well aware.
Hmph! You come to us with your feet uncovered.
I'm sorry, General. I didn't remember—
How indecent... Have you gone so native as to walk around in the dirt like a common dog?
Have you no shame? Or have you grown used to living like a *Keidran*?
Don't you speak out of turn, Former Keiser!
You may have left as a child but you're an adult now. you follow adult laws.
Look at me when I speak to you, *boy!*
Augh!
You always were the runt of the litter.
You have brought disgrace to your people and your nation. Why have you returned?

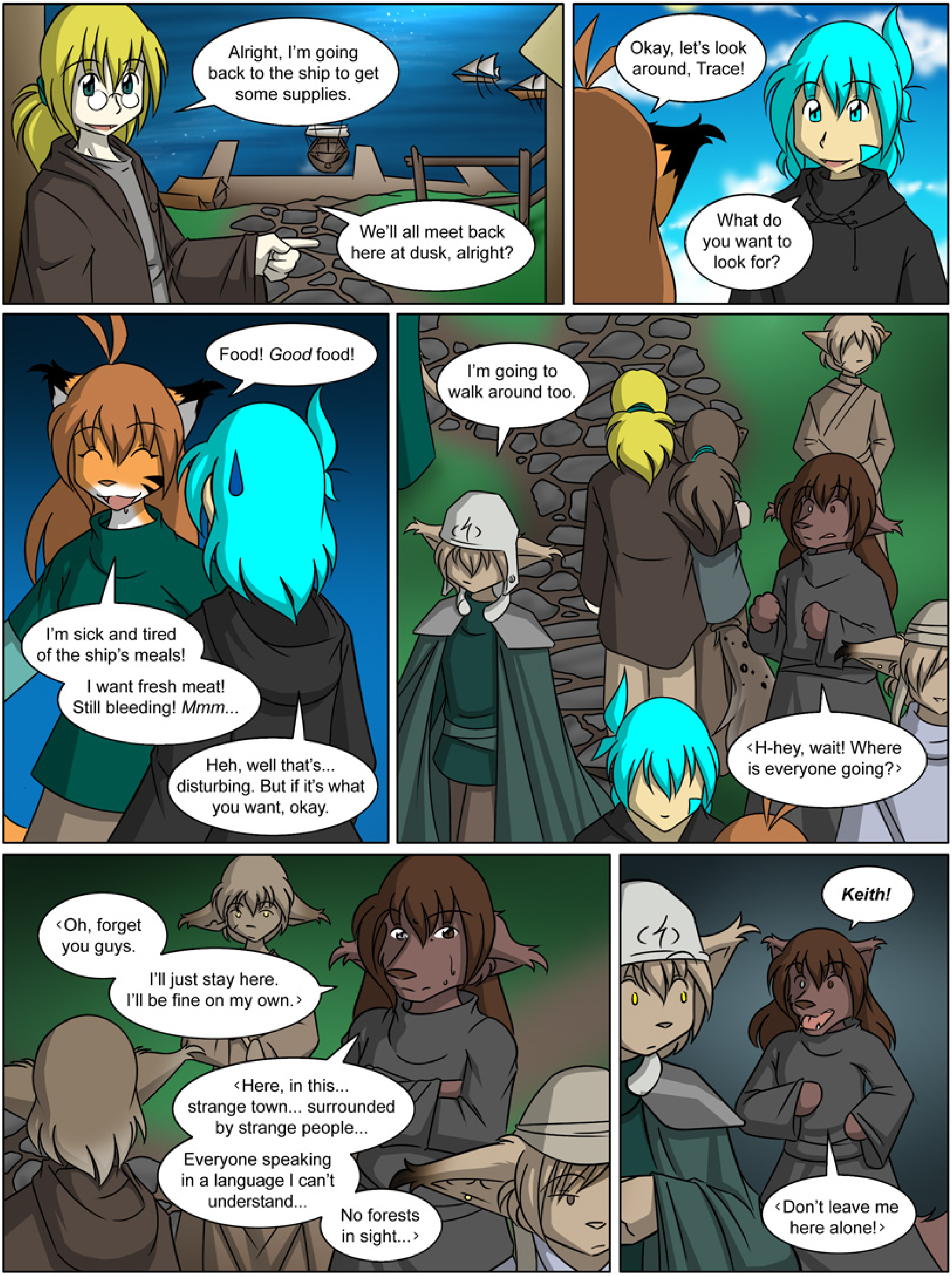

That's enough, Alabaster.
Let the boy explain himself.
I was banished on the condition that I could return if I brought back Trace.
I have done so. You should recognize him.
Flora, get up... we're supposed to be on our best behavior here.
Nya, my legs are tired.
That *is* him...!
But... no, it can't be!
Never in my years has anyone returned from banishment!
The conditions were supposed to be impossible to accomplish!
You were meant to accept your punishment with dignity and die!
You were ***not*** supposed to return!
And yet he has.
It's out of our hands now, General.
We have no choice but to grant little Keith access back into our glorious society.
It is law.

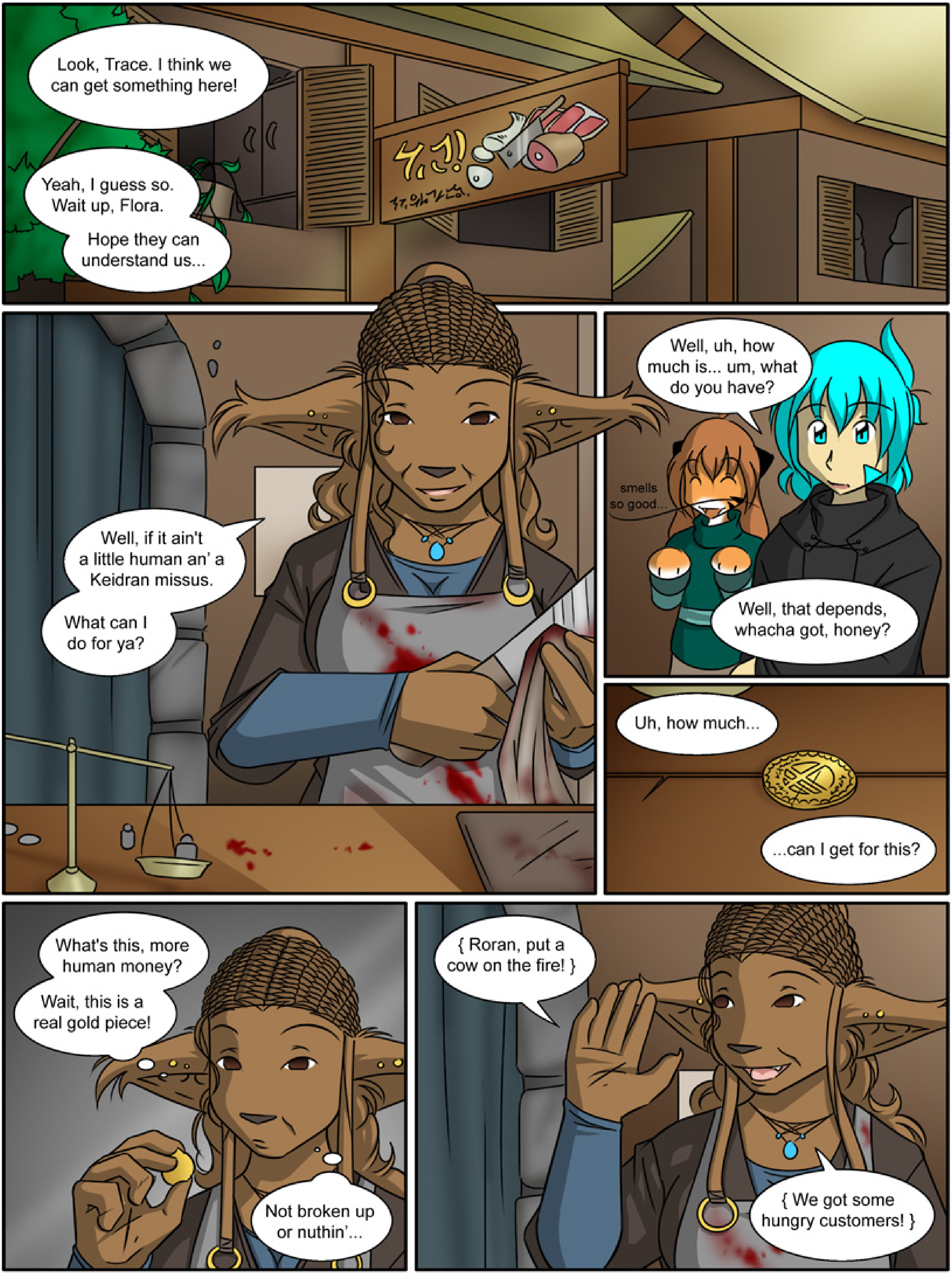

Hey, looks like they're letting them into the city.
Ah, good. No more Basitin on the ship!
You said it. I can relax a little. That *dark Basitin magic* is scary.
It was hard constantly avoiding that guy.
I'd hate to end up like that wolf—
...Huh. I feel strange...
M-Mike...! Look at yourself!
Ah?!
W-what's happening to my body?!
T-that Basitin! He cursed me! *Ah!* T-this feels really weird! What am I going to do?
Woah... Mike, you look... hot...
What?!
Mrahaha! Well, I'm starving. I haven't eaten in weeks.
I'll undo the illusion later, if they can't.

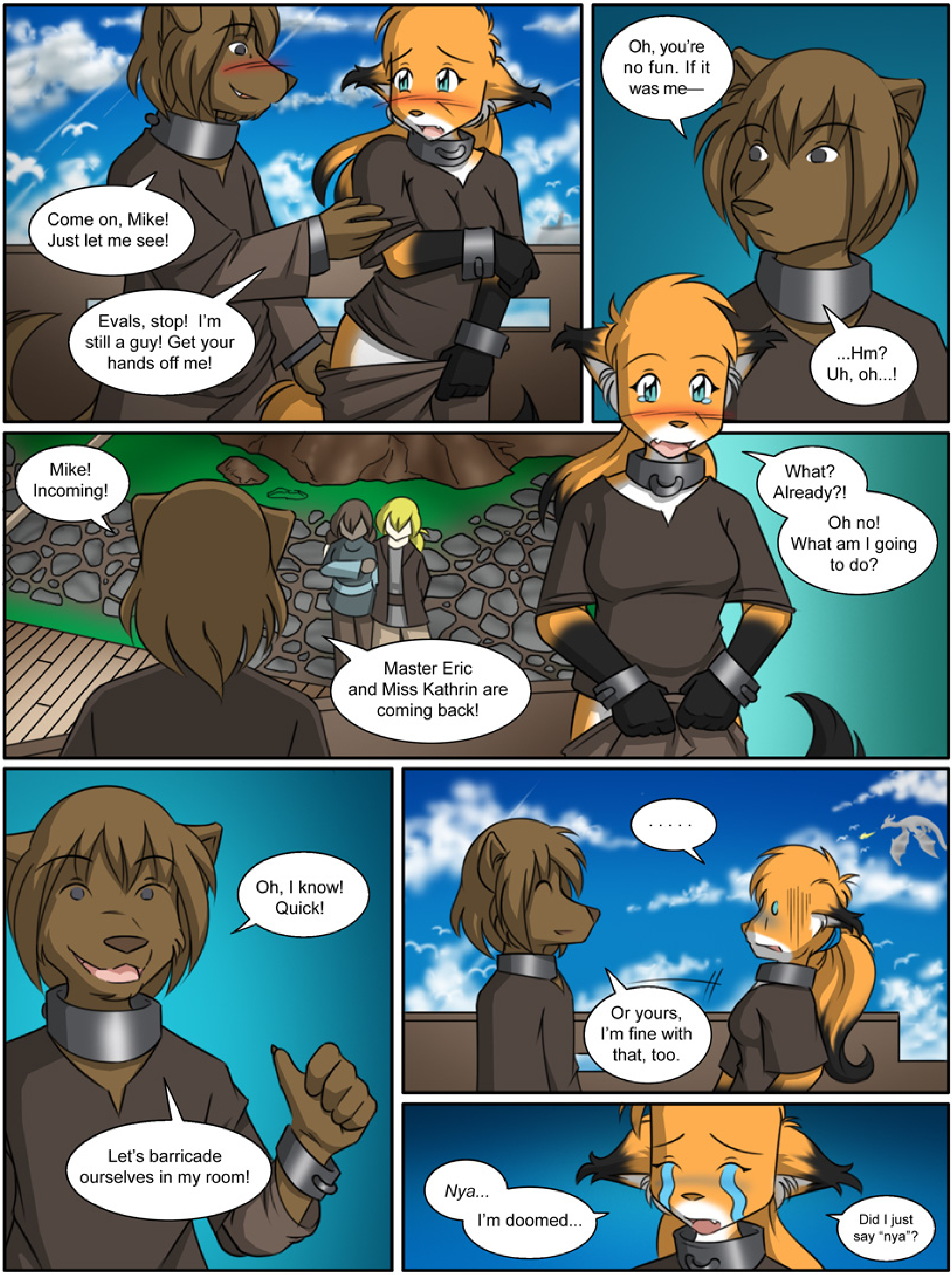

Everyone's looking at us.
You guys do kinda stick out.
Hey Trace...
Have you noticed anything... strange about the women here?
Seems like every other woman we pass by is... well, pregnant.
You're right, Flora. that's why I don't tend to visit the islands this time of year.
I don't understand...
Flora, Basitins... um, we.. only mate once per year. At the same time.
What?! Why?
Well, all females live together on the inside of our city. While all the males live outside the city.
Living together, all our females have their cycles at the same time once per year.
So we have one week set aside for... reproduction.
Outside that, it is not permitted.
That's... horrible...
It's not! It's efficient and organized.
And law.


You will stay here in this tavern.
You and your friends may feel free to look around and buy supplies.
But do not leave this district, and respect the curfew.
Keith, you may be one of us again, but you are not yet free.
You will be summoned soon to stand trial. Prepare yourself, my friend.
You, human. Are you not Eric, the slave trader?
Why, yes, I am.
Are those keidran your slaves?
Well... the spotted one is mine. The tiger is Trace's, and the wolf is his own.
Very well. We tolerate keidran, but we ask you keep them under control.
Yes, most certainly.
We may tolerate their kind, but we do not tolerate their promiscuous ways.
And make sure their feet are covered next time they're out. Public nudity is unlawful.
We leave you now, Keith. Good luck.
Ah, customers!
Welcome, welcome. I've been expecting you.

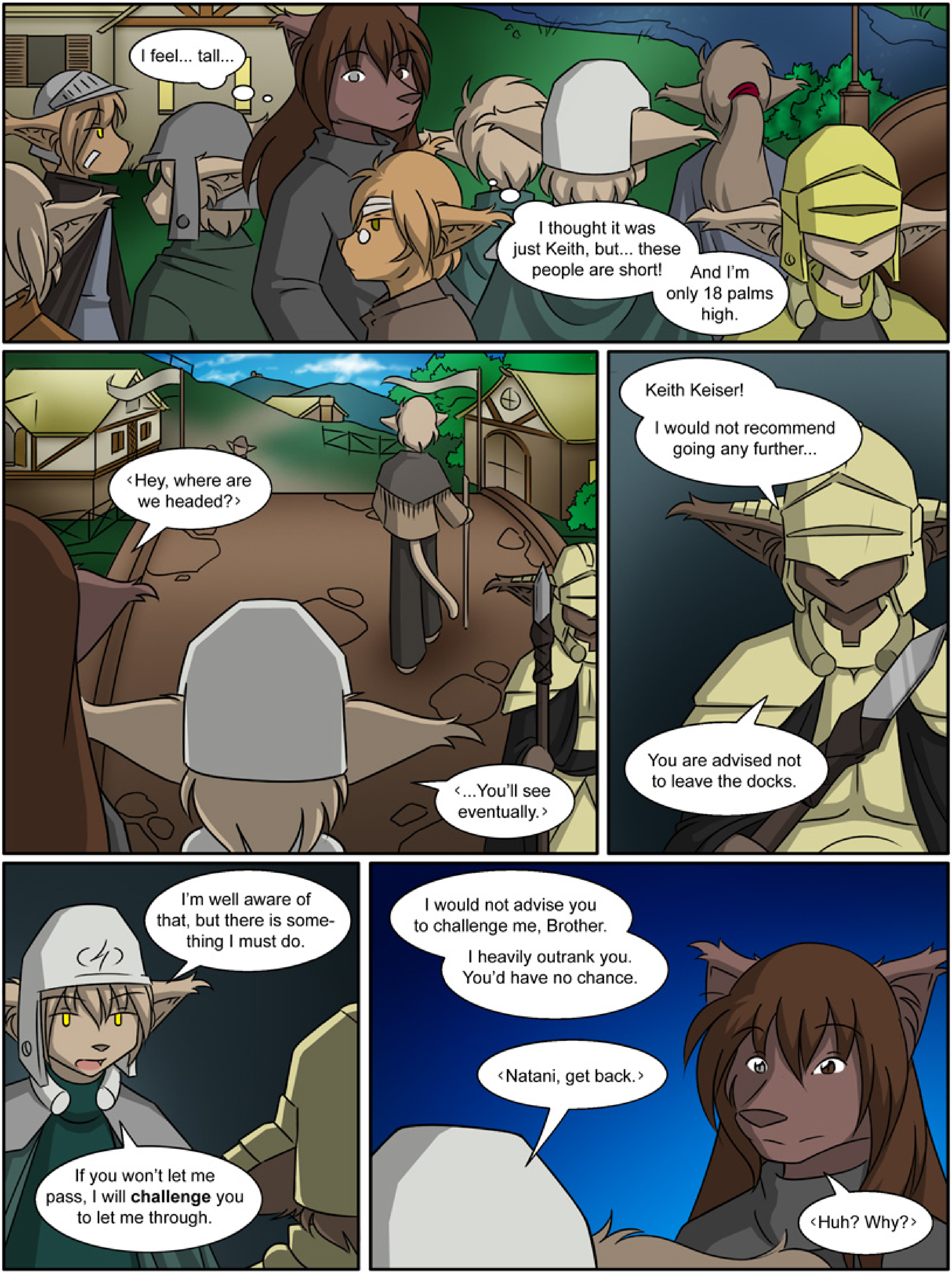

Keith, why do I have to wear these silly things?
Sorry, Flora.
The feet, ankles, the base of the tail and between the legs are what we consider nudity here.
Hey, guys.
Everyone's signed in now. Go ahead and stretch your legs or relax.
We've got three rooms to ourselves upstairs.
Three rooms! But... we need at least four!
Sorry, Keith. That guy said they only had three.
Here are the keys.
Looks like you'll be sharing a room with Natani again.
Aw, man...
Not again.
‹ What? What's wrong?
I can't understand a word anyone is saying! ›

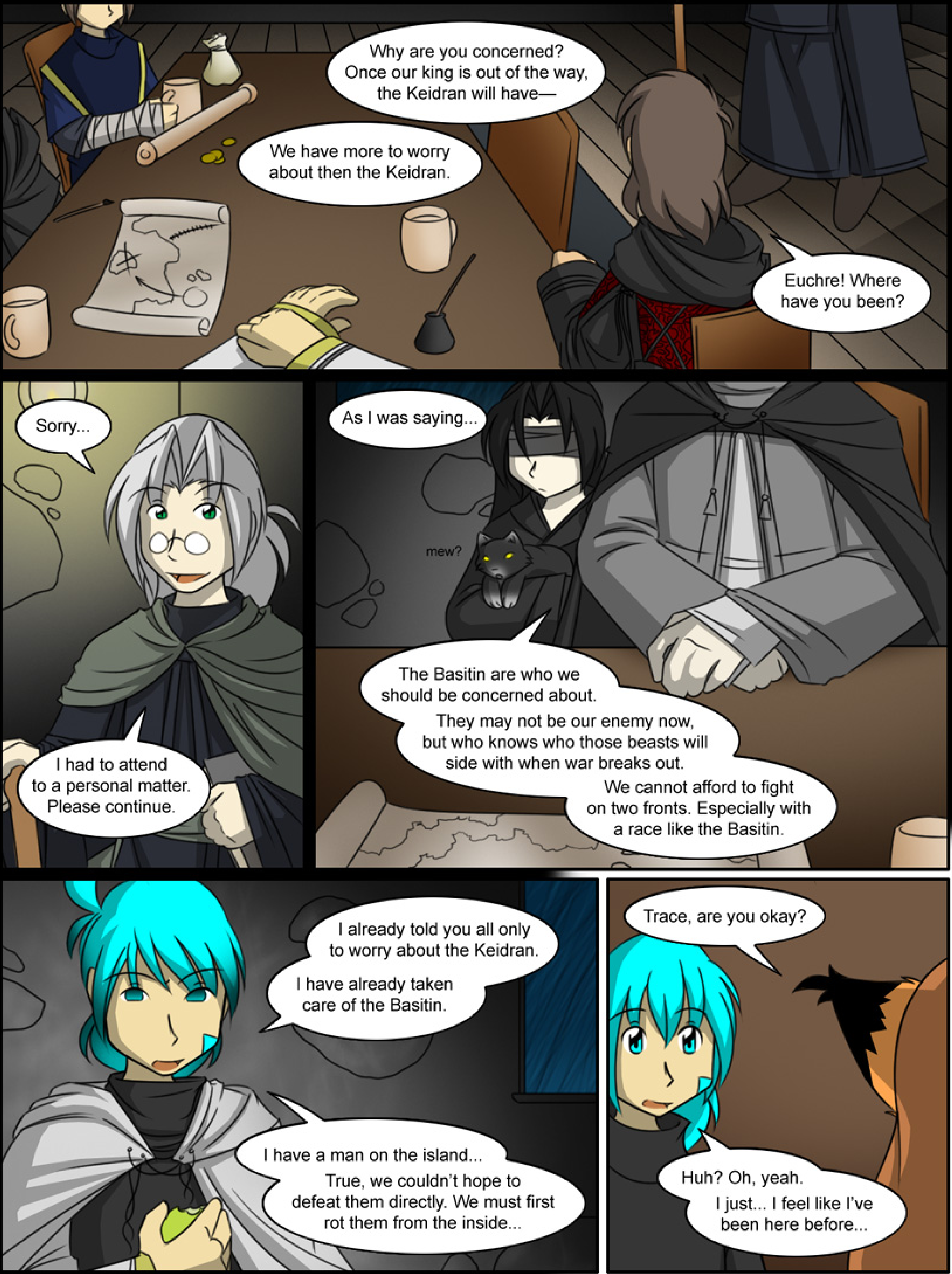

Alright, I'm going back to the ship to get some supplies.
We'll all meet back here at dusk, alright?
Okay, let's look around, Trace!
What do you want to look for?
Food! *Good* food!
I'm sick and tired of the ship's meals!
I want fresh meat! Still bleeding! *Mmm...*
Heh, well that's... disturbing. But if it's what you want, okay.
I'm going to walk around too.
‹H-hey, wait! Where is everyone going?›
‹Oh, forget you guys.
I'll just stay here. I'll be fine on my own.›
‹Here, in this... strange town... surrounded by strange people...
Everyone speaking in a language I can't understand...
No forests in sight...›
Keith!
‹Don't leave me here alone!›

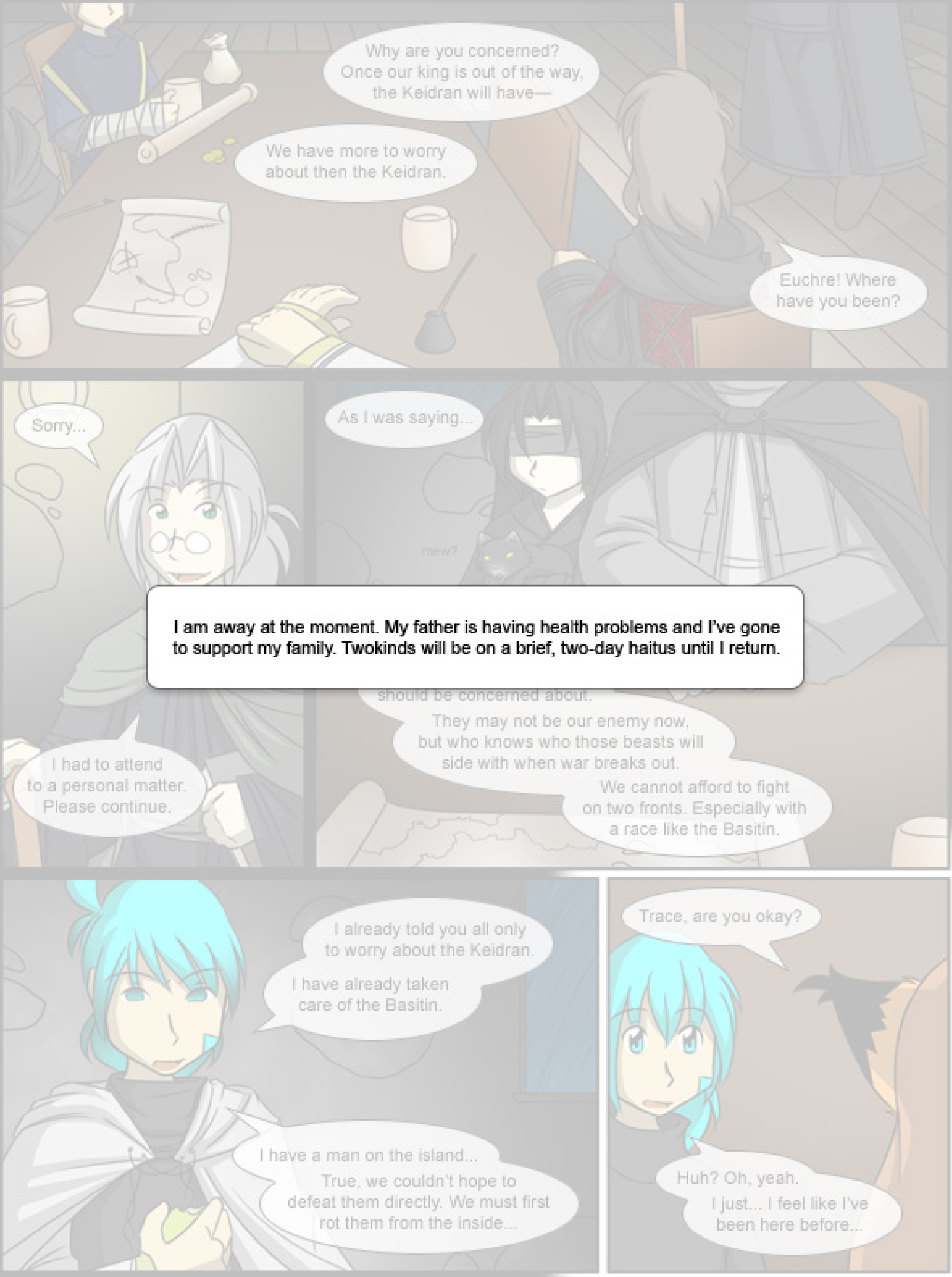

Look, Trace. I think we can get something here!
Yeah, I guess so. Wait up, Flora.
Hope they can understand us...
Well, if it ain't a little human an' a Keidran missus.
What can I do for ya?
Well, uh, how much is... um, what do you have?
smells so good...
Well, that depends, whacha got, honey?
Uh, how much...
...can I get for this?
What's this, more human money?
Wait, this is a real gold piece!
Not broken up or nuthin'...
{ Roran, put a cow on the fire! }
{ We got some hungry customers! }


Come on, Mike! Just let me see!
Evals, stop! I'm still a guy! Get your hands off me!
Oh, you're no fun. If it was me—
...Hm? Uh, oh...!
Mike! Incoming!
What? Already?!
Master Eric and Miss Kathrin are coming back!
Oh no! What am I going to do?
Oh, I know! Quick!
Let's barricade ourselves in my room!
. . . . .
Or yours, I'm fine with that, too.
Nya... I'm doomed...
Did I just say "nya"?

Z z z z z z
Tom


I feel... tall...
I thought it was just Keith, but... these people are short!
And I'm only 18 palms high.
‹Hey, where are we headed?›
‹...You'll see eventually.›
Keith Keiser!
I would not recommend going any further...
You are advised not to leave the docks.
I'm well aware of that, but there is something I must do.
If you won't let me pass, I will **challenge** you to let me through.
I would not advise you to challenge me, Brother.
I heavily outrank you. You'd have no chance.
‹Natani, get back.›
‹Huh? Why?›


Why are you concerned? Once our king is out of the way, the Keidran will have—
We have more to worry about then the Keidran.
Euchre! Where have you been?
Sorry...
I had to attend to a personal matter. Please continue.
As I was saying...
mew?
The Basitin are who we should be concerned about.
They may not be our enemy now, but who knows who those beasts will side with when war breaks out.
We cannot afford to fight on two fronts. Especially with a race like the Basitin.
I already told you all only to worry about the Keidran.
I have already taken care of the Basitin.
I have a man on the island...
True, we couldn't hope to defeat them directly. We must first rot them from the inside...
Trace, are you okay?
Huh? Oh, yeah.
I just... I feel like I've been here before...



I am away at the moment. My father is having health problems and I've gone to support my family. Twokinds will be on a brief, two-day haitus until I return.

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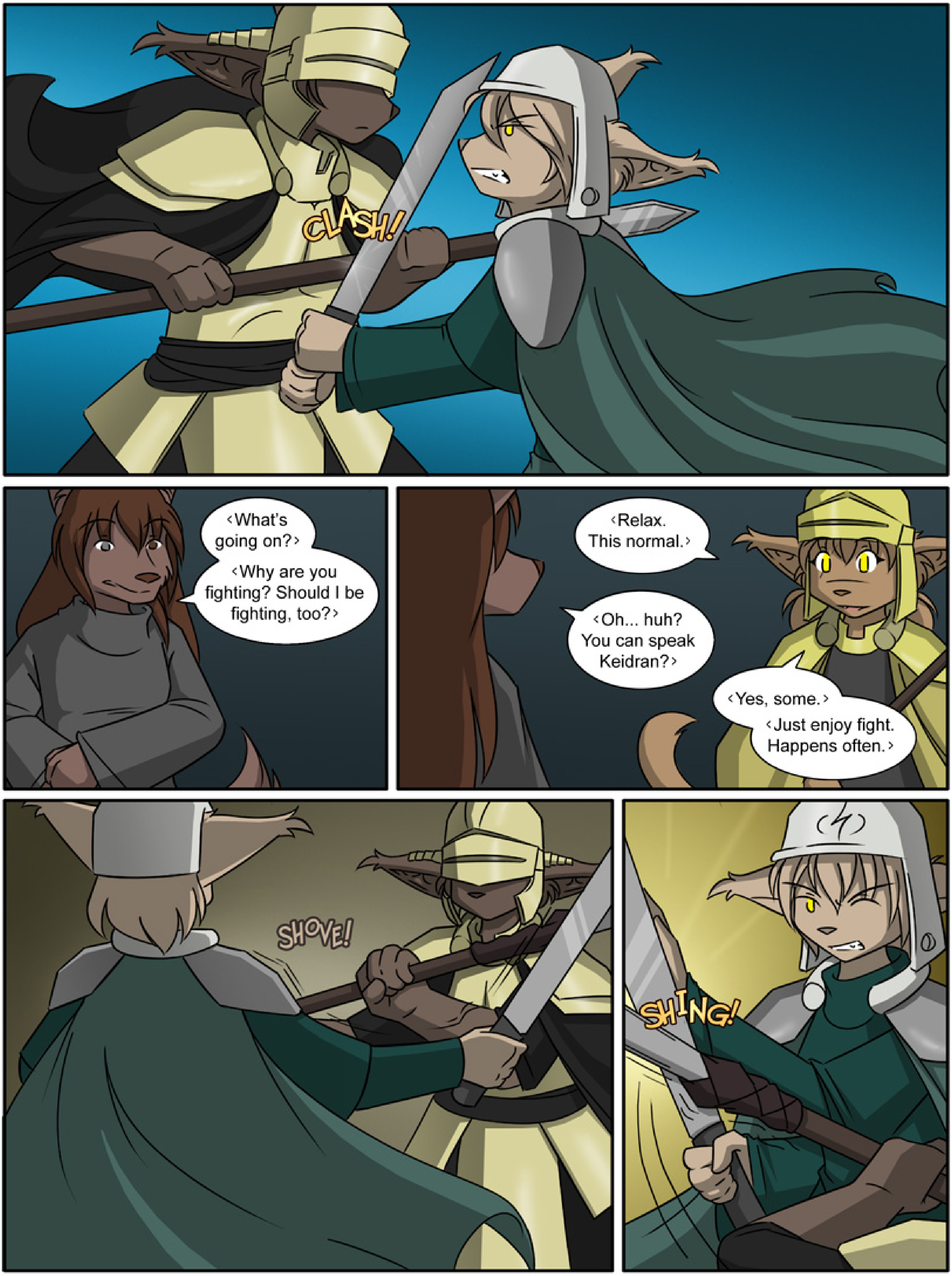
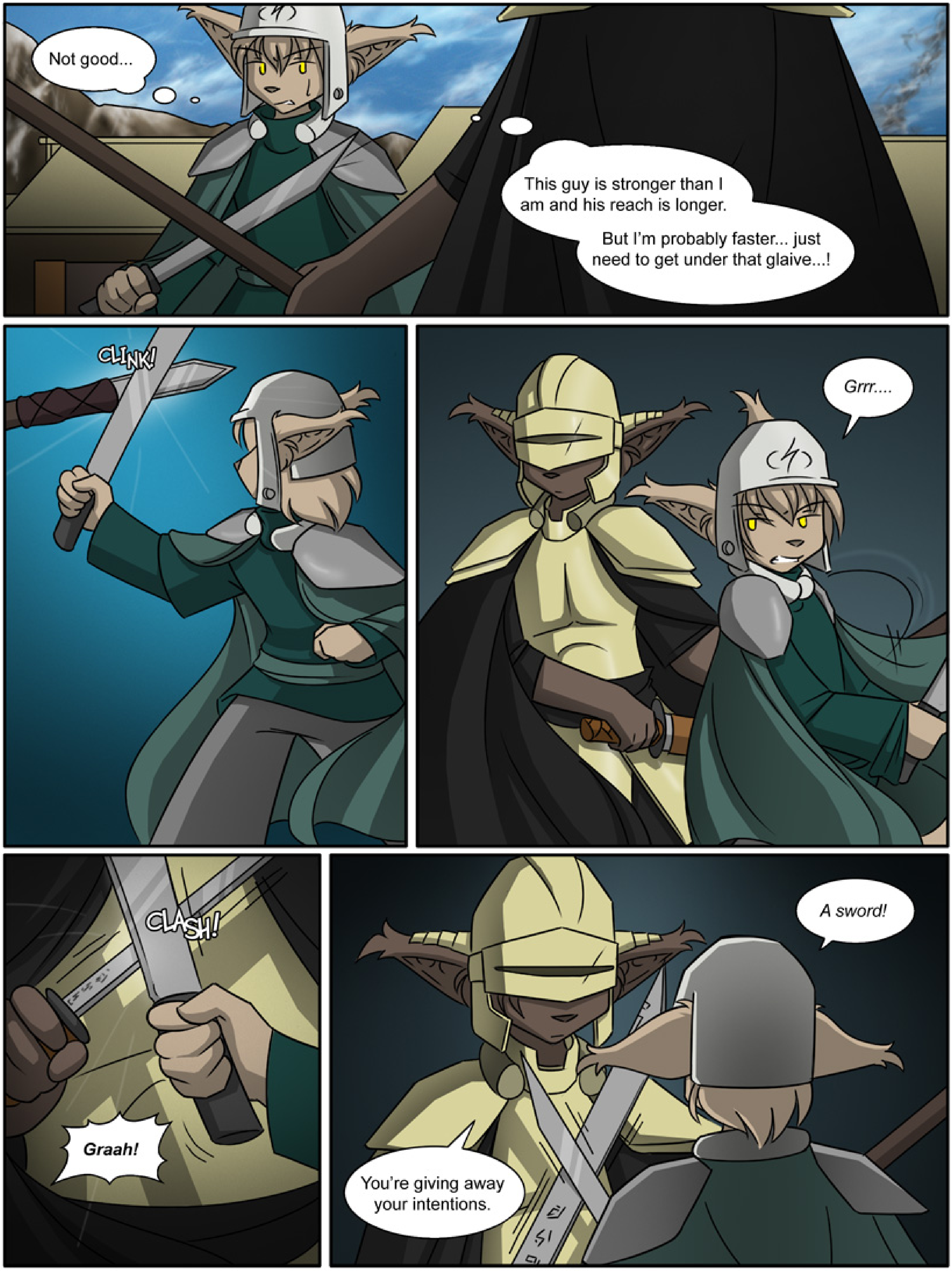
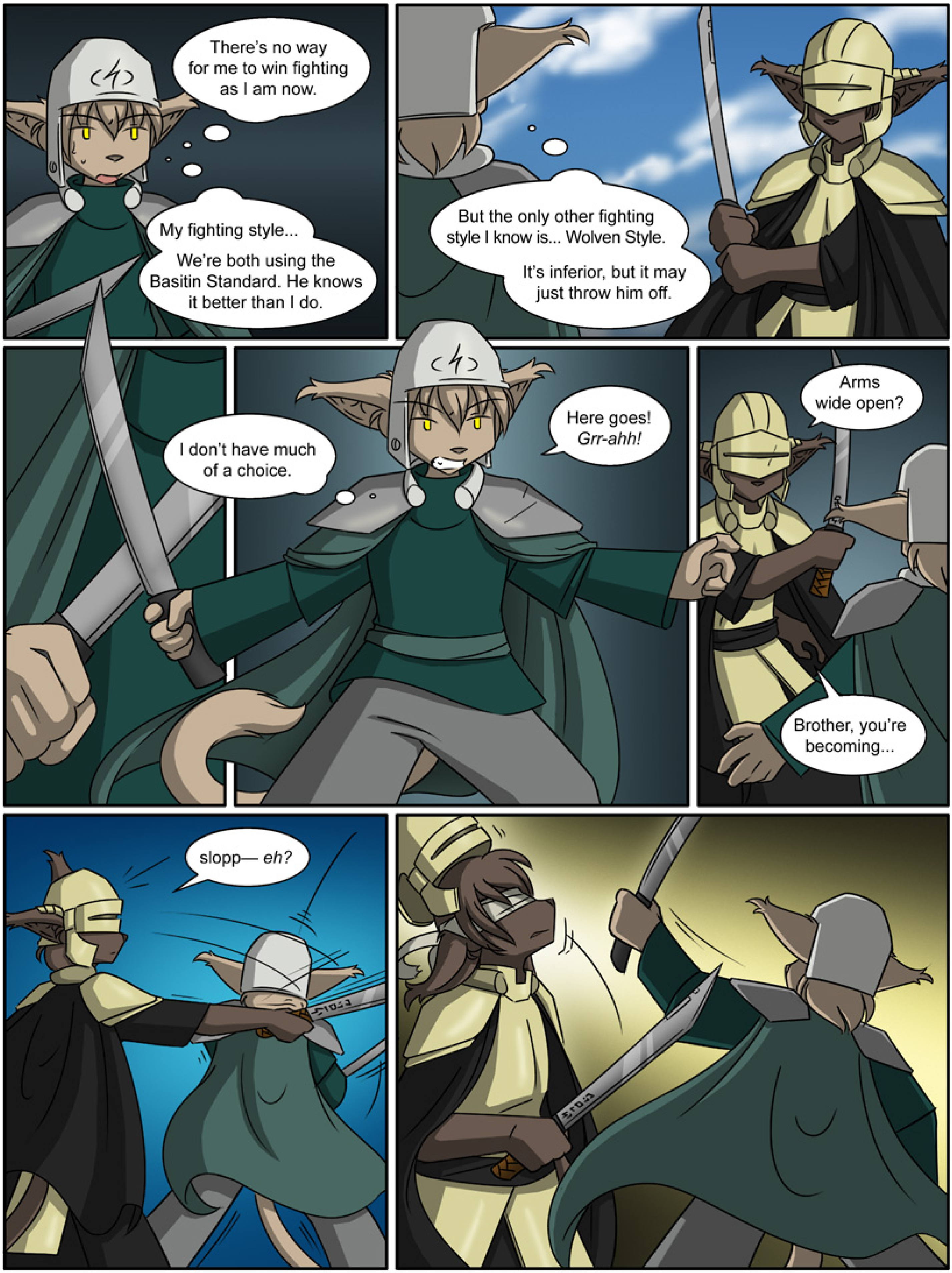
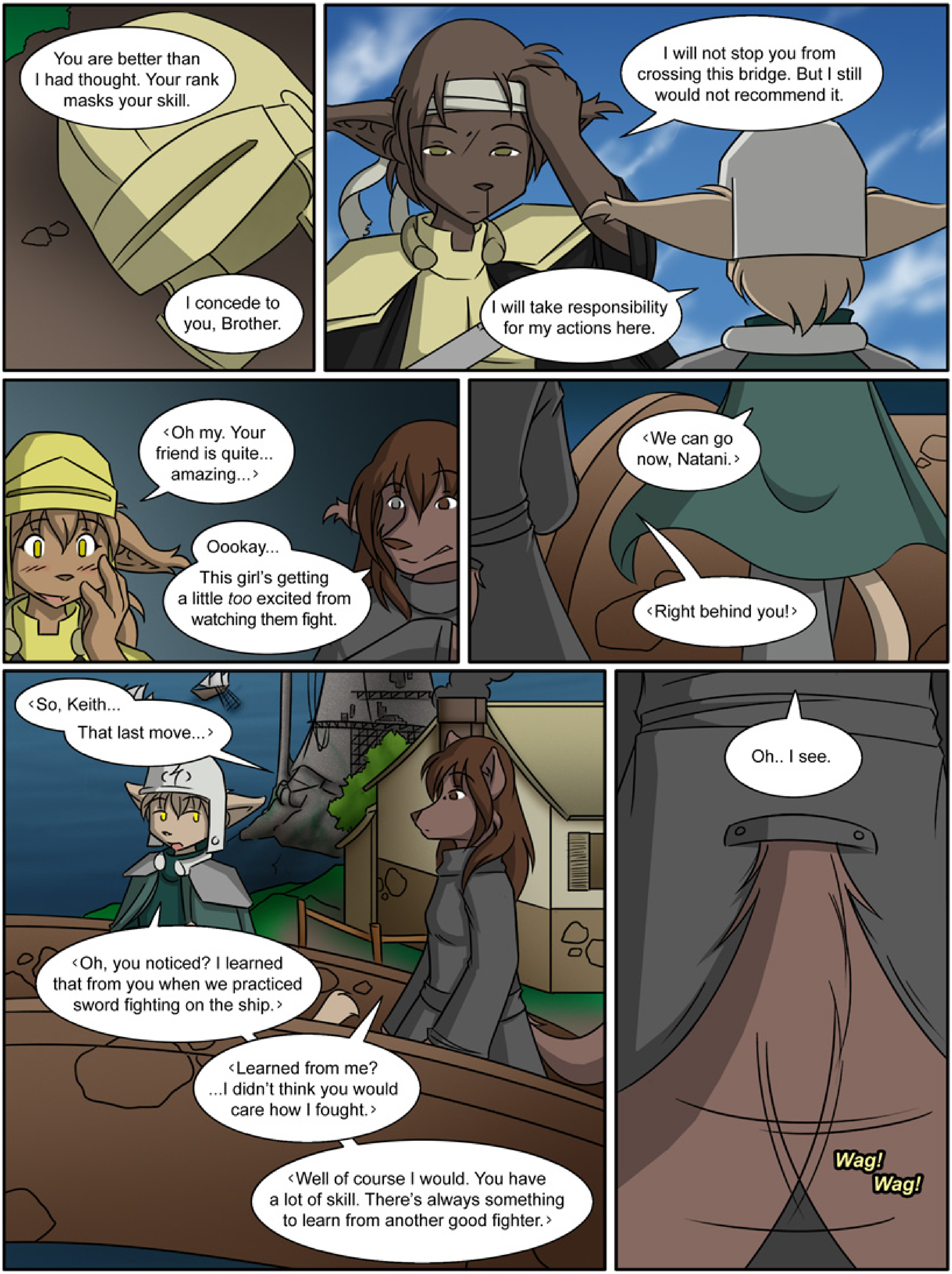
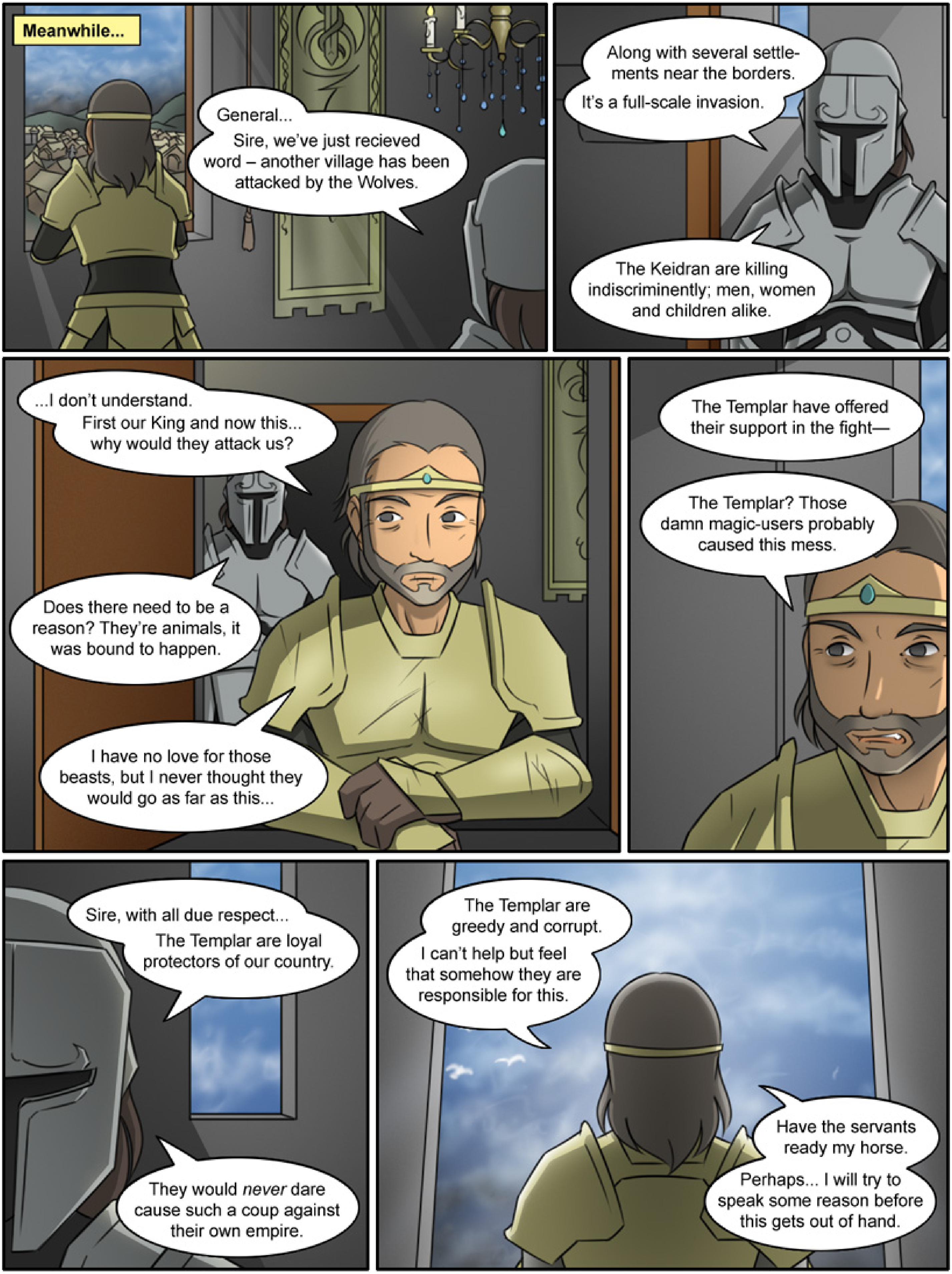
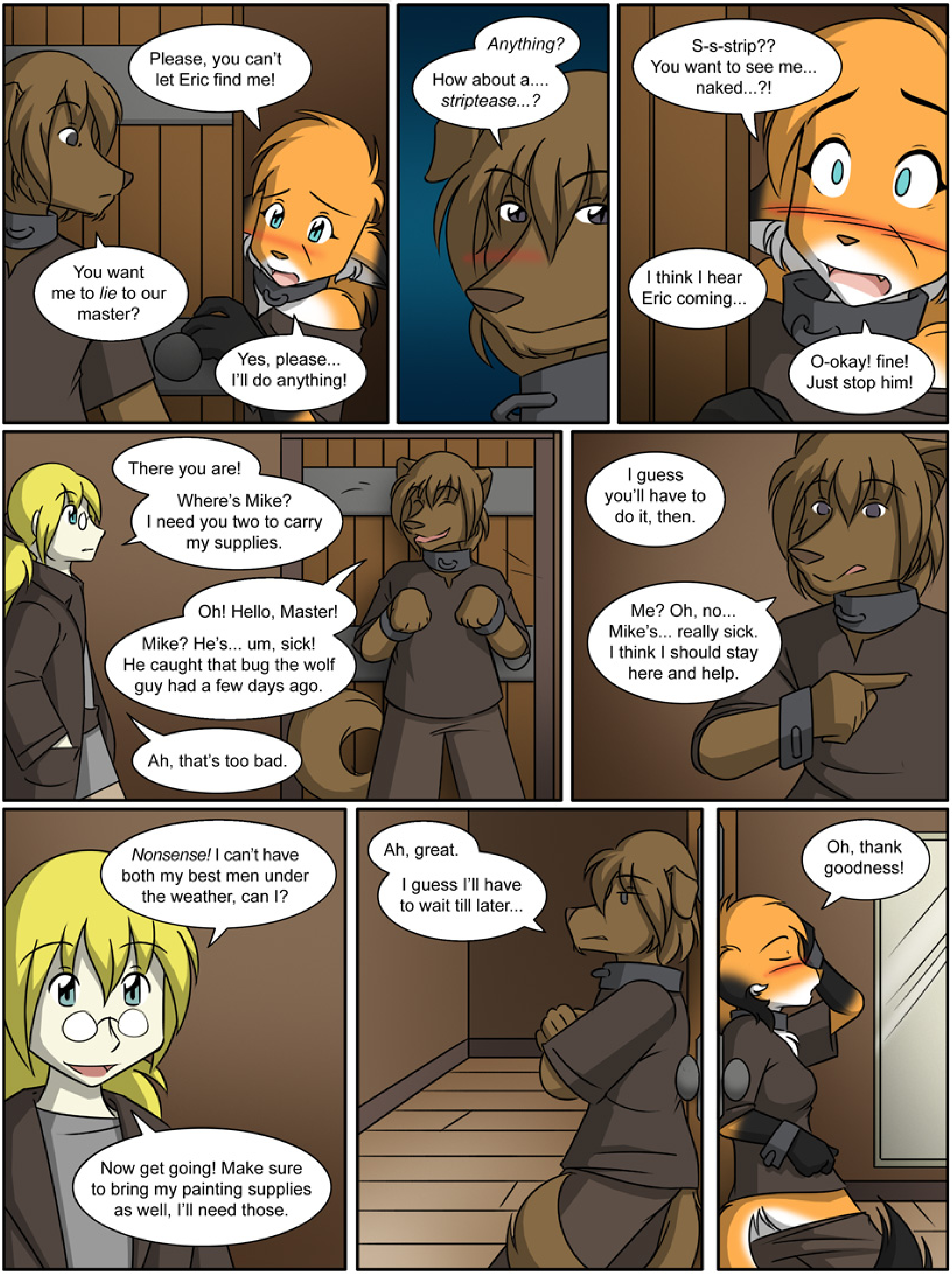

CLASH!
‹What's going on?›
‹Why are you fighting? Should I be fighting, too?›
‹Relax. This normal.›
‹Oh... huh? You can speak Keidran?›
‹Yes, some.›
‹Just enjoy fight. Happens often.›
SHOVE!
SHING!

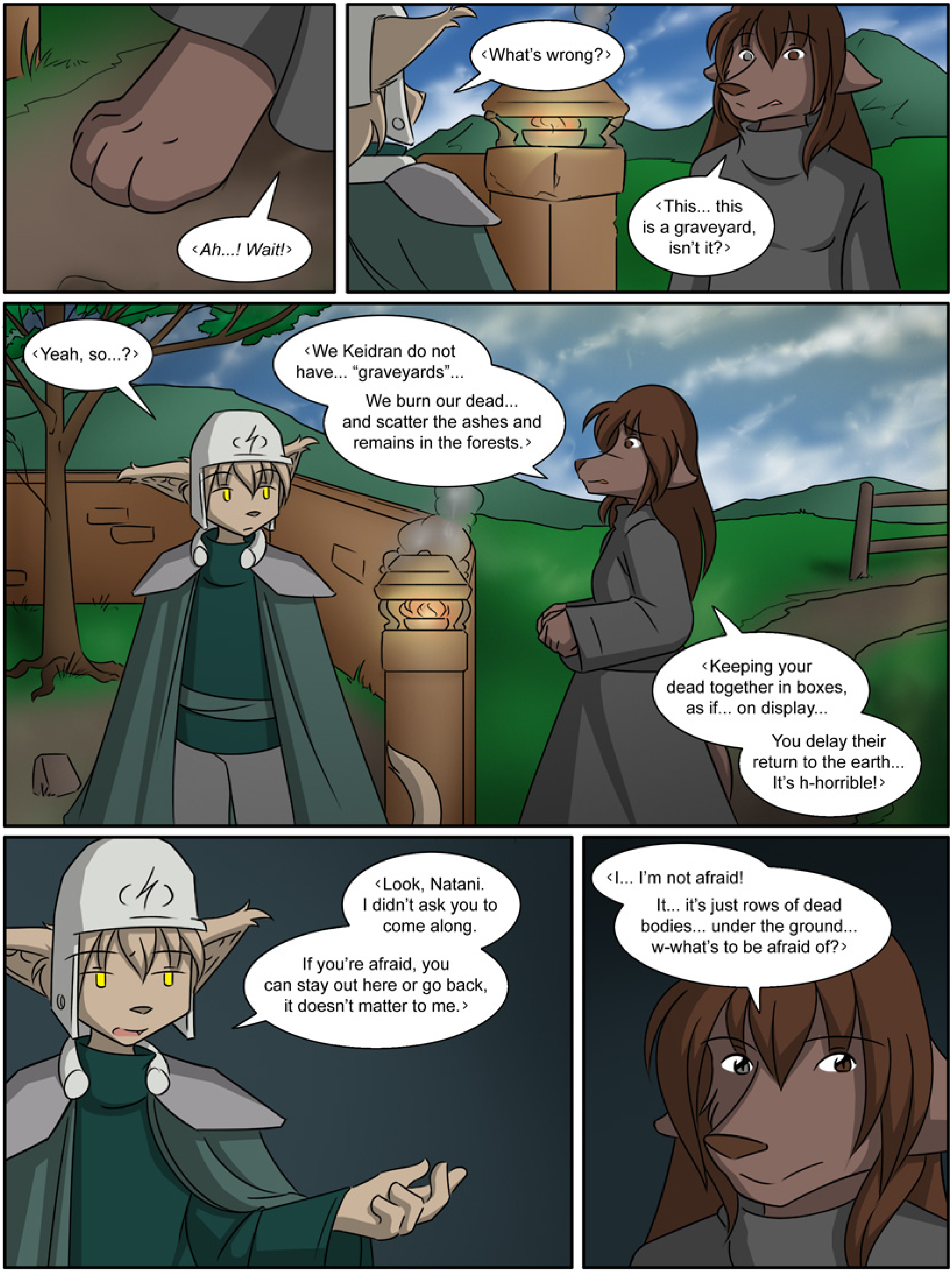

Not good...
This guy is stronger than I am and his reach is longer.
But I'm probably faster... just need to get under that glaive...!
CLINK!
Grrr....
CLASH!
Graah!
A sword!
You're giving away your intentions.

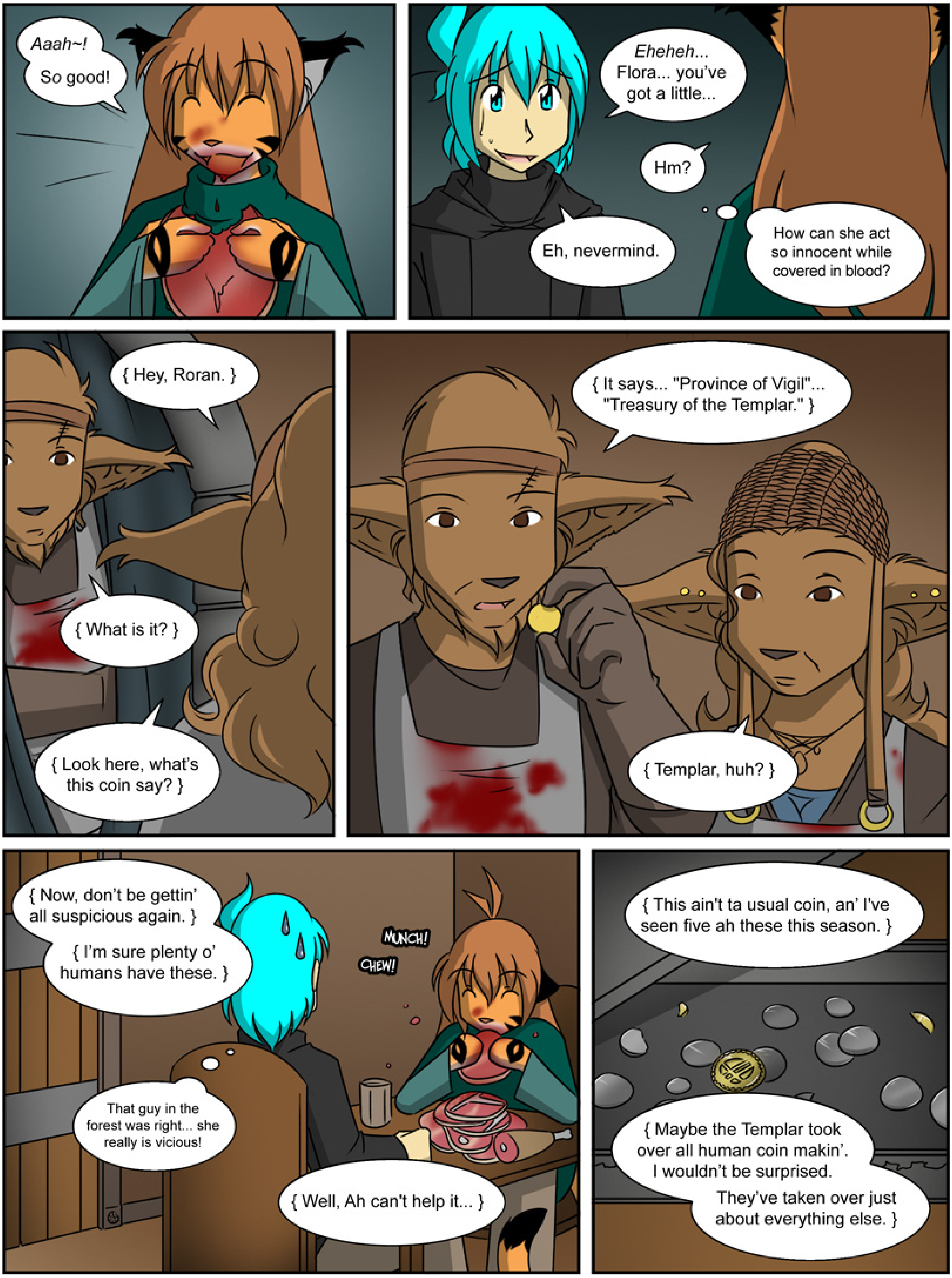

There's no way for me to win fighting as I am now.
My fighting style...
We're both using the Basitin Standard. He knows it better than I do.
But the only other fighting style I know is... Wolven Style.
It's inferior, but it may just throw him off.
I don't have much of a choice.
Here goes! *Grr-ahh!*
Arms wide open?
Brother, you're becoming...
slopp— *eh?*

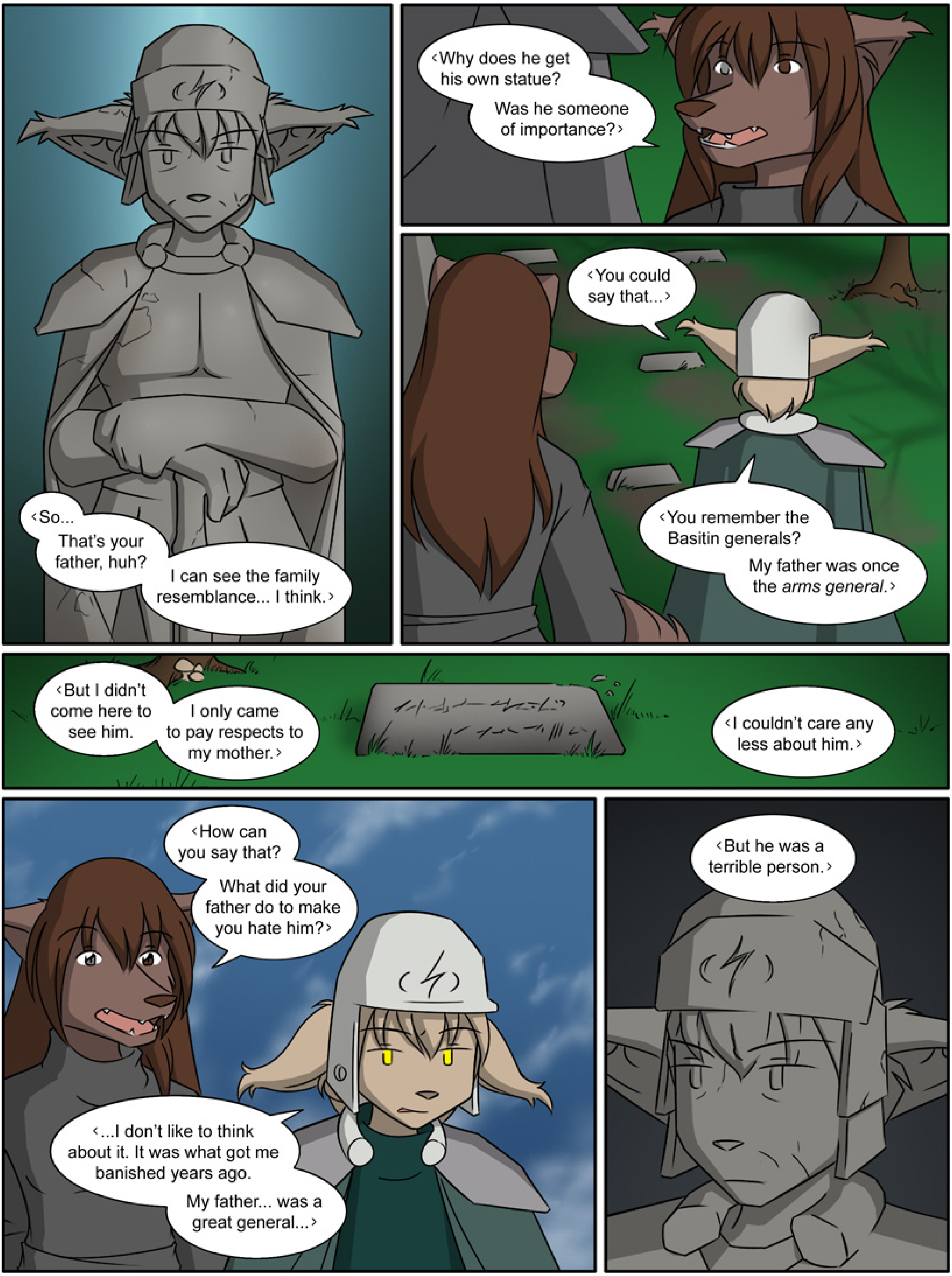

You are better than I had thought. Your rank masks your skill.
I concede to you, Brother.
I will not stop you from crossing this bridge. But I still would not recommend it.
I will take responsibility for my actions here.
‹Oh my. Your friend is quite... amazing...›
Oookay...
This girl's getting a little *too* excited from watching them fight.
‹We can go now, Natani.›
‹Right behind you!›
‹So, Keith...
That last move...›
‹Oh, you noticed? I learned that from you when we practiced sword fighting on the ship.›
‹Learned from me? ...I didn't think you would care how I fought.›
‹Well of course I would. You have a lot of skill. There's always something to learn from another good fighter.›
Oh.. I see.
Wag!
Wag!

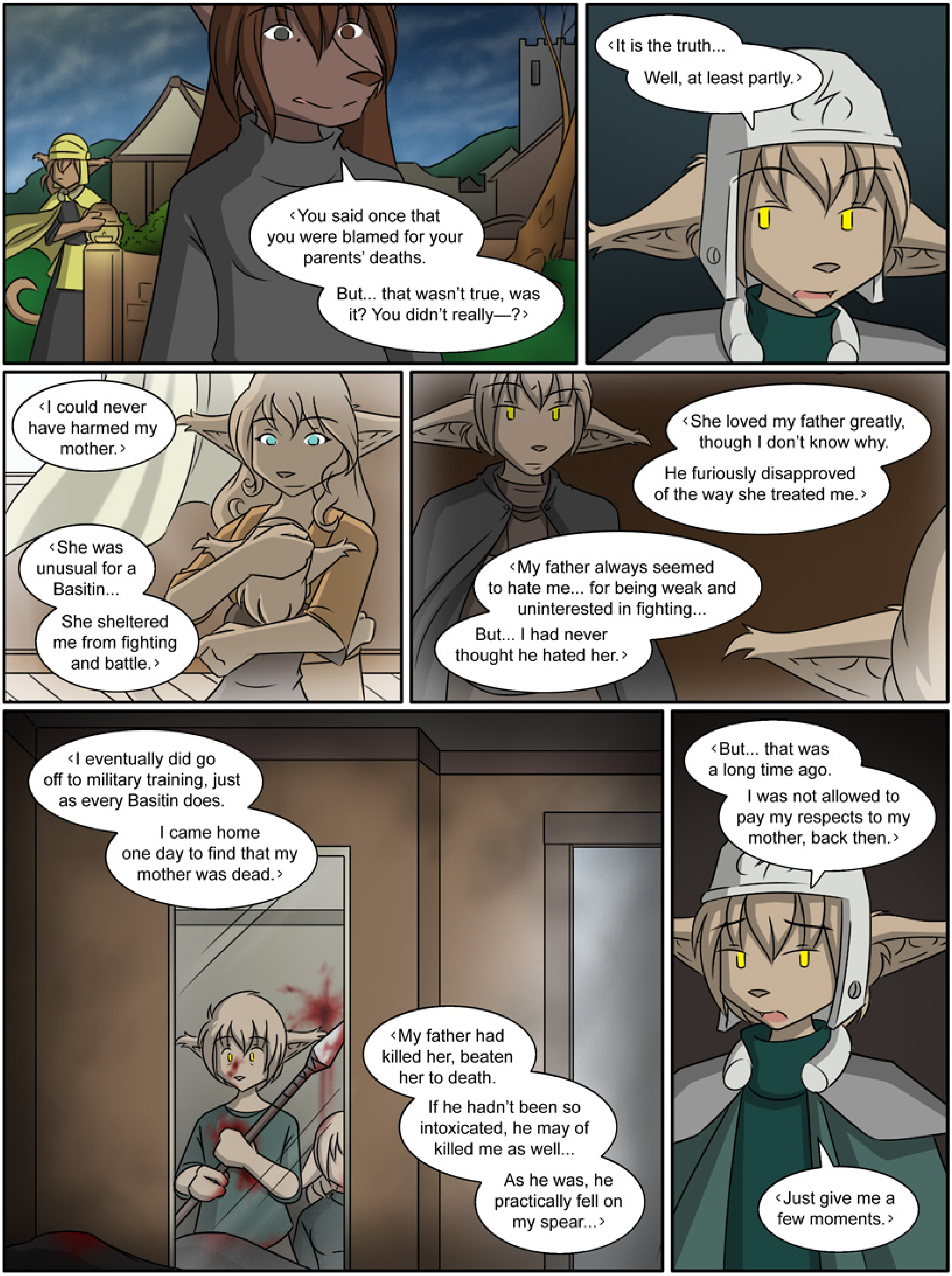

Meanwhile...
General...
Sire, we've just recieved word – another village has been attacked by the Wolves.
Along with several settlements near the borders.
It's a full-scale invasion.
The Keidran are killing indiscriminently; men, women and children alike.
...I don't understand.
First our King and now this... why would they attack us?
Does there need to be a reason? They're animals, it was bound to happen.
I have no love for those beasts, but I never thought they would go as far as this...
The Templar have offered their support in the fight—
The Templar? Those damn magic-users probably caused this mess.
Sire, with all due respect...
The Templar are loyal protectors of our country.
They would *never* dare cause such a coup against their own empire.
The Templar are greedy and corrupt.
I can't help but feel that somehow they are responsible for this.
Have the servants ready my horse.
Perhaps... I will try to speak some reason before this gets out of hand.

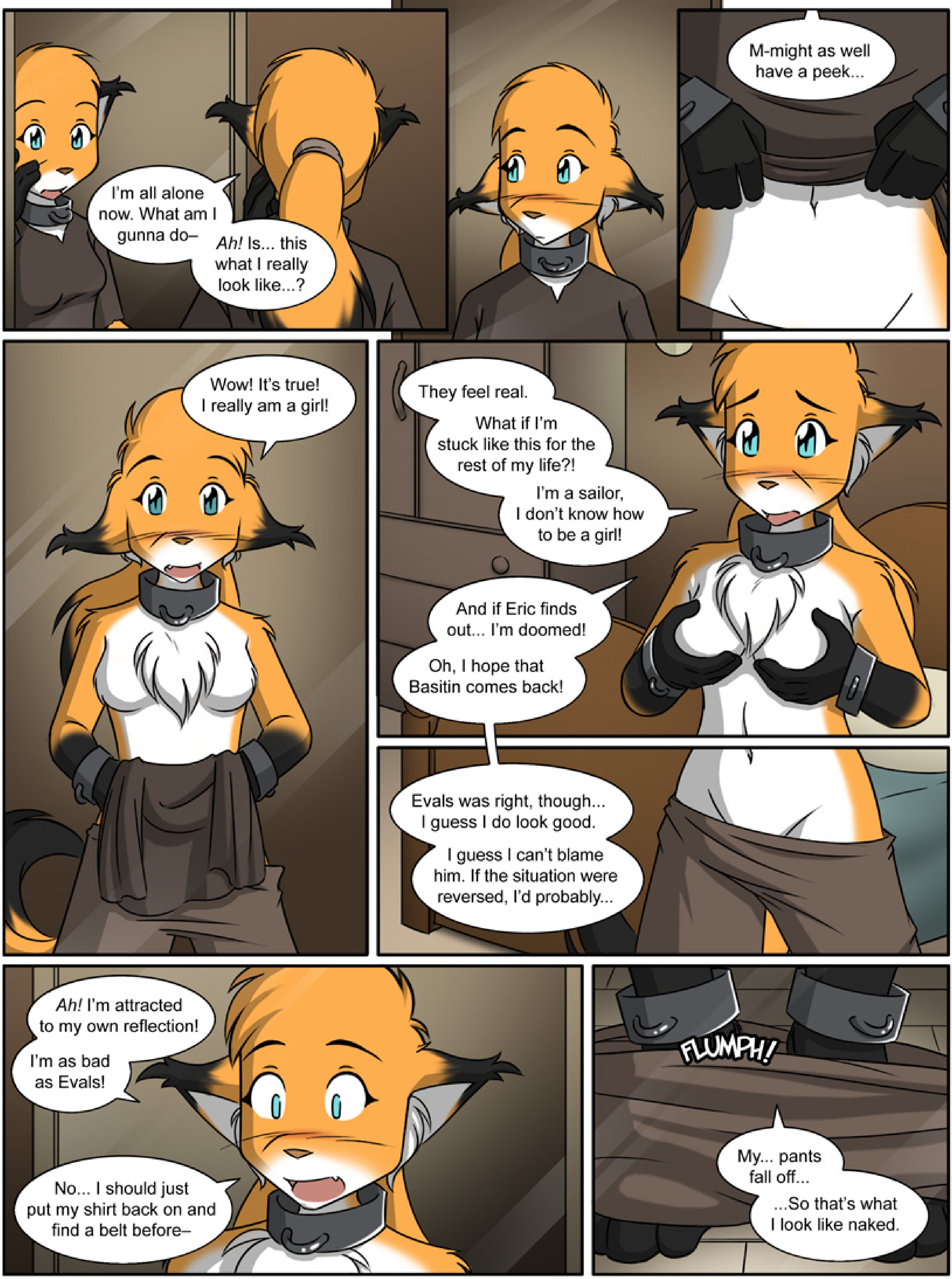

Please, you can't let Eric find me!
You want me to *lie* to our master?
Yes, please... I'll do anything!
Anything?
How about a.... *striptease...?*
S-s-strip?? You want to see me... naked...?!
I think I hear Eric coming...
O-okay! fine! Just stop him!
There you are!
Where's Mike? I need you two to carry my supplies.
Oh! Hello, Master!
Mike? He's... um, sick! He caught that bug the wolf guy had a few days ago.
Ah, that's too bad.
I guess you'll have to do it, then.
Me? Oh, no... Mike's... really sick. I think I should stay here and help.
Nonsense! I can't have both my best men under the weather, can I?
Now get going! Make sure to bring my painting supplies as well, I'll need those.
Ah, great.
I guess I'll have to wait till later...
Oh, thank goodness!

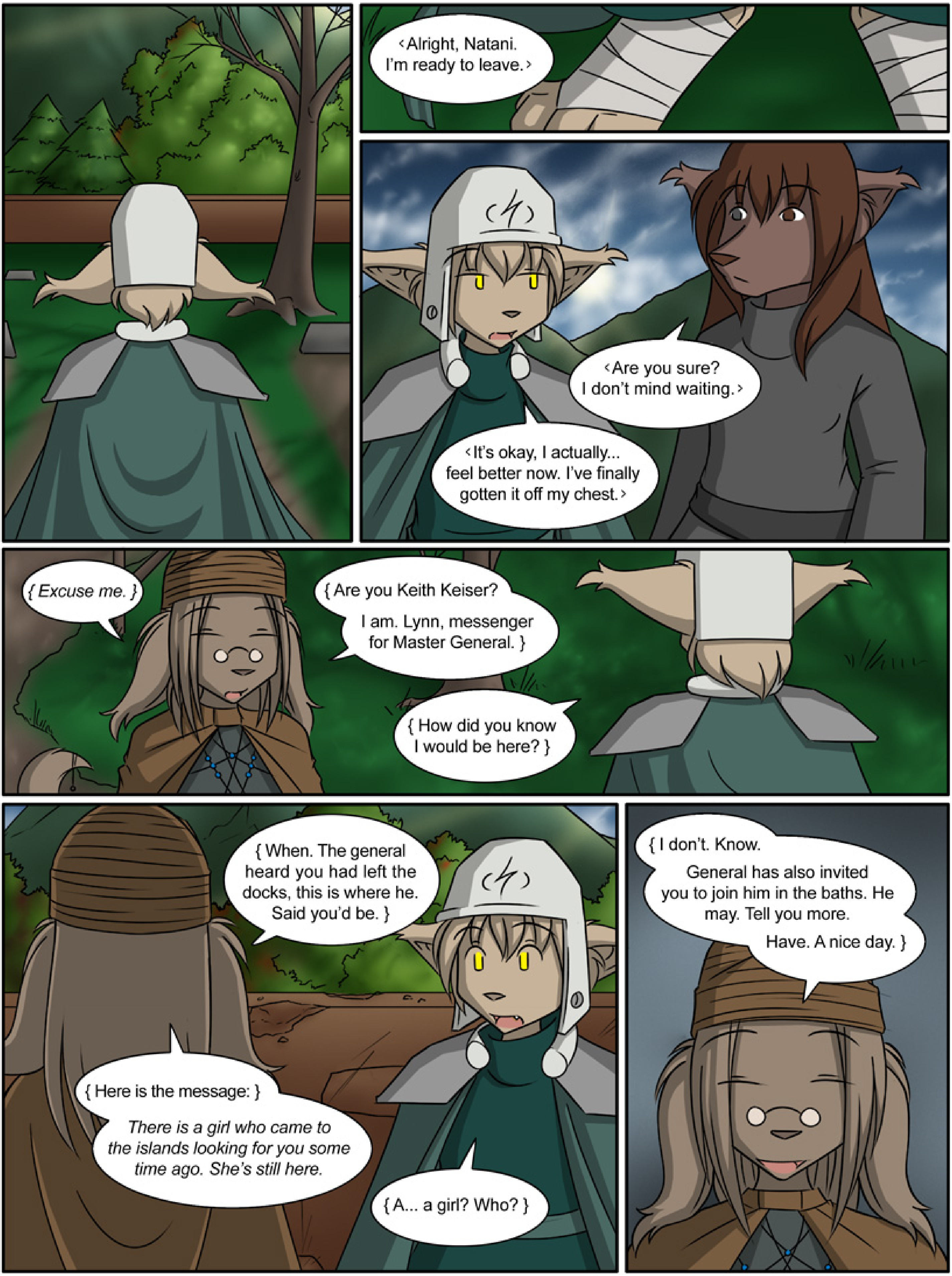

‹Ah...! Wait!›
‹What's wrong?›
‹This... this is a graveyard, isn't it?›
‹Yeah, so...?›
‹We Keidran do not have... "graveyards"... We burn our dead... and scatter the ashes and remains in the forests.›
‹Keeping your dead together in boxes, as if... on display... You delay their return to the earth... It's h-horrible!›
‹Look, Natani. I didn't ask you to come along. If you're afraid, you can stay out here or go back, it doesn't matter to me.›
‹I... I'm not afraid! It... it's just rows of dead bodies... under the ground... w-what's to be afraid of?›

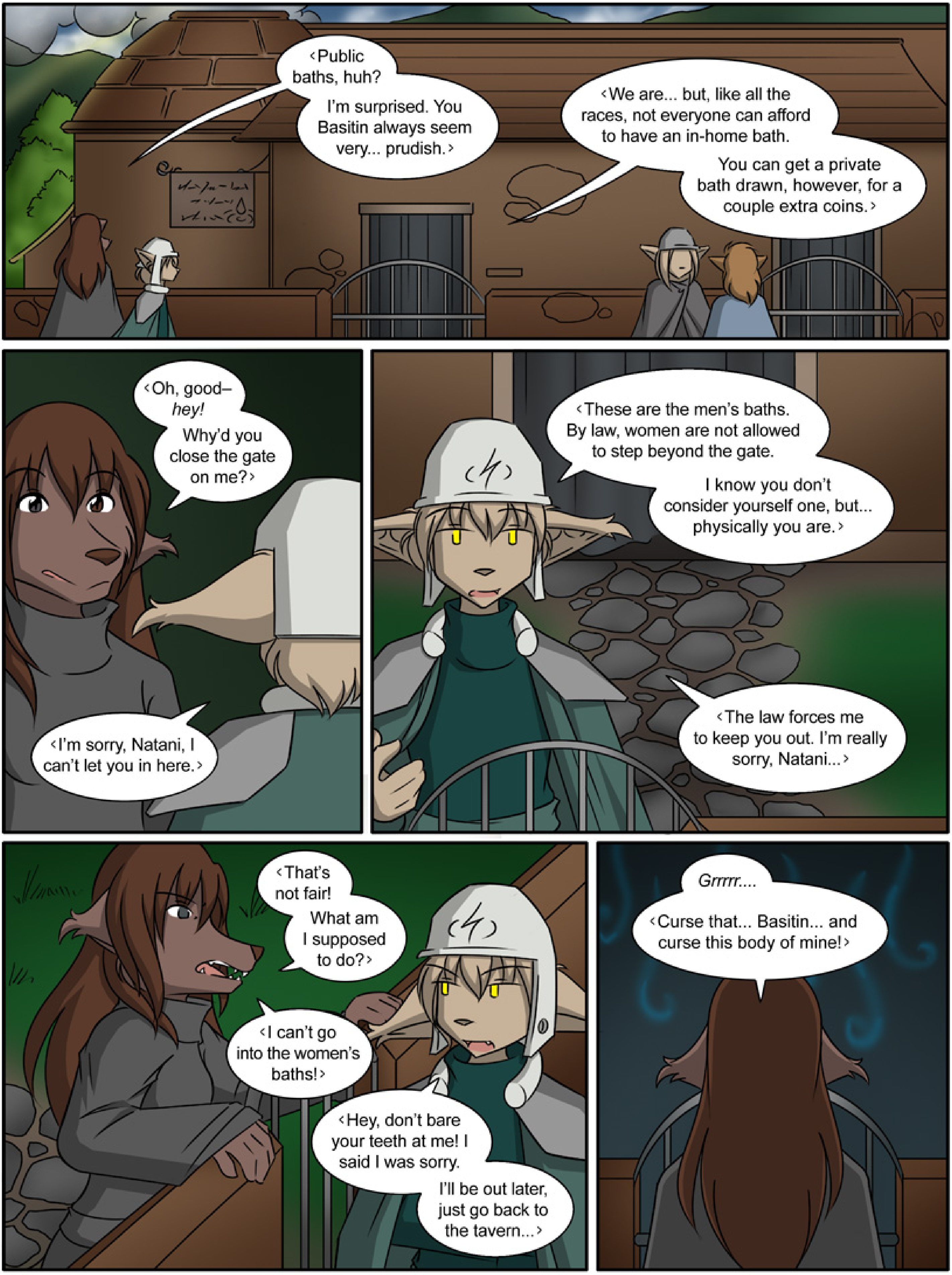

Aaah~!
So good!
Eheheh... Flora... you've got a little...
Hm?
Eh, nevermind.
How can she act so innocent while covered in blood?
{ Hey, Roran. }
{ What is it? }
{ Look here, what's this coin say? }
{ It says... "Province of Vigil"... "Treasury of the Templar." }
{ Templar, huh? }
{ Now, don't be gettin' all suspicious again. }
{ I'm sure plenty o' humans have these. }
MUNCH!
CHEW!
That guy in the forest was right... she really is vicious!
{ Well, Ah can't help it... }
{ This ain't ta usual coin, an' I've seen five ah these this season. }
{ Maybe the Templar took over all human coin makin'. I wouldn't be surprised.
They've taken over just about everything else. }

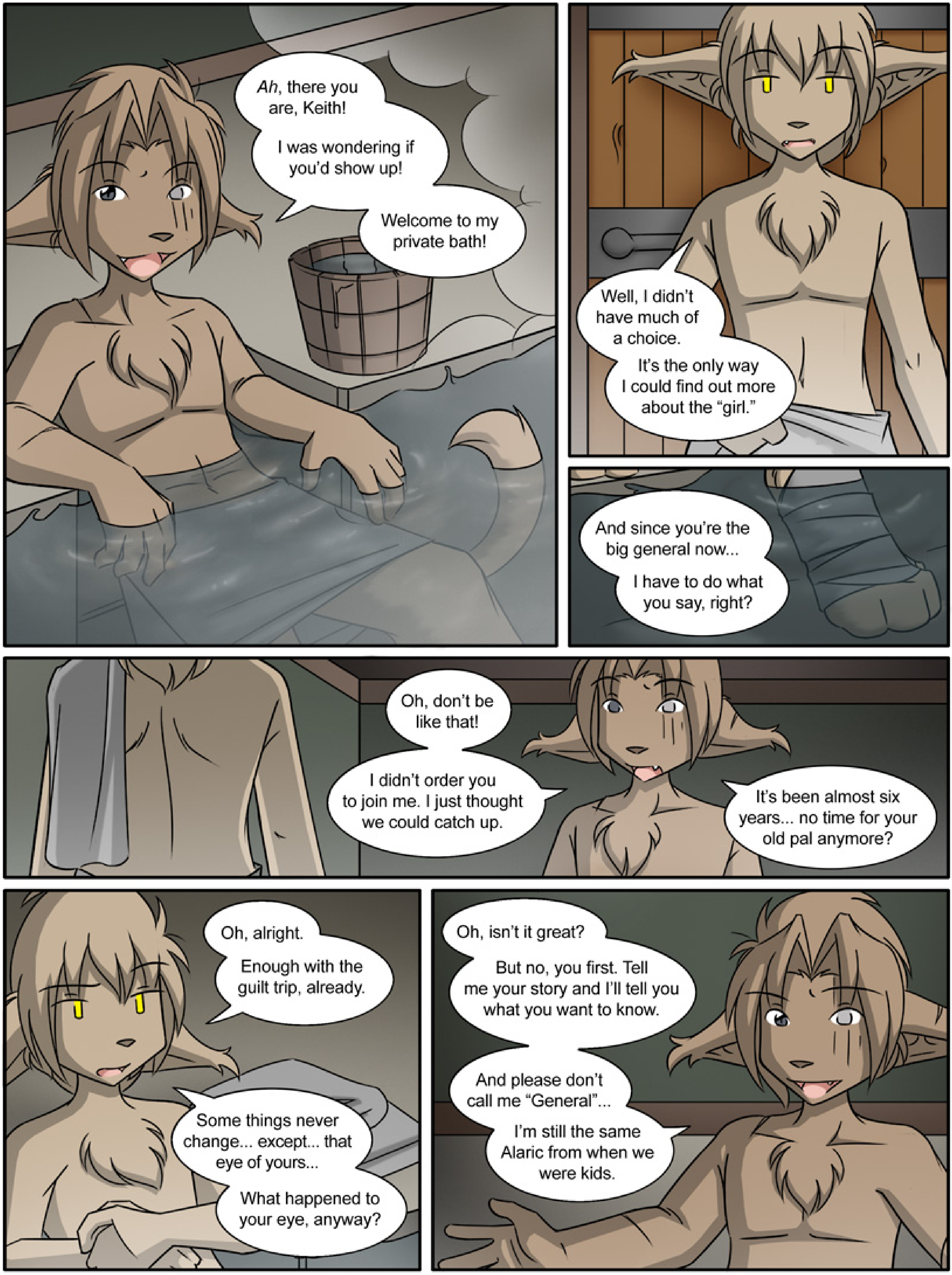

‹So... That's your father, huh?
I can see the family resemblance... I think.›
‹Why does he get his own statue?
Was he someone of importance?›
‹You could say that...›
‹You remember the Basitin generals?
My father was once the *arms general*.›
‹But I didn't come here to see him.
I only came to pay respects to my mother.›
‹I couldn't care any less about him.›
‹How can you say that?
What did your father do to make you hate him?›
‹...I don't like to think about it. It was what got me banished years ago.
My father... was a great general...›
‹But he was a terrible person.›

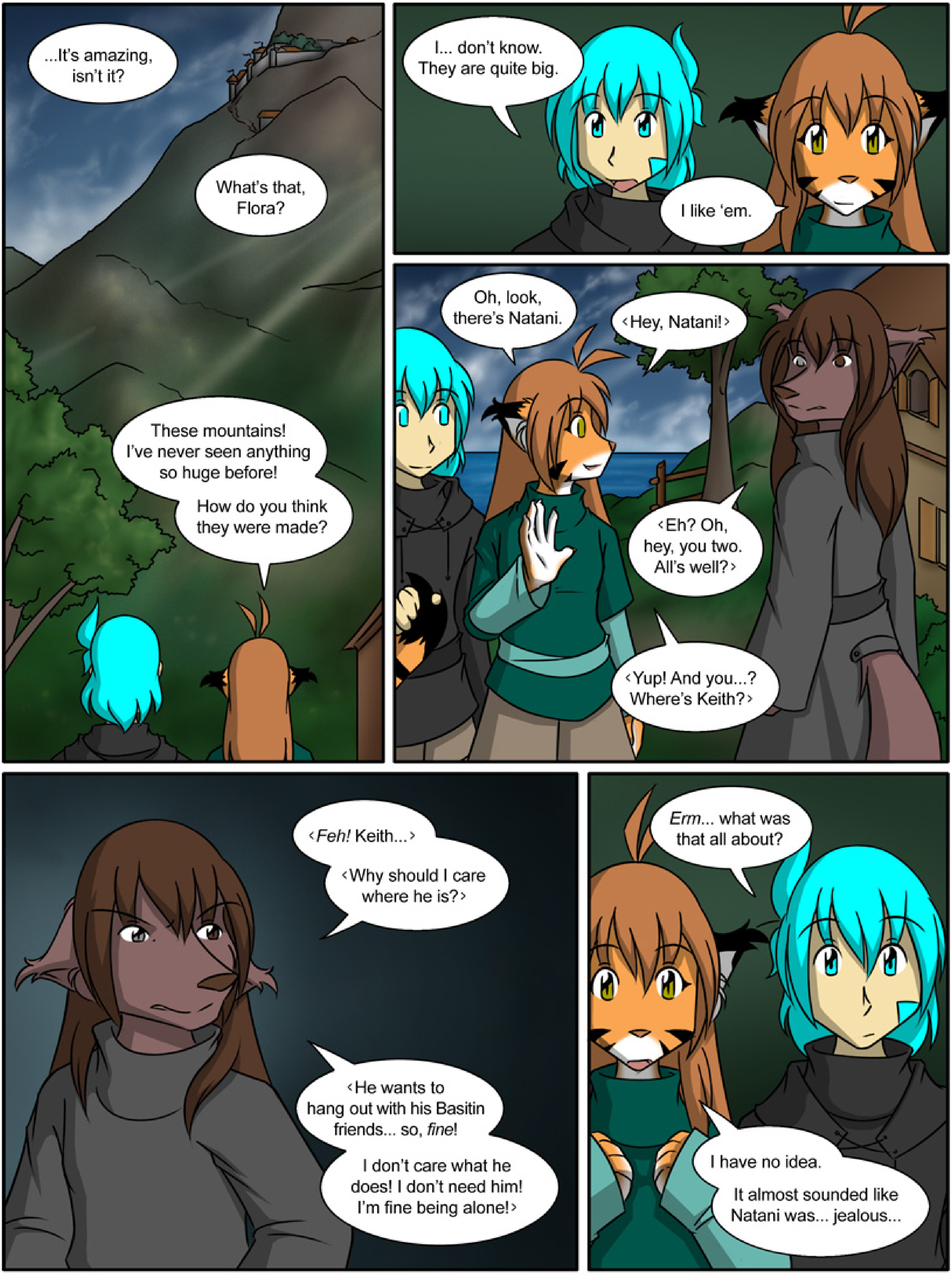

‹You said once that you were blamed for your parents' deaths.
But... that wasn't true, was it? You didn't really—?›
‹It is the truth...
Well, at least partly.›
‹I could never have harmed my mother.›
‹She was unusual for a Basitin...
She sheltered me from fighting and battle.›
‹She loved my father greatly, though I don't know why.
He furiously disapproved of the way she treated me.›
‹My father always seemed to hate me... for being weak and uninterested in fighting...
But... I had never thought he hated her.›
‹I eventually did go off to military training, just as every Basitin does.
I came home one day to find that my mother was dead.›
‹My father had killed her, beaten her to death.
If he hadn't been so intoxicated, he may of killed me as well...
As he was, he practically fell on my spear...›
‹But... that was a long time ago.
I was not allowed to pay my respects to my mother, back then.›
‹Just give me a few moments.›

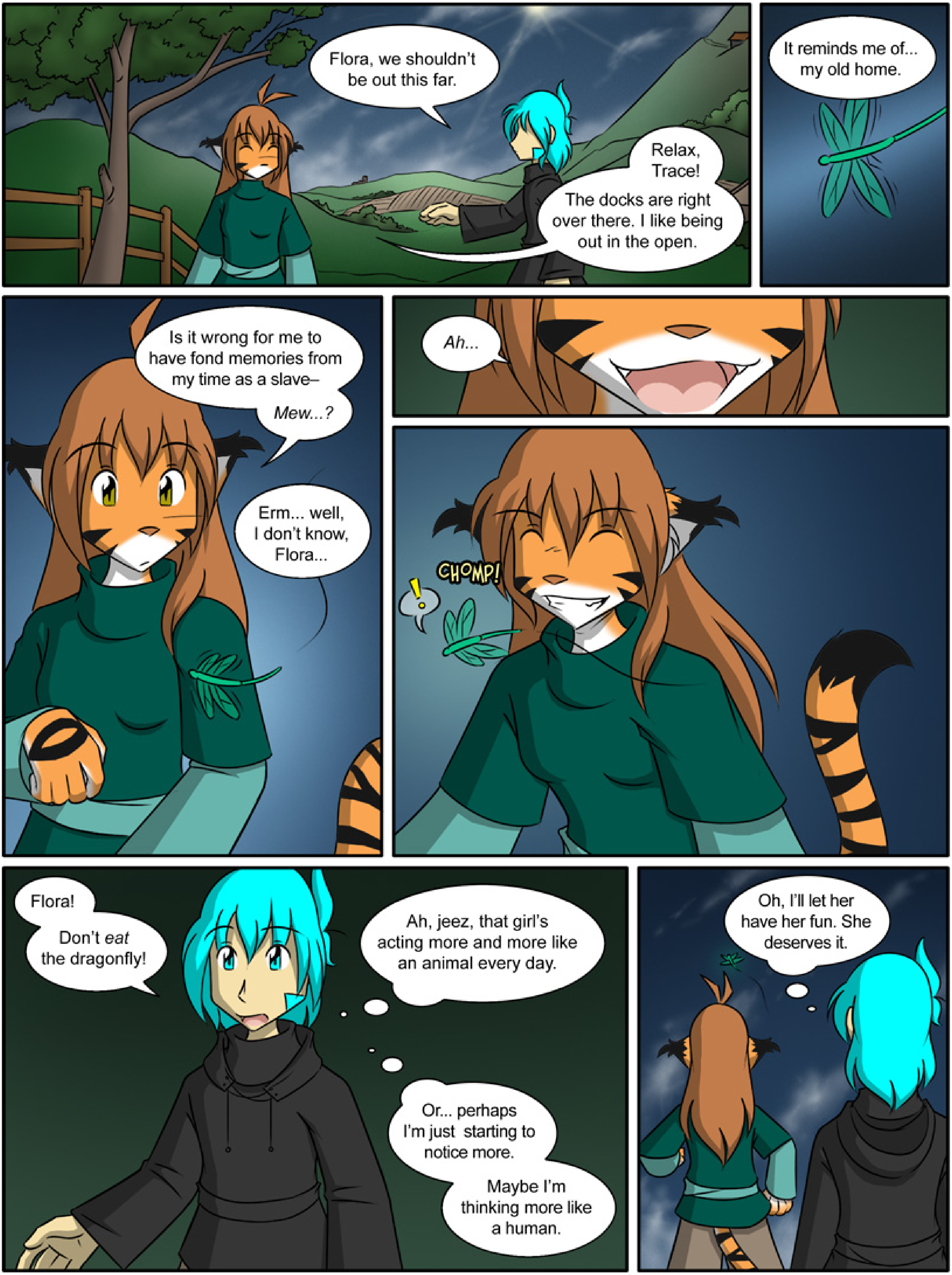

I'm all alone now. What am I gunna do–
Ah! Is... this what I really look like...?
M-might as well have a peek...
Wow! It's true! I really am a girl!
They feel real.
What if I'm stuck like this for the rest of my life?!
I'm a sailor, I don't know how to be a girl!
And if Eric finds out... I'm doomed!
Oh, I hope that Basitin comes back!
Evals was right, though... I guess I do look good.
I guess I can't blame him. If the situation were reversed, I'd probably...
Ah! I'm attracted to my own reflection!
I'm as bad as Evals!
No... I should just put my shirt back on and find a belt before–
FLUMPH!
My... pants fall off...
...So that's what I look like naked.

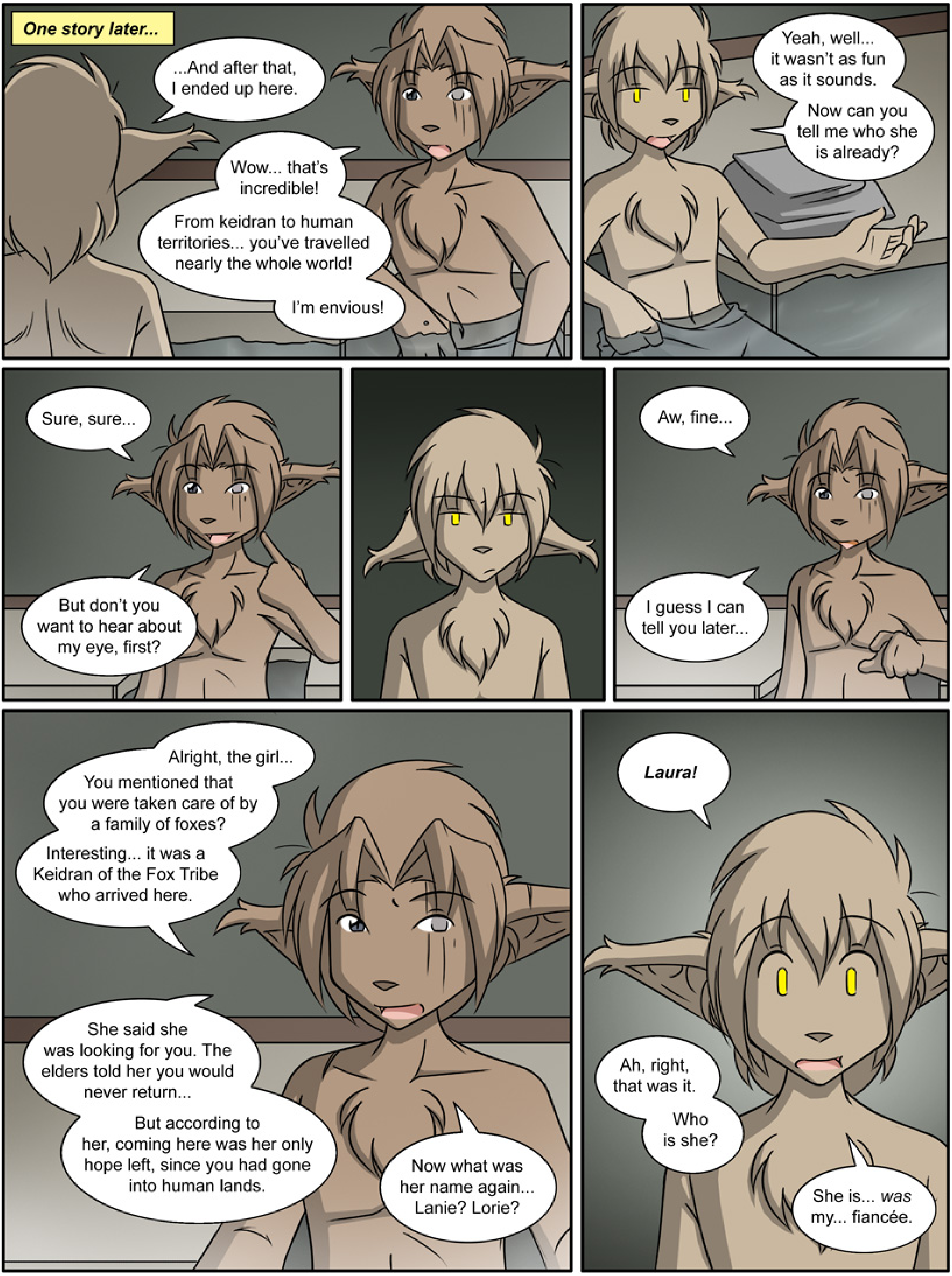

‹Alright, Natani. I'm ready to leave.›
‹Are you sure? I don't mind waiting.›
‹It's okay, I actually... feel better now. I've finally gotten it off my chest.›
{ *Excuse me.* }
{ Are you Keith Keiser?
I am. Lynn, messenger for Master General. }
{ How did you know I would be here? }
{ When. The general heard you had left the docks, this is where he. Said you'd be. }
{ Here is the message: }
There is a girl who came to the islands looking for you some time ago. She's still here.
{ A... a girl? Who? }
{ I don't. Know.
General has also invited you to join him in the baths. He may. Tell you more.
Have. A nice day. }

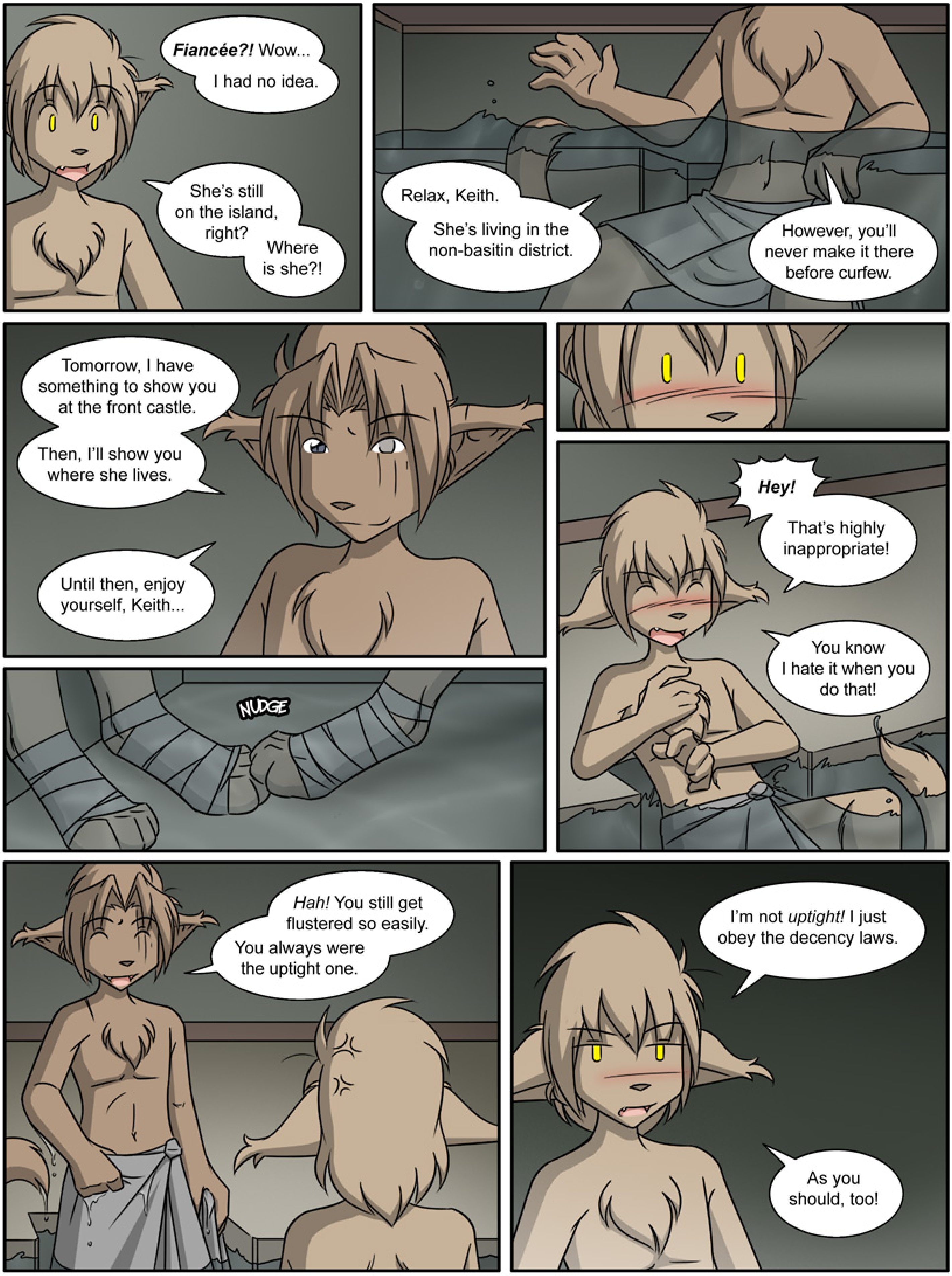

‹Public baths, huh?
I'm surprised. You Basitin always seem very... prudish.›
‹We are... but, like all the races, not everyone can afford to have an in-home bath.
You can get a private bath drawn, however, for a couple extra coins.›
‹Oh, good– *hey!* Why'd you close the gate on me?›
‹I'm sorry, Natani, I can't let you in here.›
‹These are the men's baths. By law, women are not allowed to step beyond the gate.
I know you don't consider yourself one, but... physically you are.›
‹The law forces me to keep you out. I'm really sorry, Natani...›
‹That's not fair! What am I supposed to do?›
‹I can't go into the women's baths!›
‹Hey, don't bare your teeth at me! I said I was sorry.
I'll be out later, just go back to the tavern...›
Grrrrr....
‹Curse that... Basitin... and curse this body of mine!›

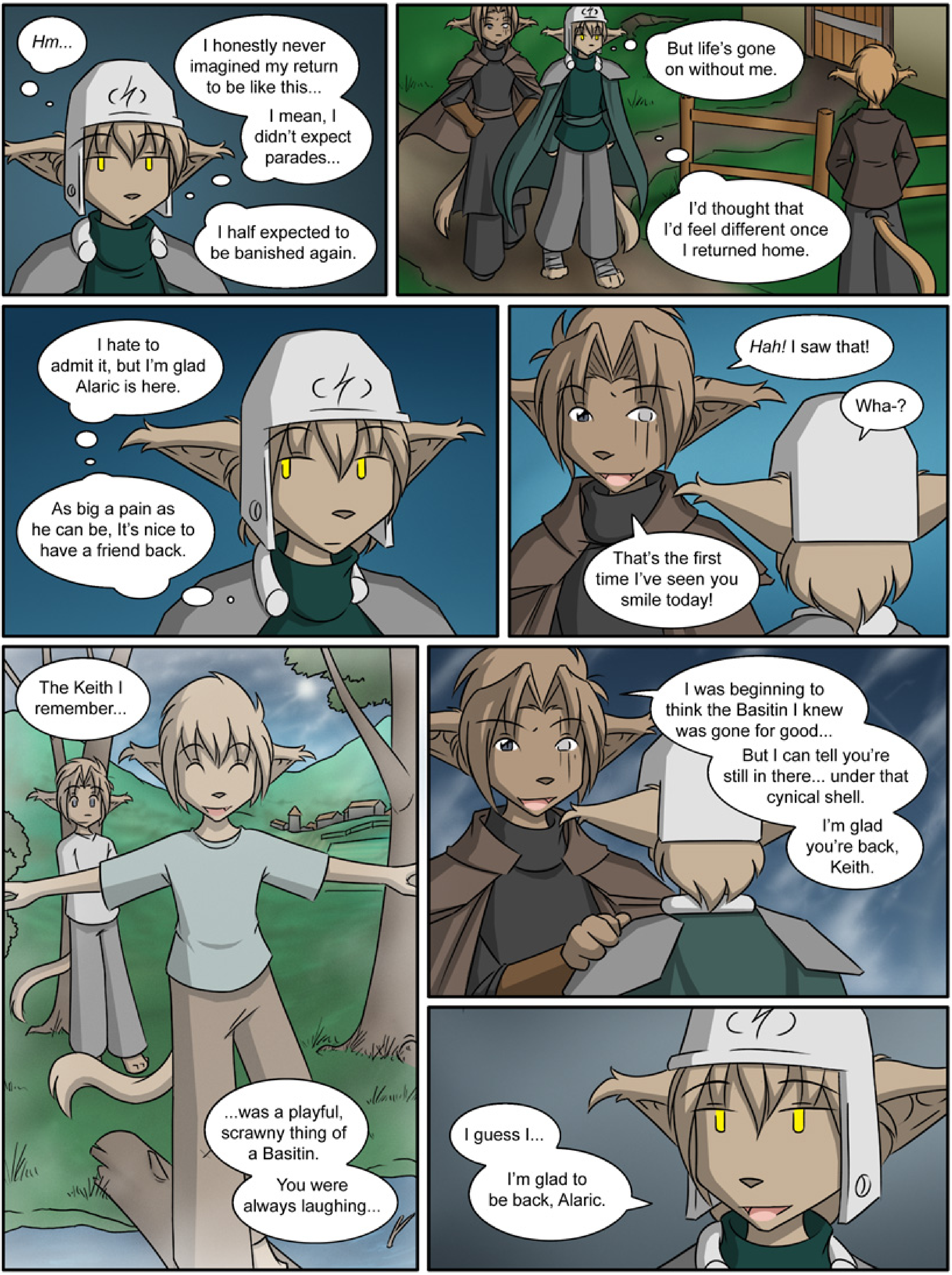

Ah, there you are, Keith!
I was wondering if you'd show up!
Welcome to my private bath!
Well, I didn't have much of a choice.
It's the only way I could find out more about the "girl."
And since you're the big general now...
I have to do what you say, right?
Oh, don't be like that!
I didn't order you to join me. I just thought we could catch up.
It's been almost six years... no time for your old pal anymore?
Oh, alright.
Enough with the guilt trip, already.
Some things never change... except... that eye of yours...
What happened to your eye, anyway?
Oh, isn't it great?
But no, you first. Tell me your story and I'll tell you what you want to know.
And please don't call me "General"...
I'm still the same Alaric from when we were kids.

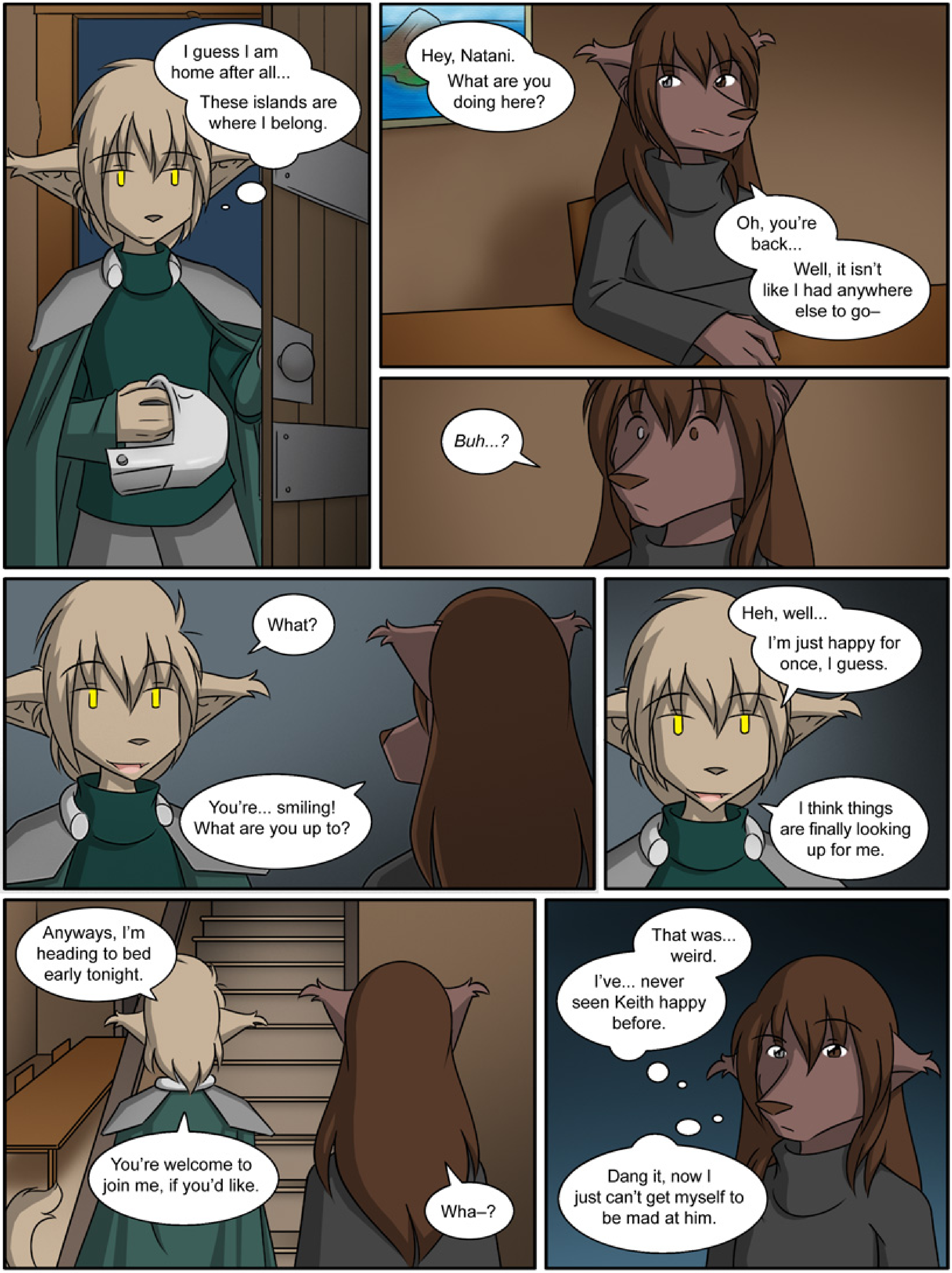

...It's amazing, isn't it?
What's that, Flora?
These mountains! I've never seen anything so huge before!
How do you think they were made?
I... don't know. They are quite big.
I like 'em.
Oh, look, there's Natani.
‹Hey, Natani!›
‹Eh? Oh, hey, you two. All's well?›
‹Yup! And you...? Where's Keith?›
‹*Feh!* Keith...›
‹Why should I care where he is?›
‹He wants to hang out with his Basitin friends... so, *fine*!
I don't care what he does! I don't need him! I'm fine being alone!›
Erm... what was that all about?
I have no idea.
It almost sounded like Natani was... jealous...

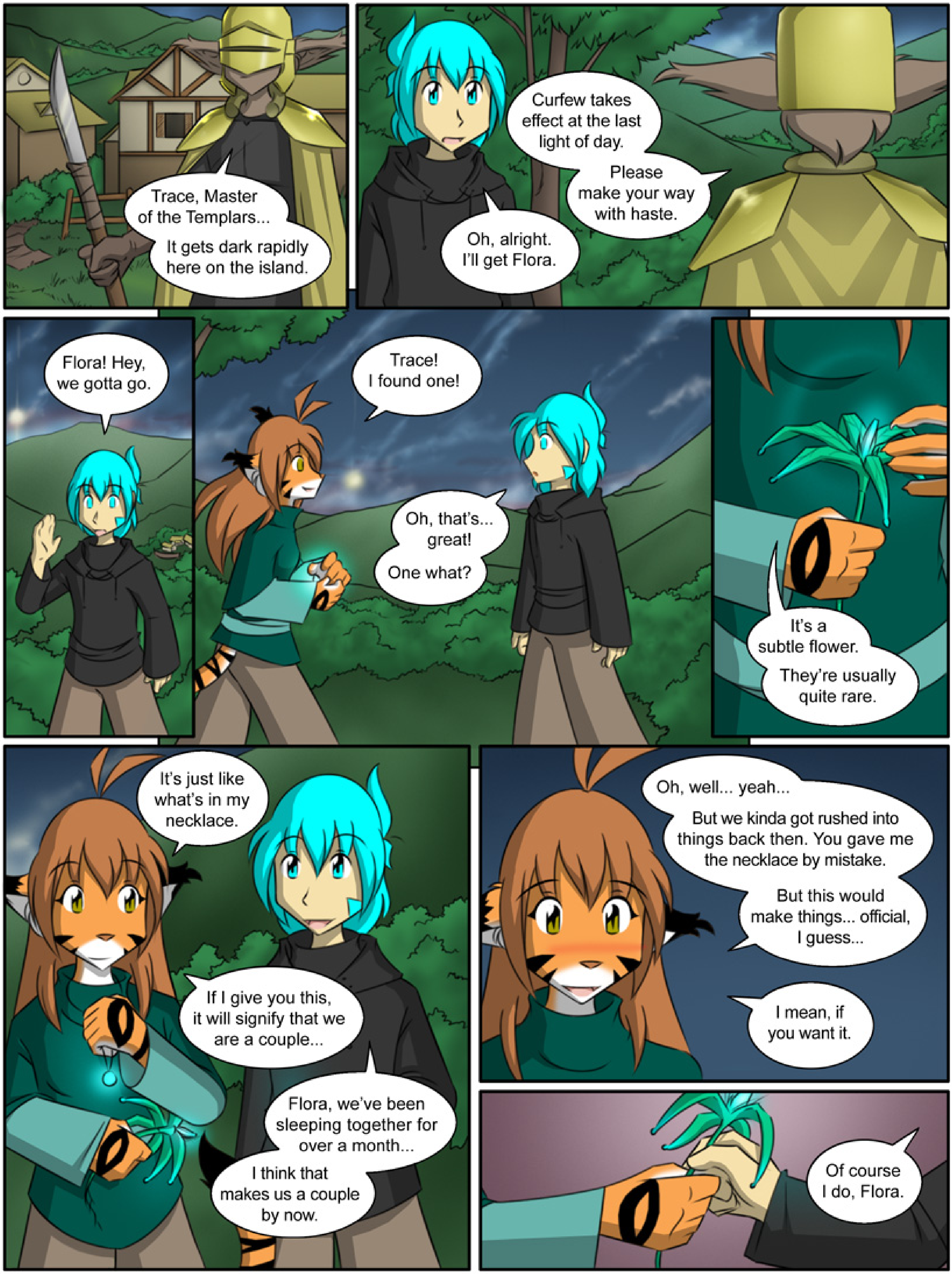

Flora, we shouldn't be out this far.
Relax, Trace!
The docks are right over there. I like being out in the open.
It reminds me of... my old home.
Is it wrong for me to have fond memories from my time as a slave–
Mew...?
Erm... well, I don't know, Flora...
Ah...
CHOMP!
!
Flora!
Don't *eat* the dragonfly!
Ah, jeez, that girl's acting more and more like an animal every day.
Or... perhaps I'm just starting to notice more.
Maybe I'm thinking more like a human.
Oh, I'll let her have her fun. She deserves it.

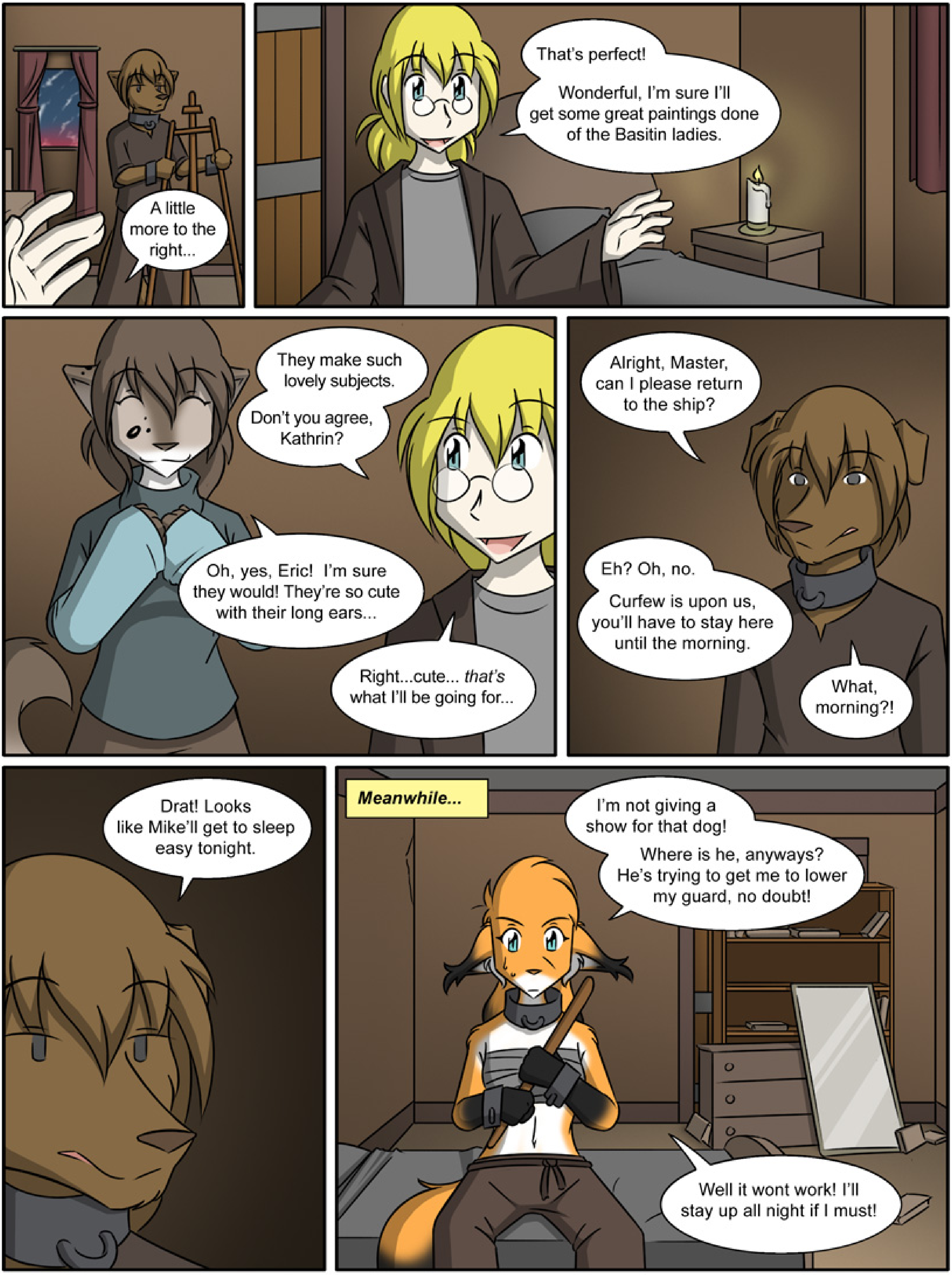

One story later...
...And after that, I ended up here.
Wow... that's incredible!
From keidran to human territories... you've travelled nearly the whole world!
I'm envious!
Yeah, well... it wasn't as fun as it sounds.
Now can you tell me who she is already?
Sure, sure...
But don't you want to hear about my eye, first?
Aw, fine...
I guess I can tell you later...
Alright, the girl...
You mentioned that you were taken care of by a family of foxes?
Interesting... it was a Keidran of the Fox Tribe who arrived here.
She said she was looking for you. The elders told her you would never return...
But according to her, coming here was her only hope left, since you had gone into human lands.
Now what was her name again... Lanie? Lorie?
Laura!
Ah, right, that was it.
Who is she?
She is... *was* my... fiancée.

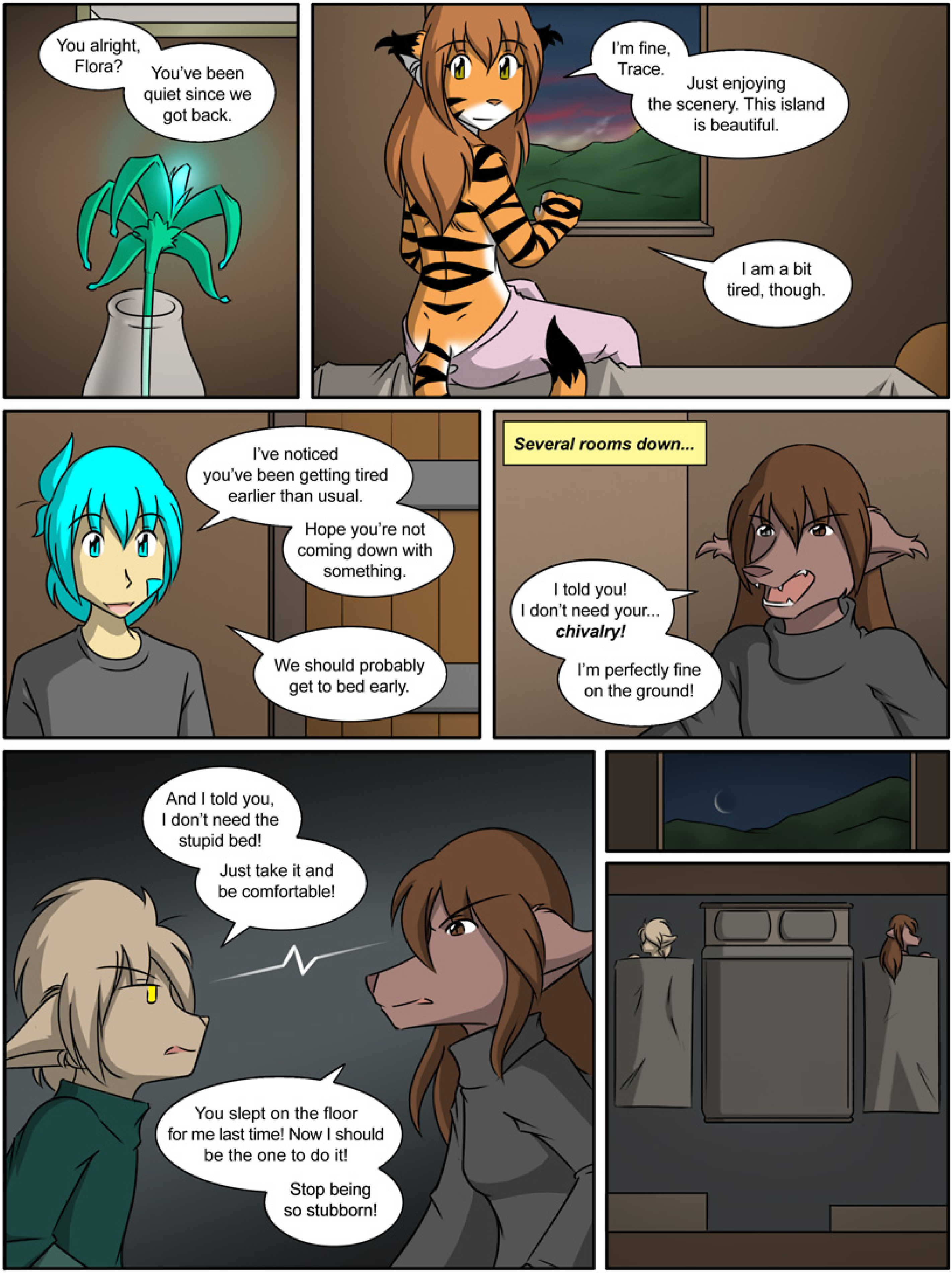

Fiancée?! Wow...
I had no idea.
She's still on the island, right?
Where is she?!
Relax, Keith.
She's living in the non-basitin district.
However, you'll never make it there before curfew.
Tomorrow, I have something to show you at the front castle.
Then, I'll show you where she lives.
Until then, enjoy yourself, Keith...
NUDGE
Hey!
That's highly inappropriate!
You know I hate it when you do that!
Hah! You still get flustered so easily.
You always were the uptight one.
I'm not *uptight!* I just obey the decency laws.
As you should, too!

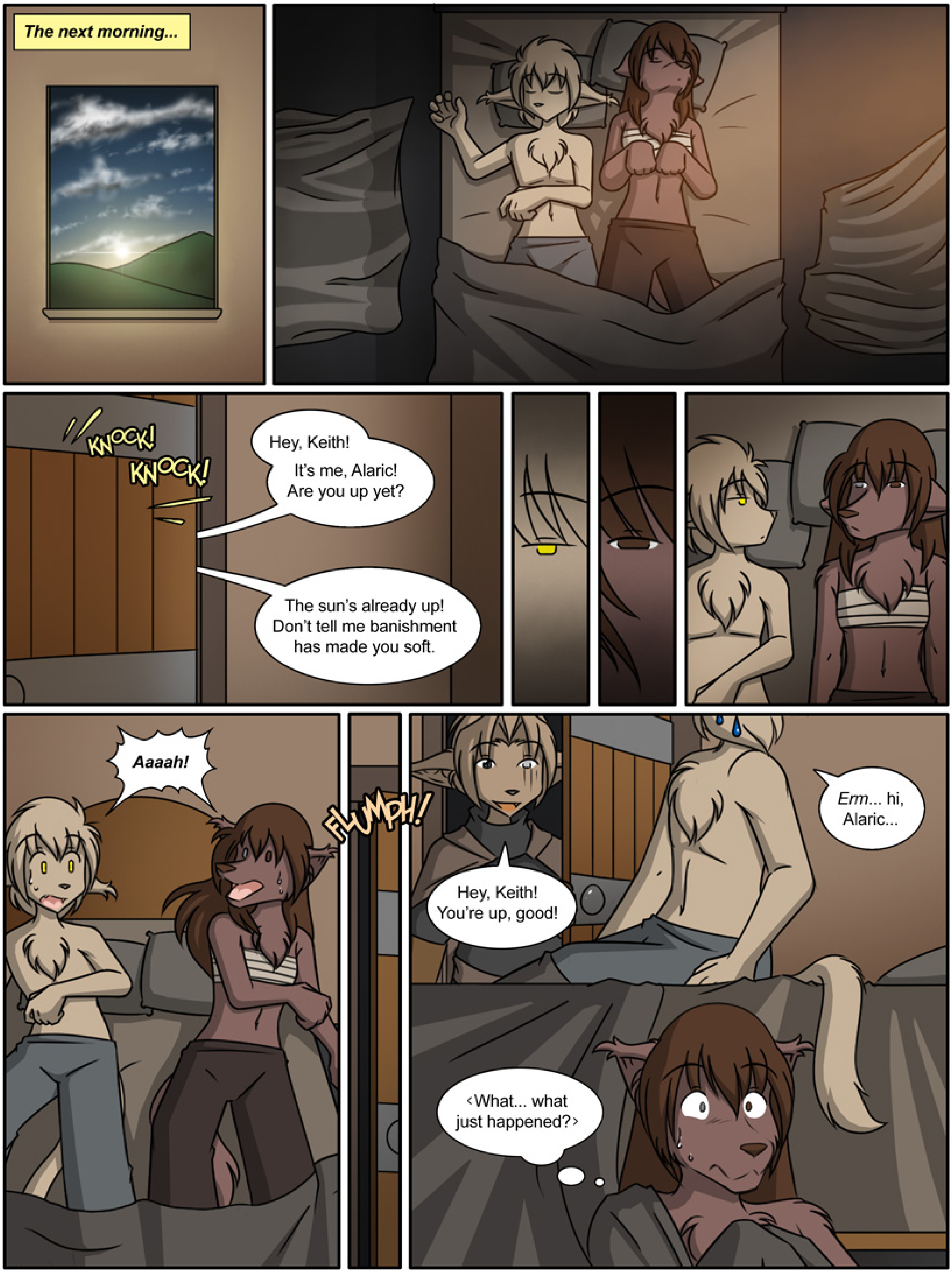

Hm...
I honestly never imagined my return to be like this...
I mean, I didn't expect parades...
I half expected to be banished again.
But life's gone on without me.
I'd thought that I'd feel different once I returned home.
I hate to admit it, but I'm glad Alaric is here.
As big a pain as he can be, It's nice to have a friend back.
Hah! I saw that!
Wha-?
That's the first time I've seen you smile today!
The Keith I remember...
...was a playful, scrawny thing of a Basitin.
You were always laughing...
I was beginning to think the Basitin I knew was gone for good...
But I can tell you're still in there... under that cynical shell.
I'm glad you're back, Keith.
I guess I...
I'm glad to be back, Alaric.

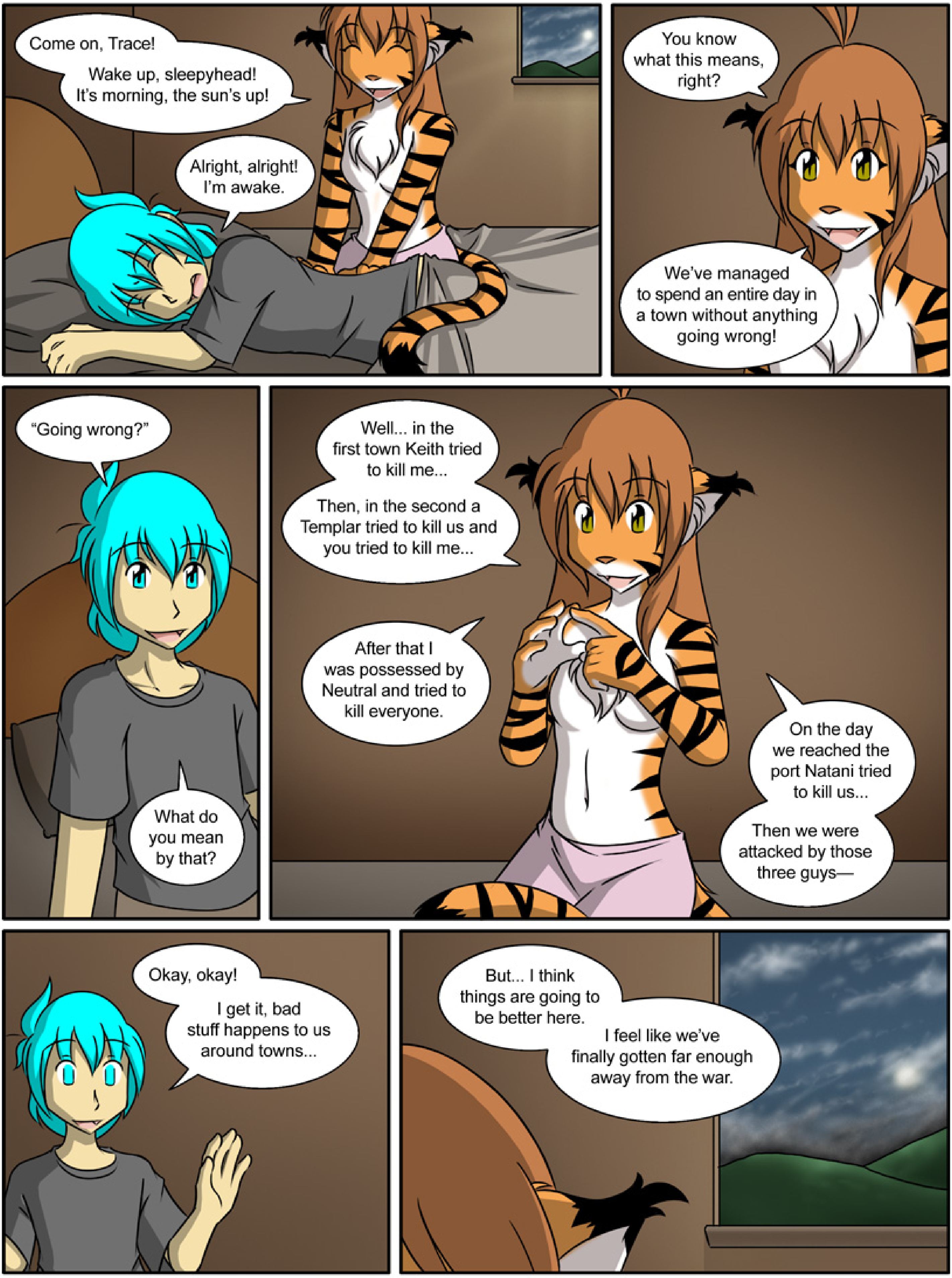

I guess I am home after all...
These islands are where I belong.
Hey, Natani.
What are you doing here?
Oh, you're back...
Well, it isn't like I had anywhere else to go–
Buh...?
What?
You're... smiling! What are you up to?
Heh, well...
I'm just happy for once, I guess.
I think things are finally looking up for me.
Anyways, I'm heading to bed early tonight.
You're welcome to join me, if you'd like.
Wha–?
That was... weird.
I've... never seen Keith happy before.
Dang it, now I just can't get myself to be mad at him.

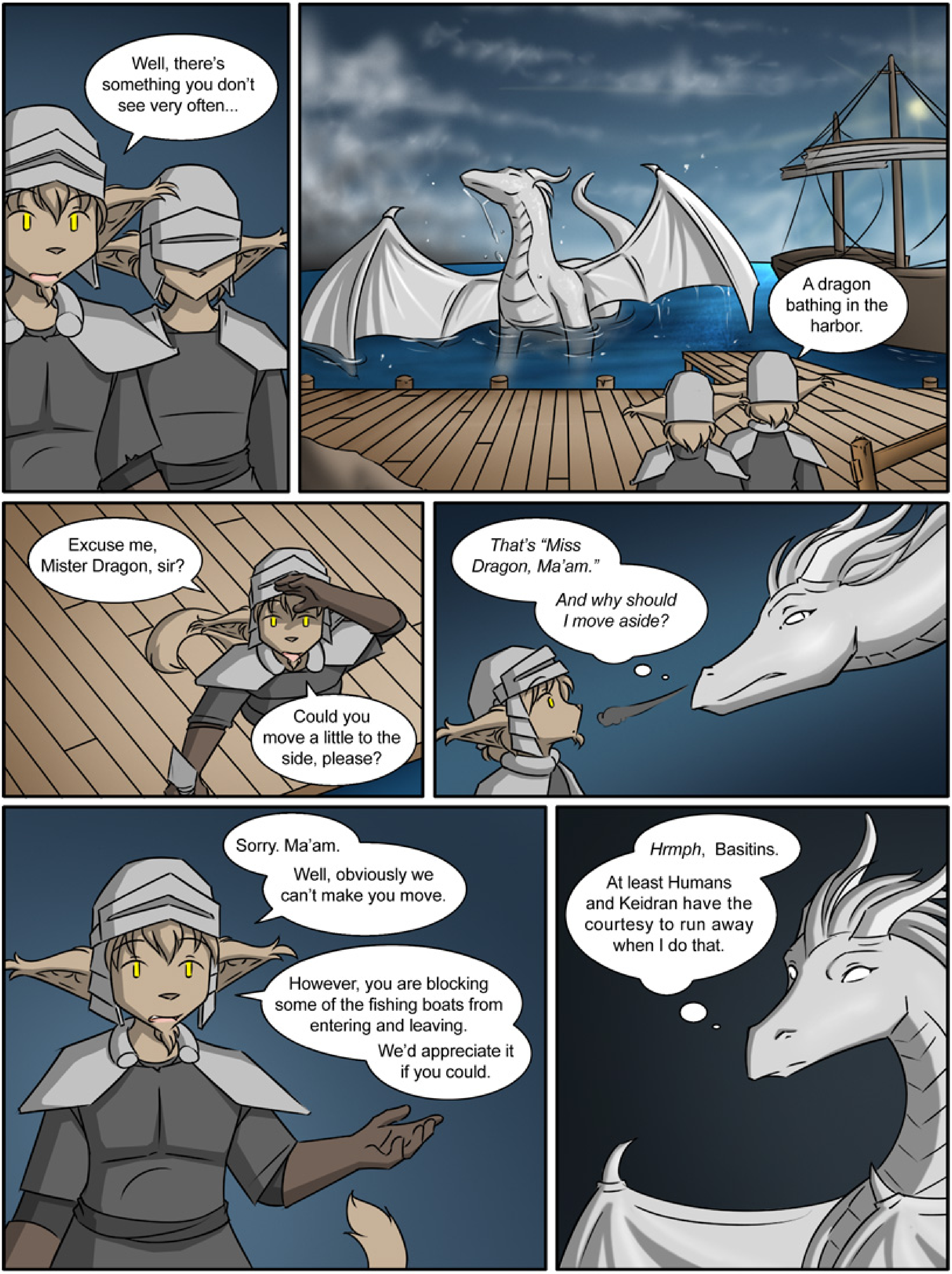

Trace, Master of the Templars...
It gets dark rapidly here on the island.
Curfew takes effect at the last light of day.
Please make your way with haste.
Oh, alright. I'll get Flora.
Flora! Hey, we gotta go.
Trace! I found one!
Oh, that's... great!
One what?
It's a subtle flower.
They're usually quite rare.
It's just like what's in my necklace.
If I give you this, it will signify that we are a couple...
Flora, we've been sleeping together for over a month...
I think that makes us a couple by now.
Oh, well... yeah...
But we kinda got rushed into things back then. You gave me the necklace by mistake.
But this would make things... official, I guess...
I mean, if you want it.
Of course I do, Flora.

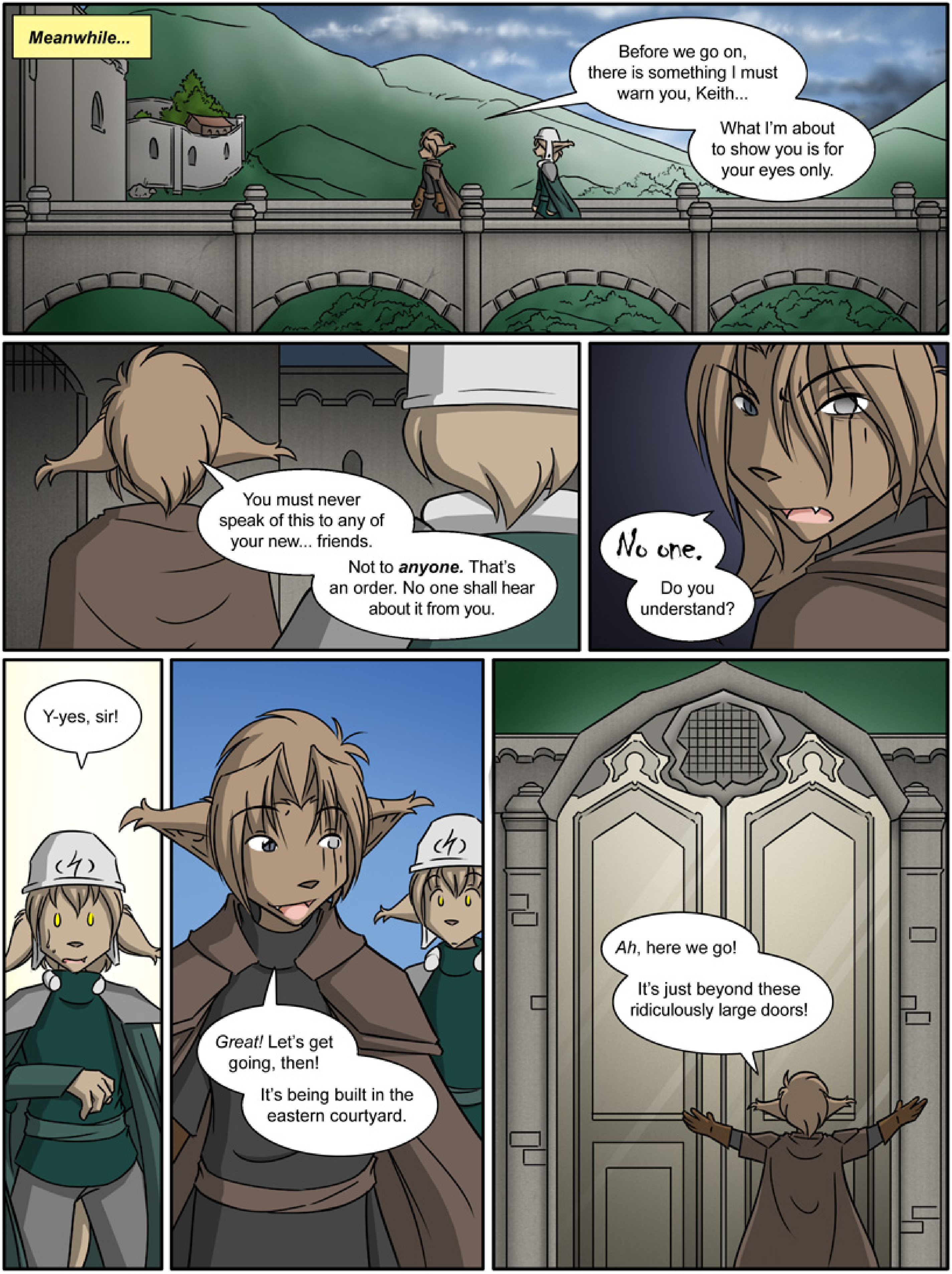

A little more to the right...
That's perfect!
Wonderful, I'm sure I'll get some great paintings done of the Basitin ladies.
They make such lovely subjects.
Don't you agree, Kathrin?
Oh, yes, Eric! I'm sure they would! They're so cute with their long ears...
Right...cute... *that's* what I'll be going for...
Alright, Master, can I please return to the ship?
Eh? Oh, no.
Curfew is upon us, you'll have to stay here until the morning.
What, morning?!
Drat! Looks like Mike'll get to sleep easy tonight.
Meanwhile...
I'm not giving a show for that dog!
Where is he, anyways? He's trying to get me to lower my guard, no doubt!
Well it wont work! I'll stay up all night if I must!

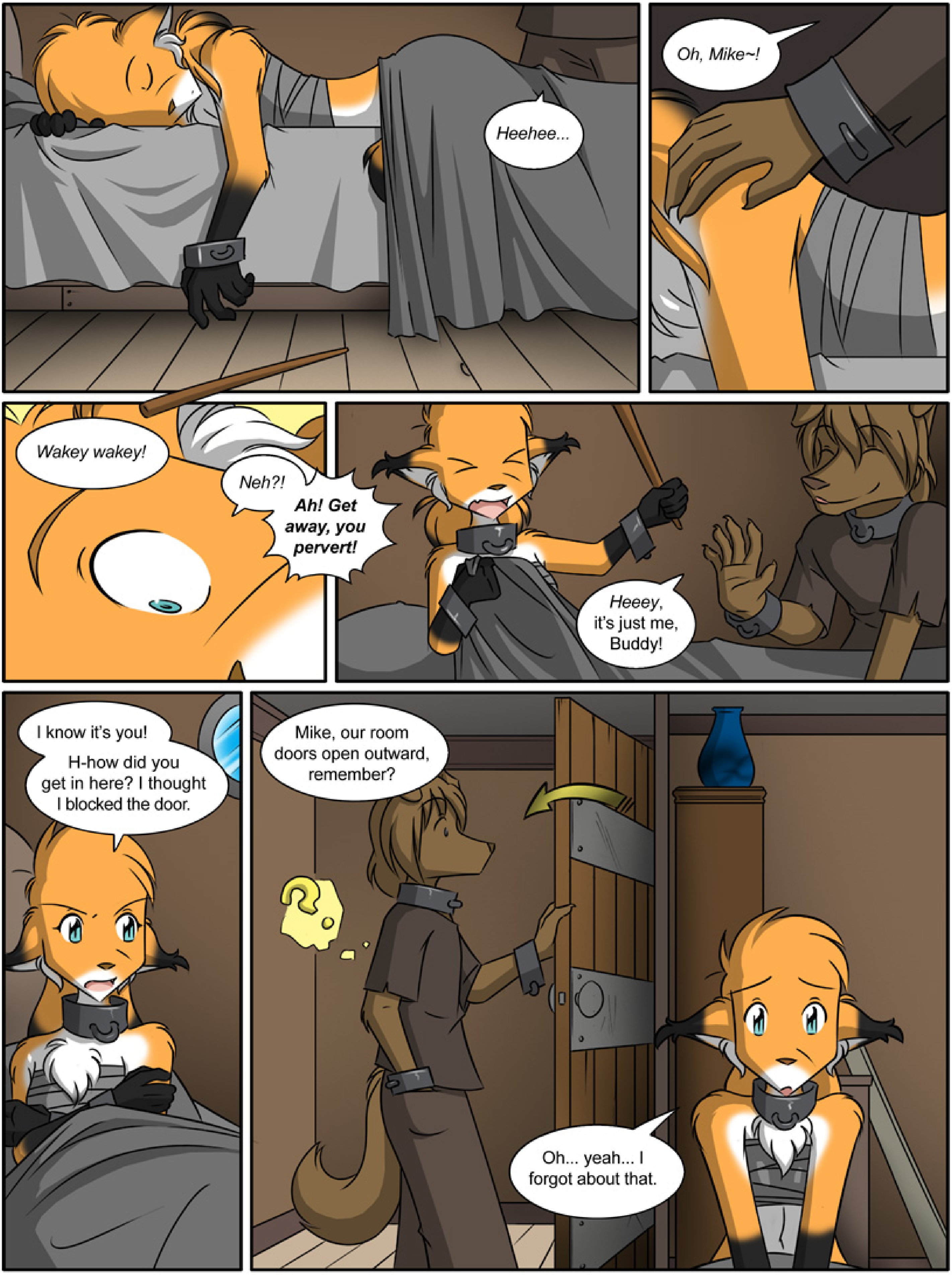

You alright, Flora?
You've been quiet since we got back.
I'm fine, Trace.
Just enjoying the scenery. This island is beautiful.
I am a bit tired, though.
I've noticed you've been getting tired earlier than usual.
Hope you're not coming down with something.
We should probably get to bed early.
Several rooms down...
I told you! I don't need your... ***chivalry!***
I'm perfectly fine on the ground!
And I told you, I don't need the stupid bed!
Just take it and be comfortable!
You slept on the floor for me last time! Now I should be the one to do it!
Stop being so stubborn!

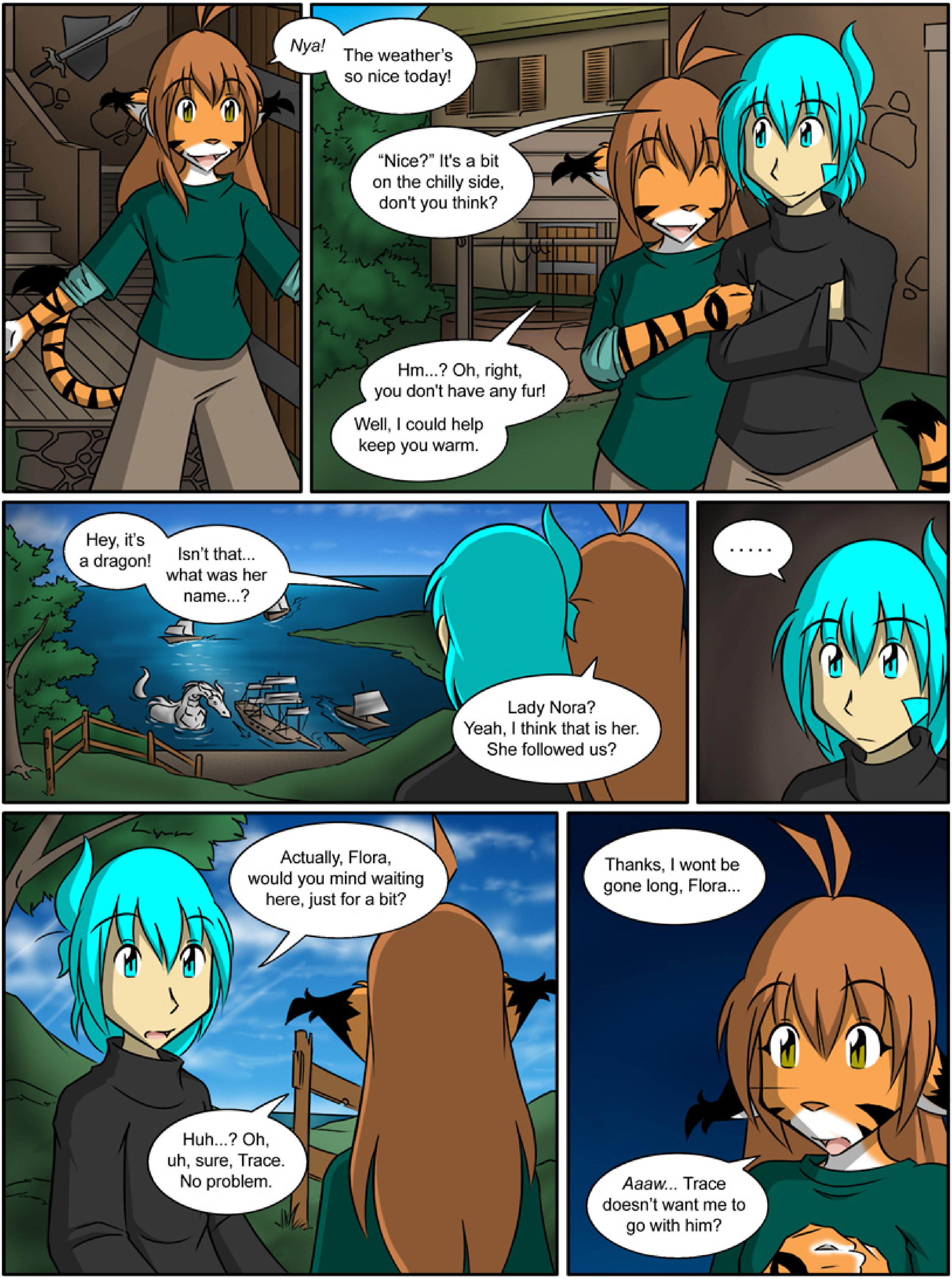

The next morning...
KNOCK! KNOCK!
Hey, Keith!
It's me, Alaric! Are you up yet?
The sun's already up! Don't tell me banishment has made you soft.
Aaaah!
FLUMPH!
Hey, Keith! You're up, good!
Erm... hi, Alaric...
‹What... what just happened?›

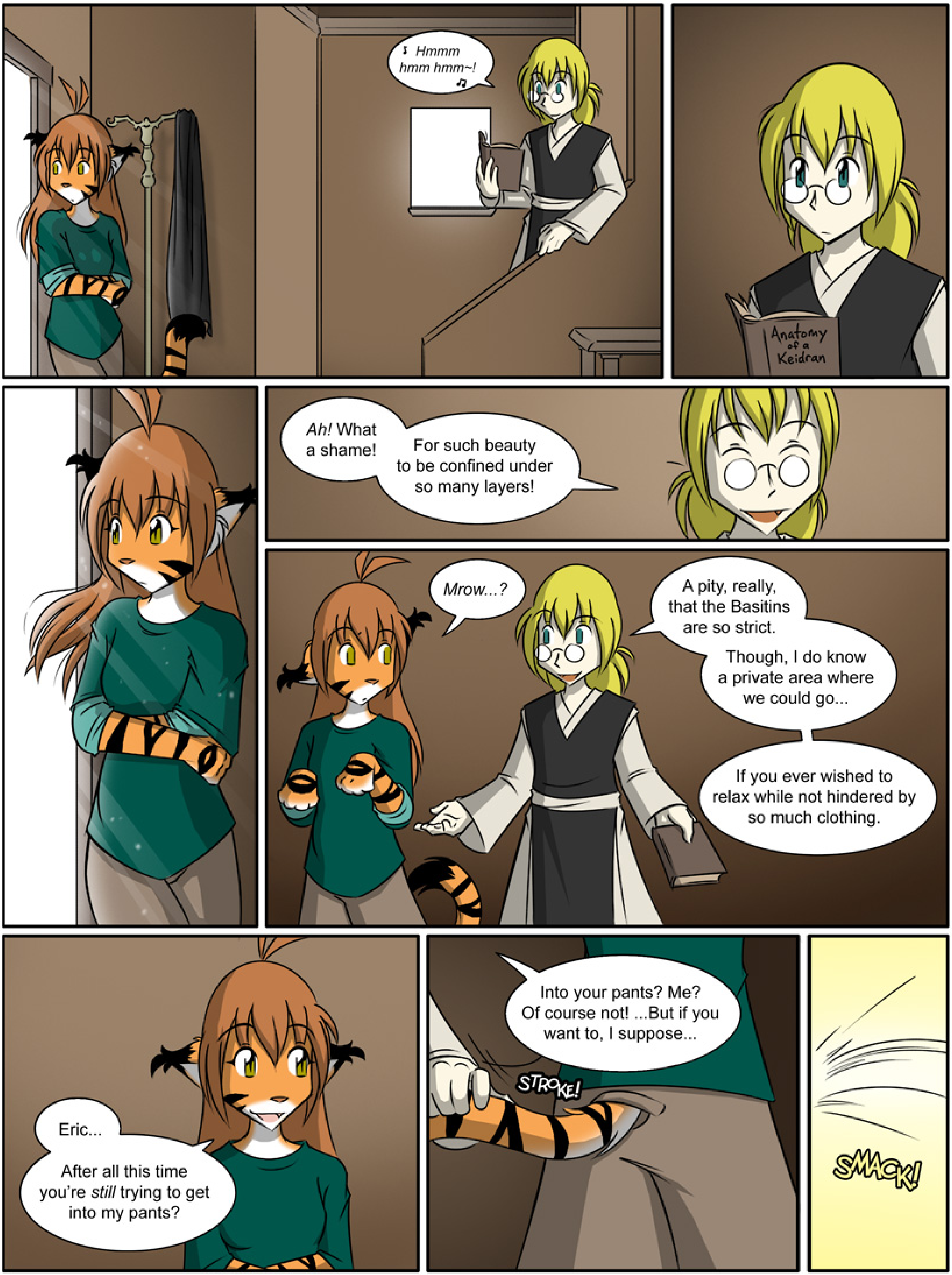

Come on, Trace!
Wake up, sleepyhead! It's morning, the sun's up!
Alright, alright! I'm awake.
You know what this means, right?
We've managed to spend an entire day in a town without anything going wrong!
"Going wrong?"
What do you mean by that?
Well... in the first town Keith tried to kill me...
Then, in the second a Templar tried to kill us and you tried to kill me...
After that I was possessed by Neutral and tried to kill everyone.
On the day we reached the port Natani tried to kill us...
Then we were attacked by those three guys—
Okay, okay!
I get it, bad stuff happens to us around towns...
But... I think things are going to be better here.
I feel like we've finally gotten far enough away from the war.

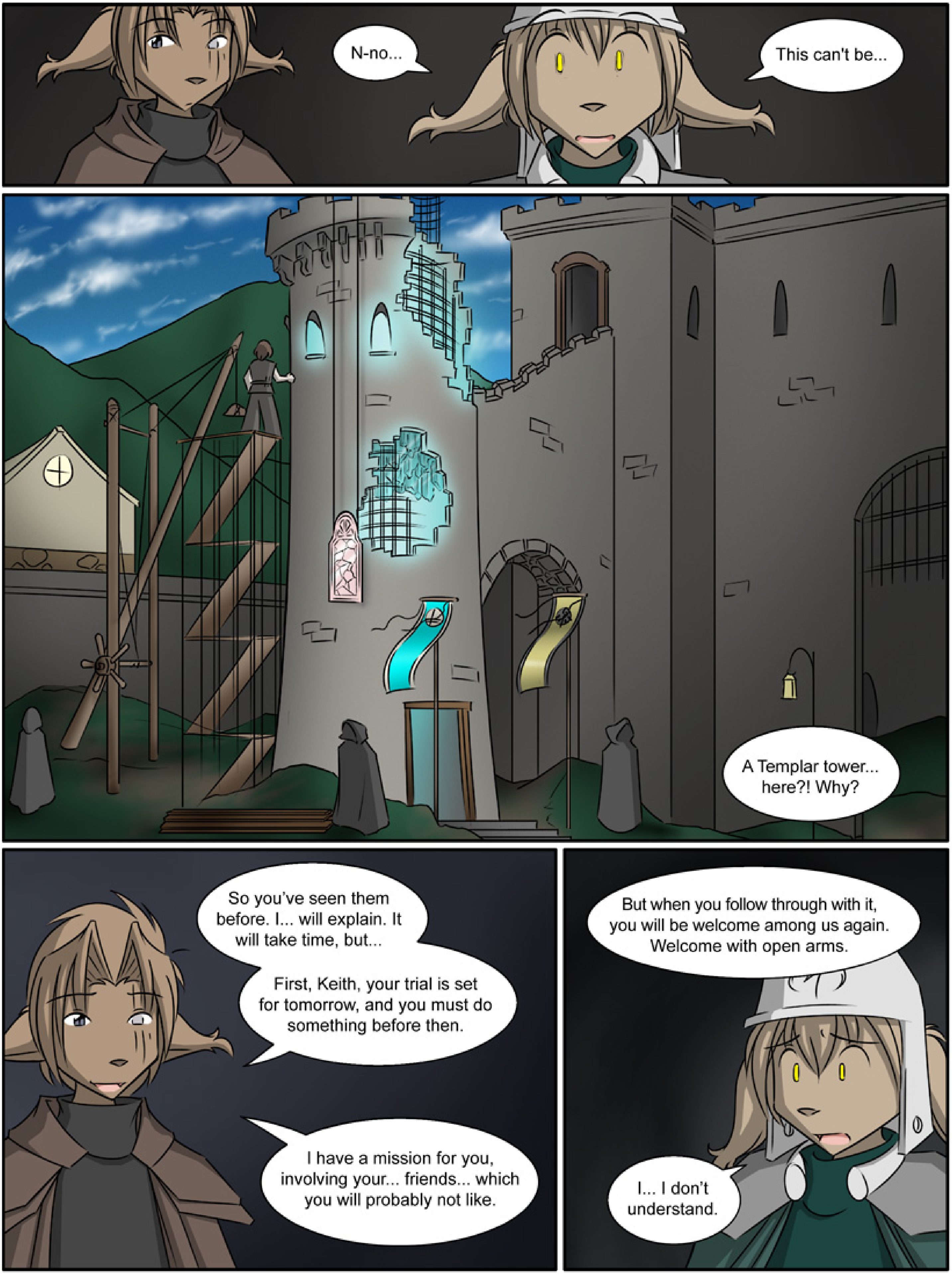

Well, there's something you don't see very often...
A dragon bathing in the harbor.
Excuse me, Mister Dragon, sir?
Could you move a little to the side, please?
That's "Miss Dragon, Ma'am."
And why should I move aside?
Sorry. Ma'am.
Well, obviously we can't make you move.
However, you are blocking some of the fishing boats from entering and leaving.
We'd appreciate it if you could.
Hrmph, Basitins.
At least Humans and Keidran have the courtesy to run away when I do that.

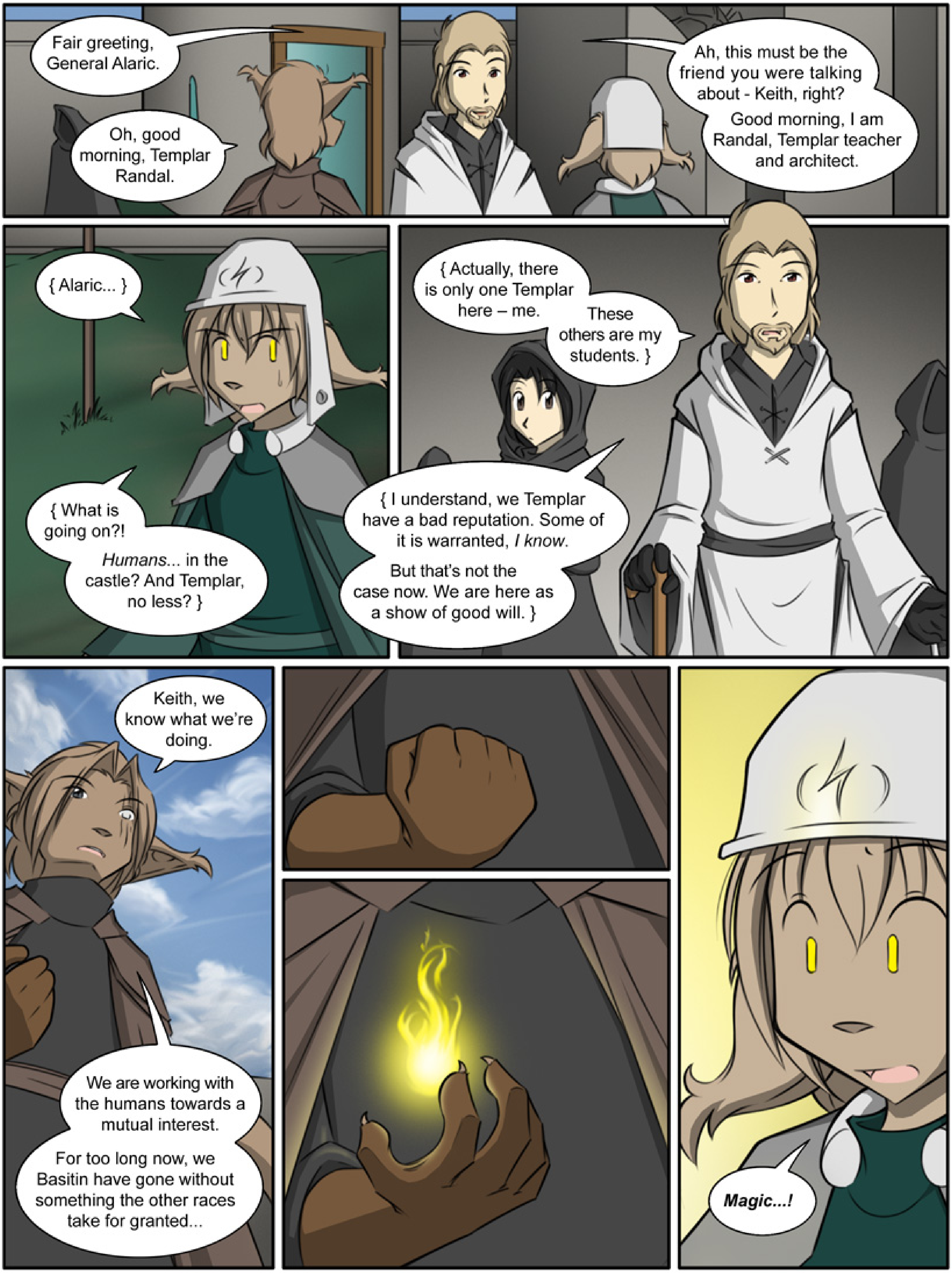

Meanwhile...
Before we go on, there is something I must warn you, Keith...
What I'm about to show you is for your eyes only.
You must never speak of this to any of your new... friends.
Not to *anyone.* That's an order. No one shall hear about it from you.
No one.
Do you understand?
Y-yes, sir!
Great! Let's get going, then!
It's being built in the eastern courtyard.
Ah, here we go!
It's just beyond these ridiculously large doors!

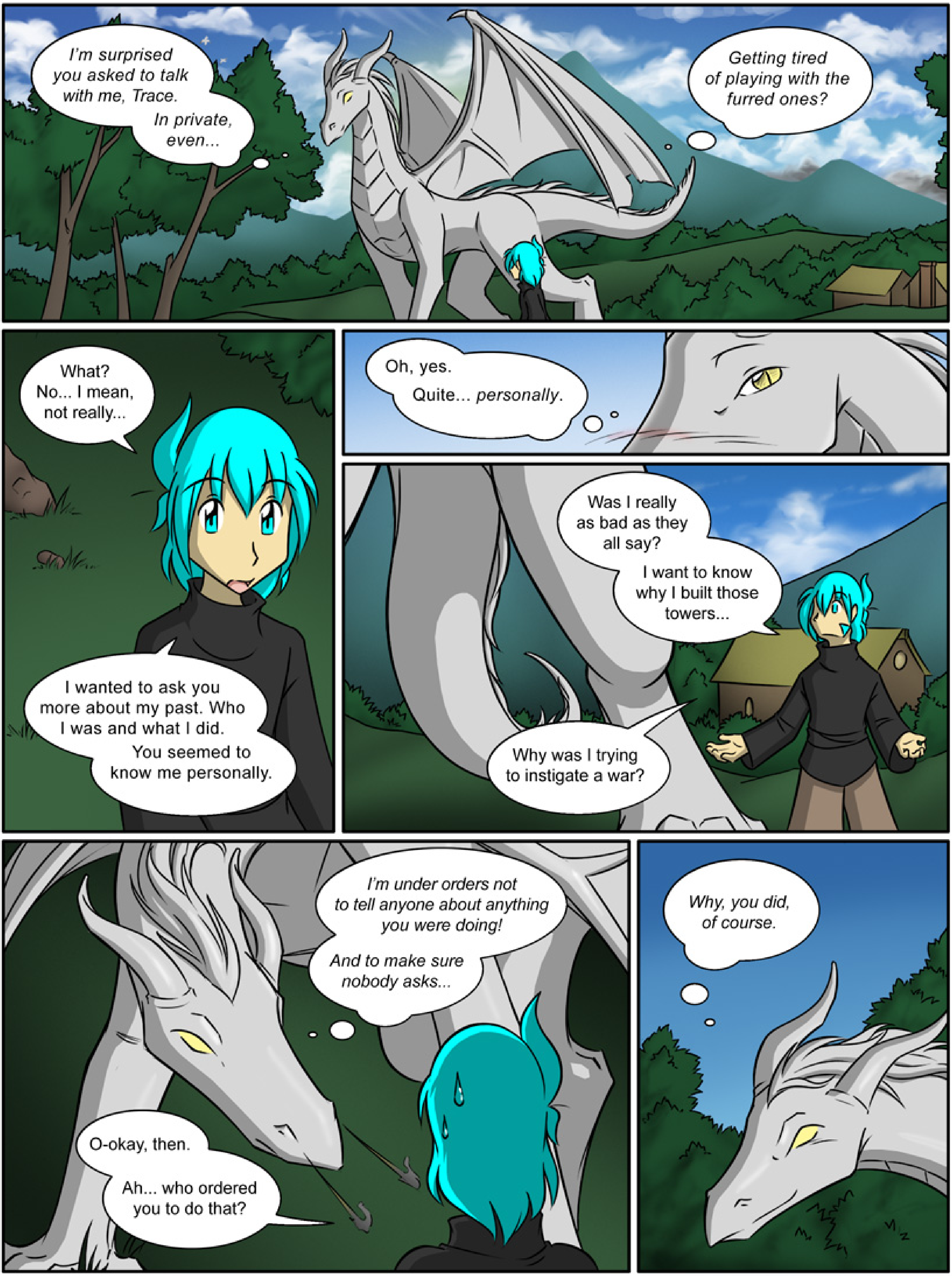

Heehee...
Oh, Mike~!
Wakey wakey!
Neh?!
Ah! Get away, you pervert!
Heeey, it's just me, Buddy!
I know it's you!
H-how did you get in here? I thought I blocked the door.
Mike, our room doors open outward, remember?
Oh... yeah... I forgot about that.

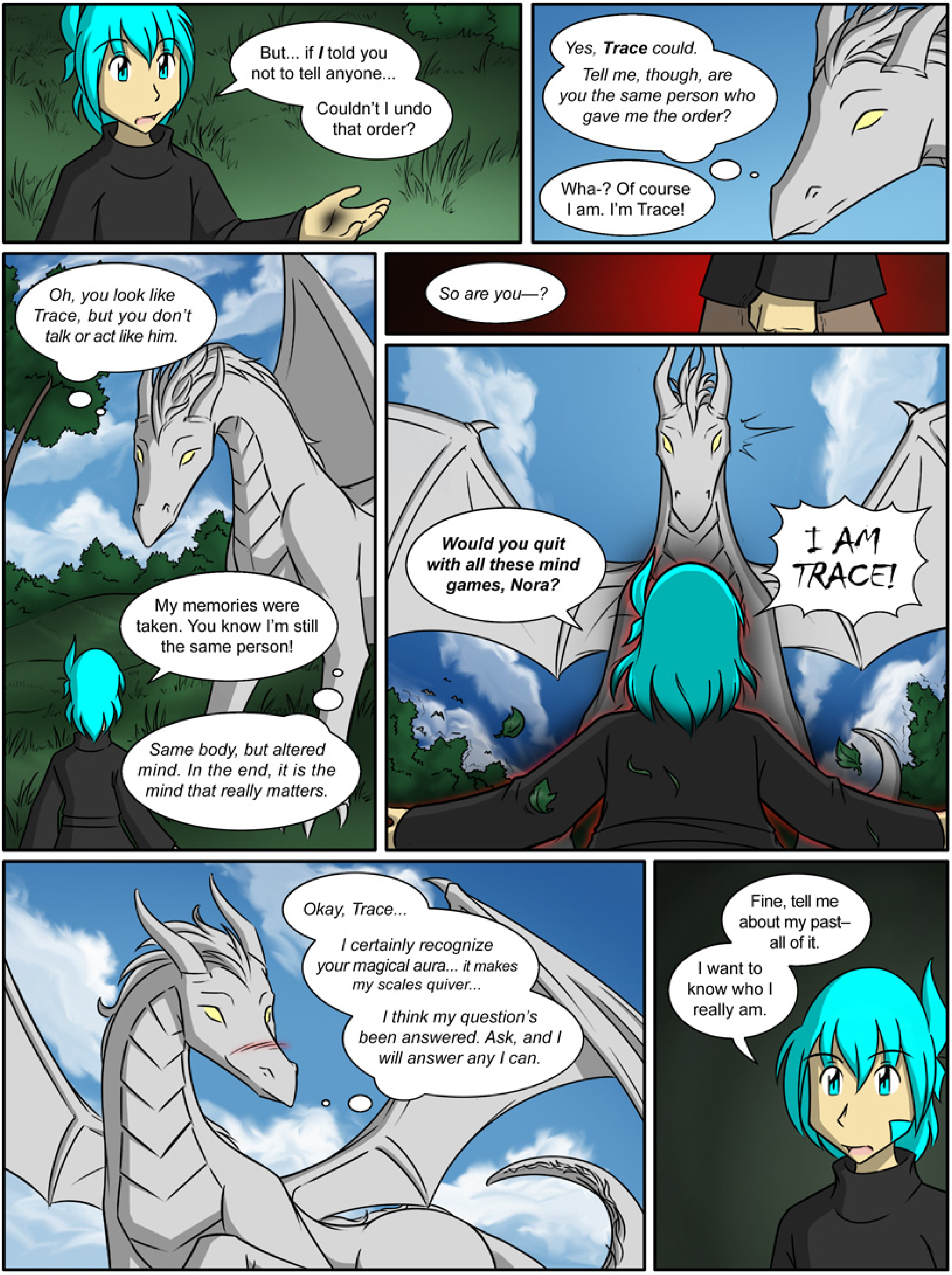

Nya!
The weather's so nice today!
"Nice?" It's a bit on the chilly side, don't you think?
Hm...? Oh, right, you don't have any fur!
Well, I could help keep you warm.
Hey, it's a dragon!
Isn't that... what was her name...?
Lady Nora? Yeah, I think that is her. She followed us?
.....
Actually, Flora, would you mind waiting here, just for a bit?
Huh...? Oh, uh, sure, Trace. No problem.
Thanks, I wont be gone long, Flora...
Aaaw... Trace doesn't want me to go with him?

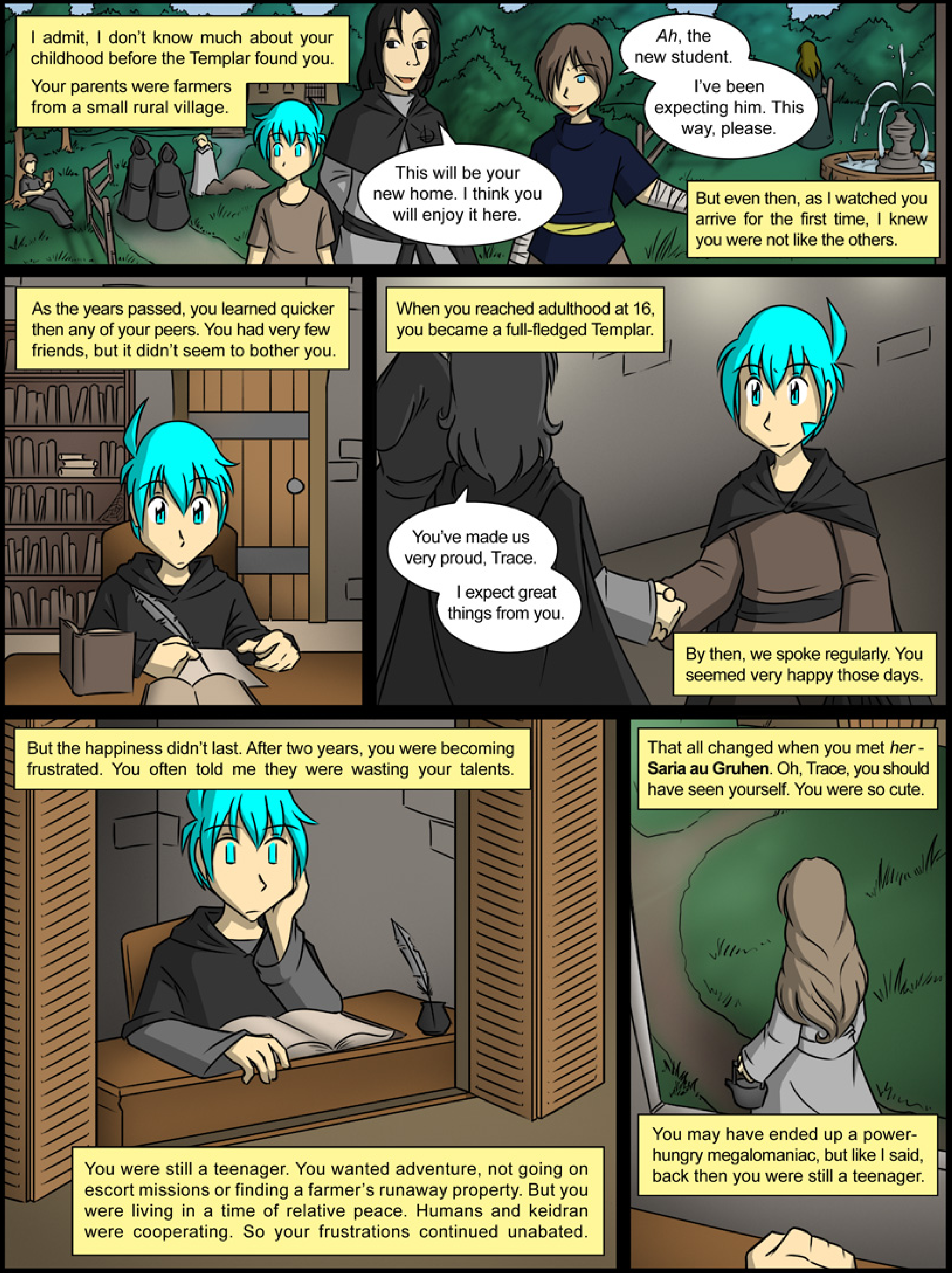

♪ Hmmm hmm hmm~! ♫
Anatomy of a Keidran
Ah! What a shame!
For such beauty to be confined under so many layers!
Mrow...?
A pity, really, that the Basitins are so strict.
Though, I do know a private area where we could go...
If you ever wished to relax while not hindered by so much clothing.
Eric...
After all this time you're *still* trying to get into my pants?
Into your pants? Me? Of course not! ...But if you want to, I suppose...
STROKE!
SMACK!


N-no...
This can't be...
A Templar tower... here?! Why?
So you've seen them before. I... will explain. It will take time, but...
First, Keith, your trial is set for tomorrow, and you must do something before then.
I have a mission for you, involving your... friends... which you will probably not like.
But when you follow through with it, you will be welcome among us again. Welcome with open arms.
I... I don't understand.


Fair greeting, General Alaric.
Oh, good morning, Templar Randal.
Ah, this must be the friend you were talking about - Keith, right?
Good morning, I am Randal, Templar teacher and architect.
{ Alaric... }
{ Actually, there is only one Templar here – me.
These others are my students. }
{ What is going on?!
Humans... in the castle? And Templar, no less? }
{ I understand, we Templar have a bad reputation. Some of it is warranted, *I know*.
But that's not the case now. We are here as a show of good will. }
Keith, we know what we're doing.
We are working with the humans towards a mutual interest.
For too long now, we Basitin have gone without something the other races take for granted...
Magic...!


I'm surprised you asked to talk with me, Trace.
In private, even...
Getting tired of playing with the furred ones?
What? No... I mean, not really...
I wanted to ask you more about my past. Who I was and what I did.
You seemed to know me personally.
Oh, yes.
Quite... *personally*.
Was I really as bad as they all say?
I want to know why I built those towers...
Why was I trying to instigate a war?
I'm under orders not to tell anyone about anything you were doing!
And to make sure nobody asks...
O-okay, then.
Ah... who ordered you to do that?
Why, you did, of course.


But... if *I* told you not to tell anyone...
Couldn't I undo that order?
*Yes, **Trace** could.*
Tell me, though, are you the same person who gave me the order?
Wha-? Of course I am. I'm Trace!
Oh, you look like Trace, but you don't talk or act like him.
My memories were taken. You know I'm still the same person!
Same body, but altered mind. In the end, it is the mind that really matters.
So are you—?
Would you quit with all these mind games, Nora?
I AM TRACE!
Okay, Trace...
I certainly recognize your magical aura... it makes my scales quiver...
I think my question's been answered. Ask, and I will answer any I can.
Fine, tell me about my past– all of it.
I want to know who I really am.


I admit, I don't know much about your childhood before the Templar found you.
Your parents were farmers from a small rural village.
This will be your new home. I think you will enjoy it here.
Ah, the new student.
I've been expecting him. This way, please.
But even then, as I watched you arrive for the first time, I knew you were not like the others.
As the years passed, you learned quicker then any of your peers. You had very few friends, but it didn't seem to bother you.
When you reached adulthood at 16, you became a full-fledged Templar.
You've made us very proud, Trace.
I expect great things from you.
By then, we spoke regularly. You seemed very happy those days.
But the happiness didn't last. After two years, you were becoming frustrated. You often told me they were wasting your talents.
You were still a teenager. You wanted adventure, not going on escort missions or finding a farmer's runaway property. But you were living in a time of relative peace. Humans and keidran were cooperating. So your frustrations continued unabated.
That all changed when you met *her* - **Saria au Gruhen**. Oh, Trace, you should have seen yourself. You were so cute.
You may have ended up a power-hungry megalomaniac, but like I said, back then you were still a teenager.

Please, be patient. Comic is almost done. Read news announcement for more info.

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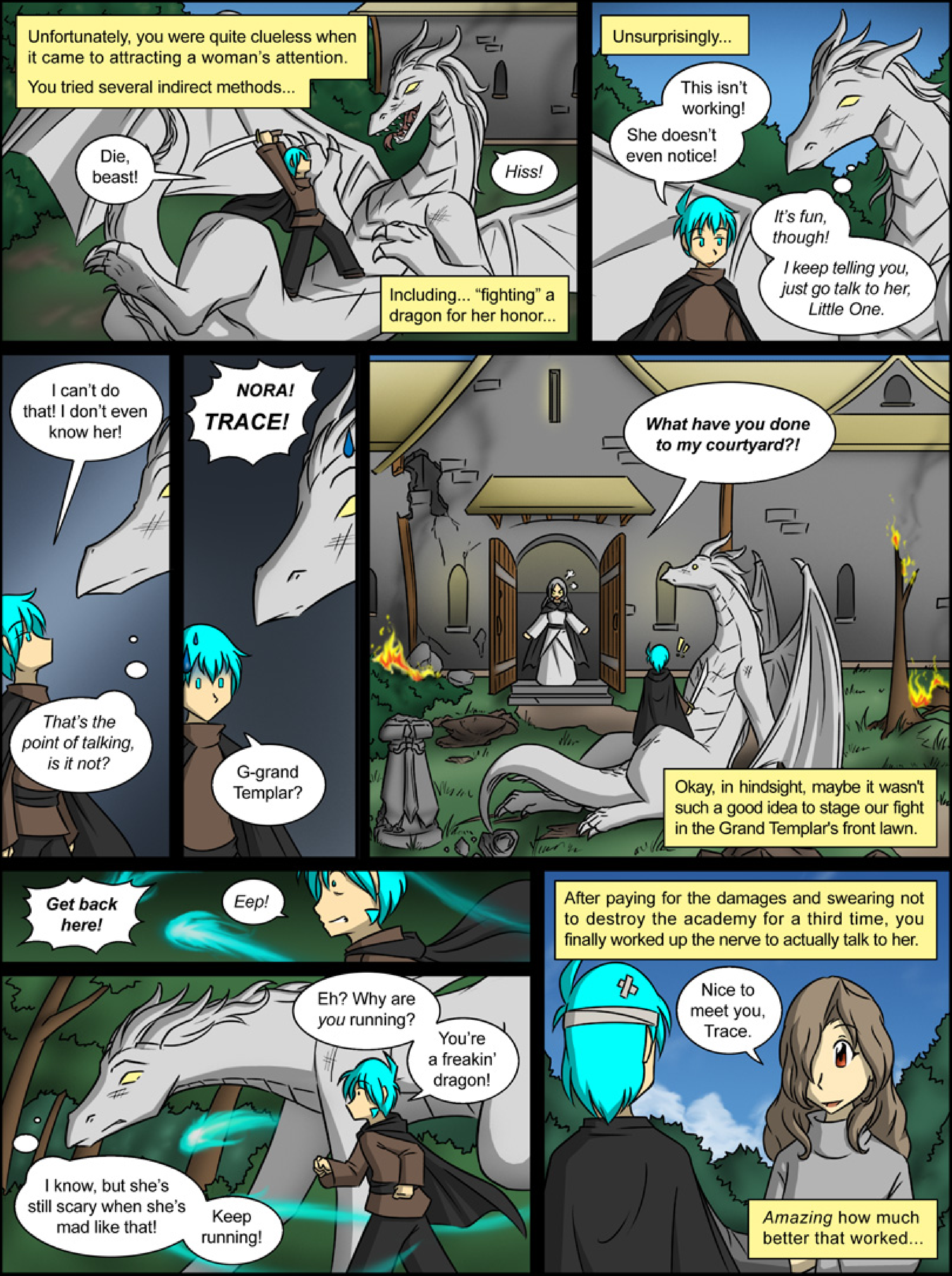
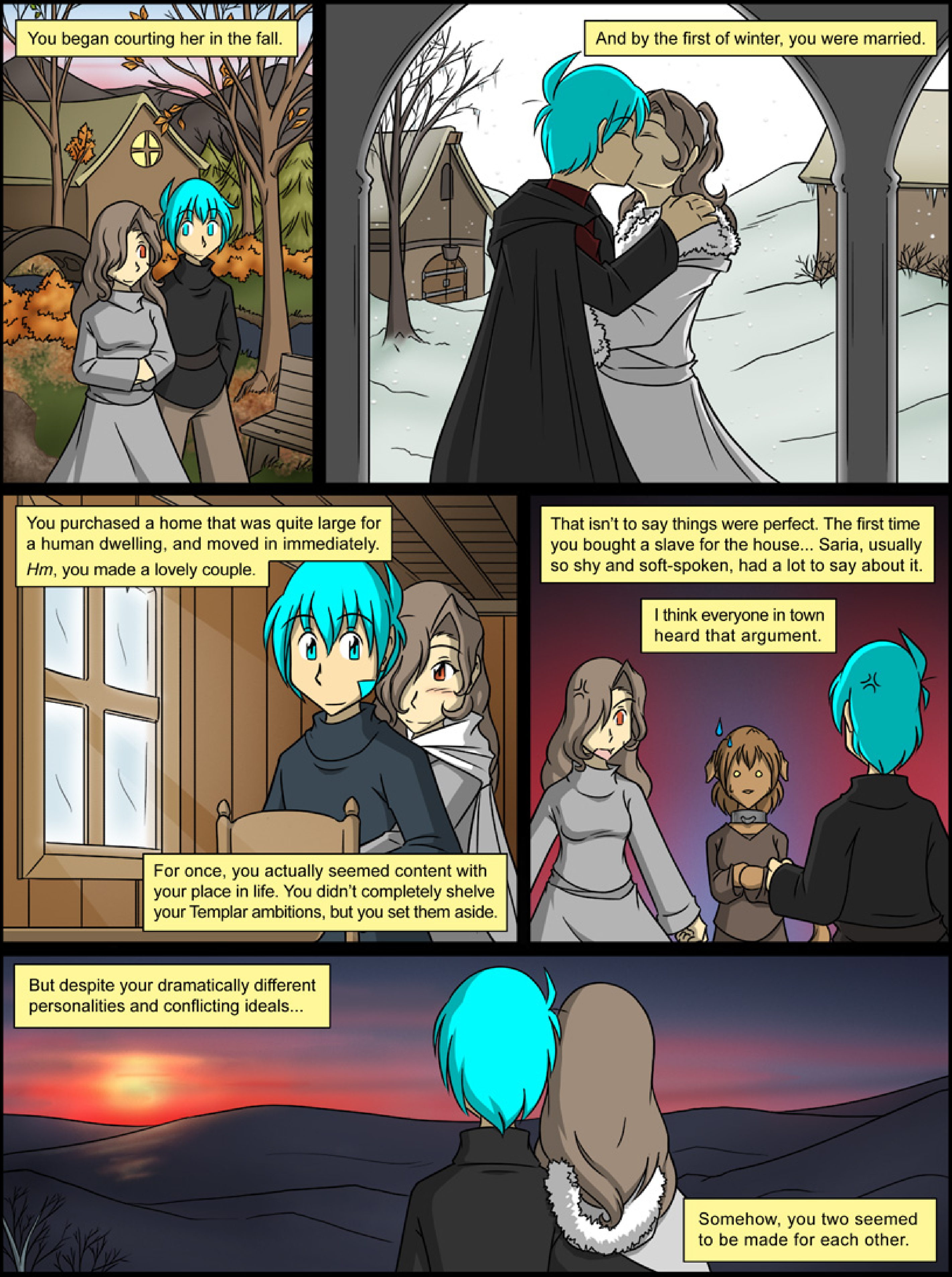
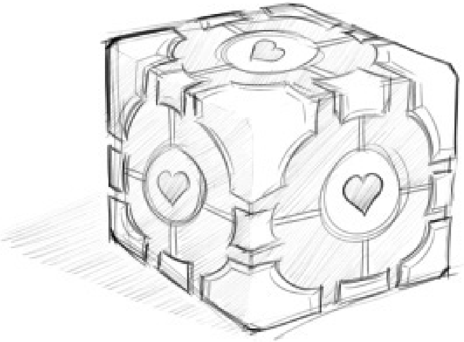
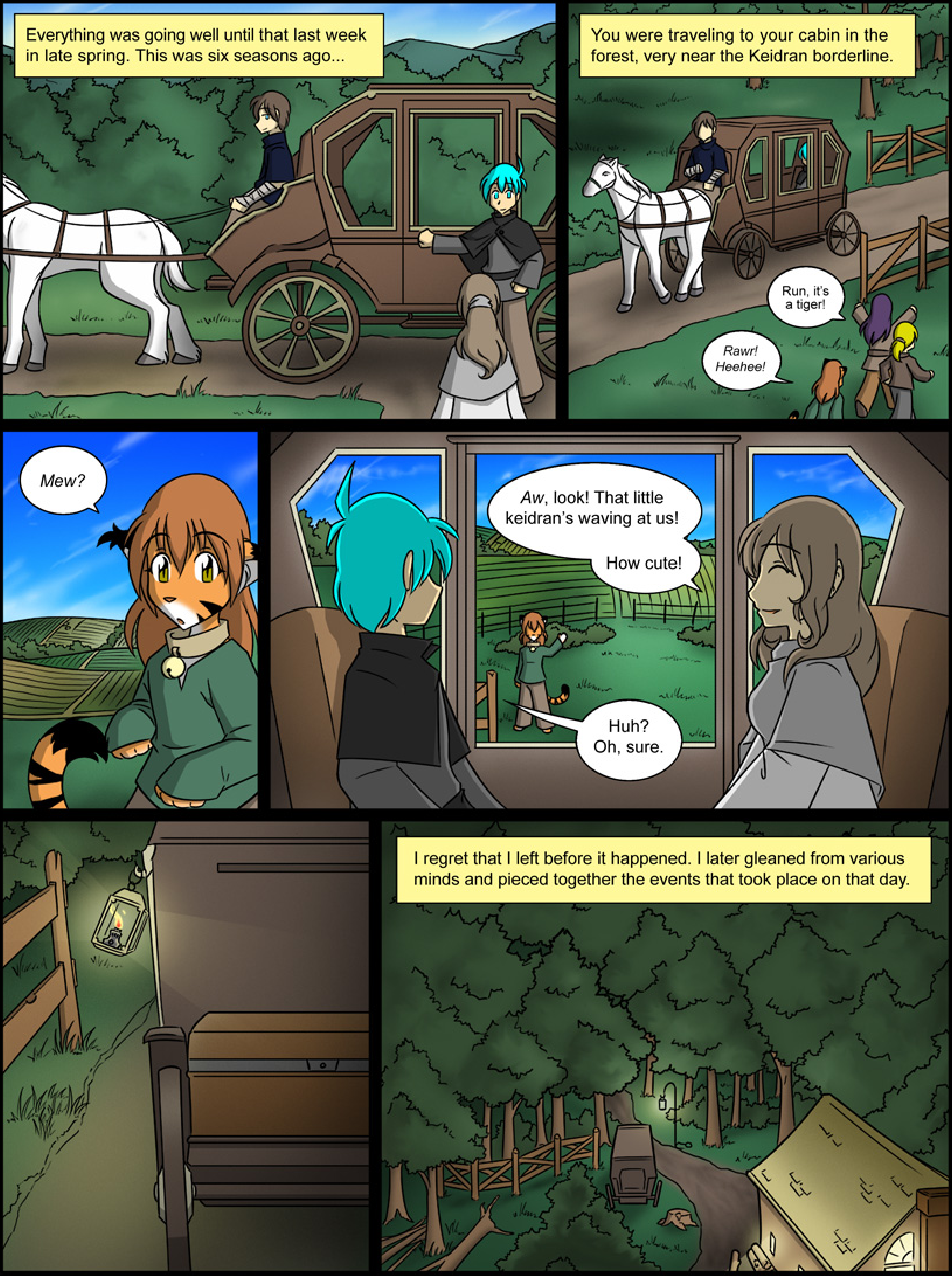

Unfortunately, you were quite clueless when it came to attracting a woman's attention.
You tried several indirect methods...
Die, beast!
Hiss!
Including... "fighting" a dragon for her honor...
Unsurprisingly...
This isn't working!
She doesn't even notice!
It's fun, though!
I keep telling you, just go talk to her, Little One.
I can't do that! I don't even know her!
That's the point of talking, is it not?
NORA! TRACE!
G-grand Templar?
What have you done to my courtyard?!
Okay, in hindsight, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to stage our fight in the Grand Templar's front lawn.
Get back here!
Eep!
Eh? Why are you running?
You're a freakin' dragon!
I know, but she's still scary when she's mad like that!
Keep running!
After paying for the damages and swearing not to destroy the academy for a third time, you finally worked up the nerve to actually talk to her.
Nice to meet you, Trace.
Amazing how much better that worked...


You began courting her in the fall.
And by the first of winter, you were married.
You purchased a home that was quite large for a human dwelling, and moved in immediately. *Hm*, you made a lovely couple.
For once, you actually seemed content with your place in life. You didn't completely shelve your Templar ambitions, but you set them aside.
That isn't to say things were perfect. The first time you bought a slave for the house... Saria, usually so shy and soft-spoken, had a lot to say about it.
I think everyone in town heard that argument.
But despite your dramatically different personalities and conflicting ideals...
Somehow, you two seemed to be made for each other.

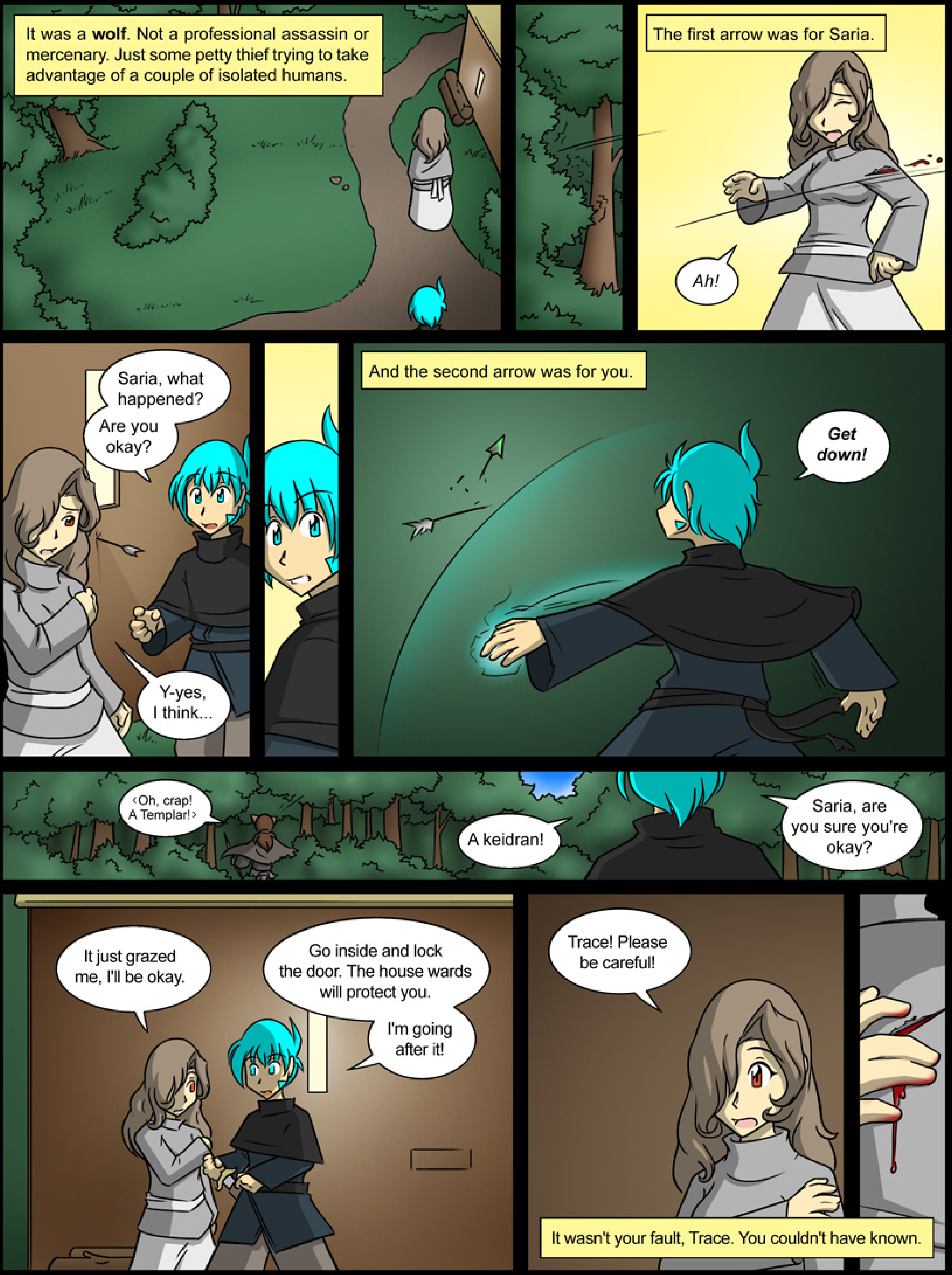


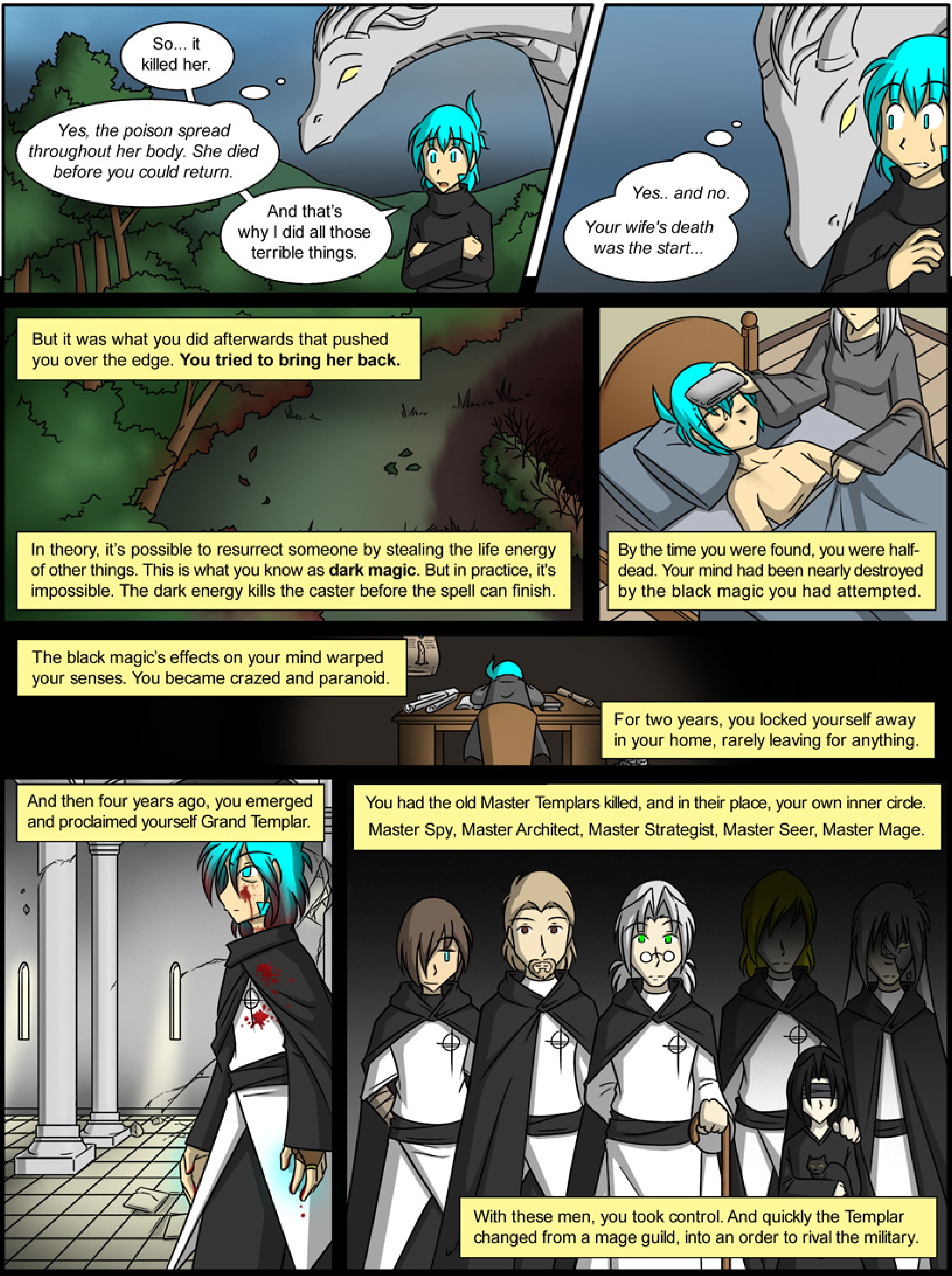

Everything was going well until that last week in late spring. This was six seasons ago...
You were traveling to your cabin in the forest, very near the Keidran borderline.
Run, it's a tiger!
Rawr! Heehee!
Mew?
Aw, look! That little keidran's waving at us!
How cute!
Huh? Oh, sure.
I regret that I left before it happened. I later gleaned from various minds and pieced together the events that took place on that day.

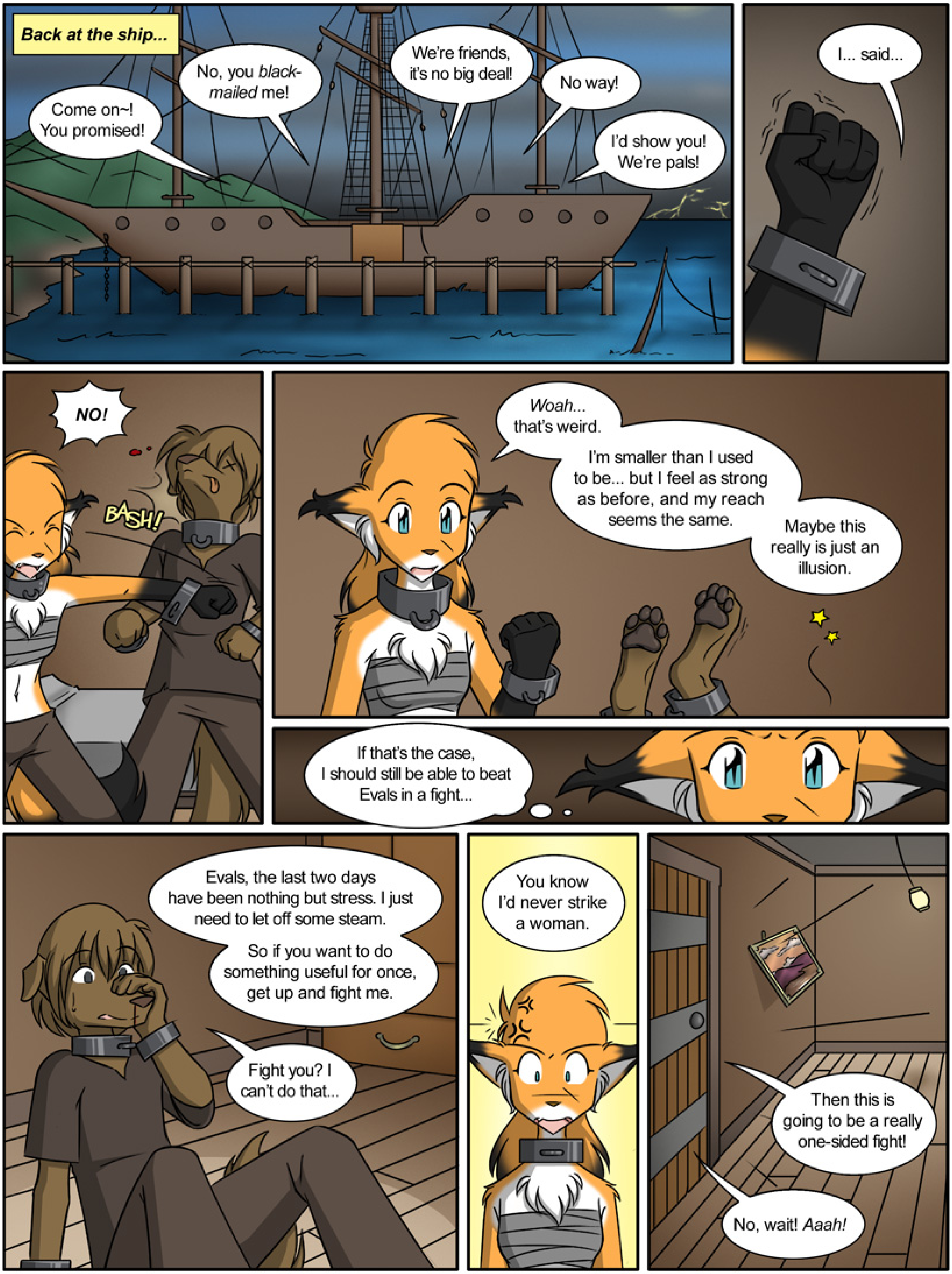
TWO | KINDS

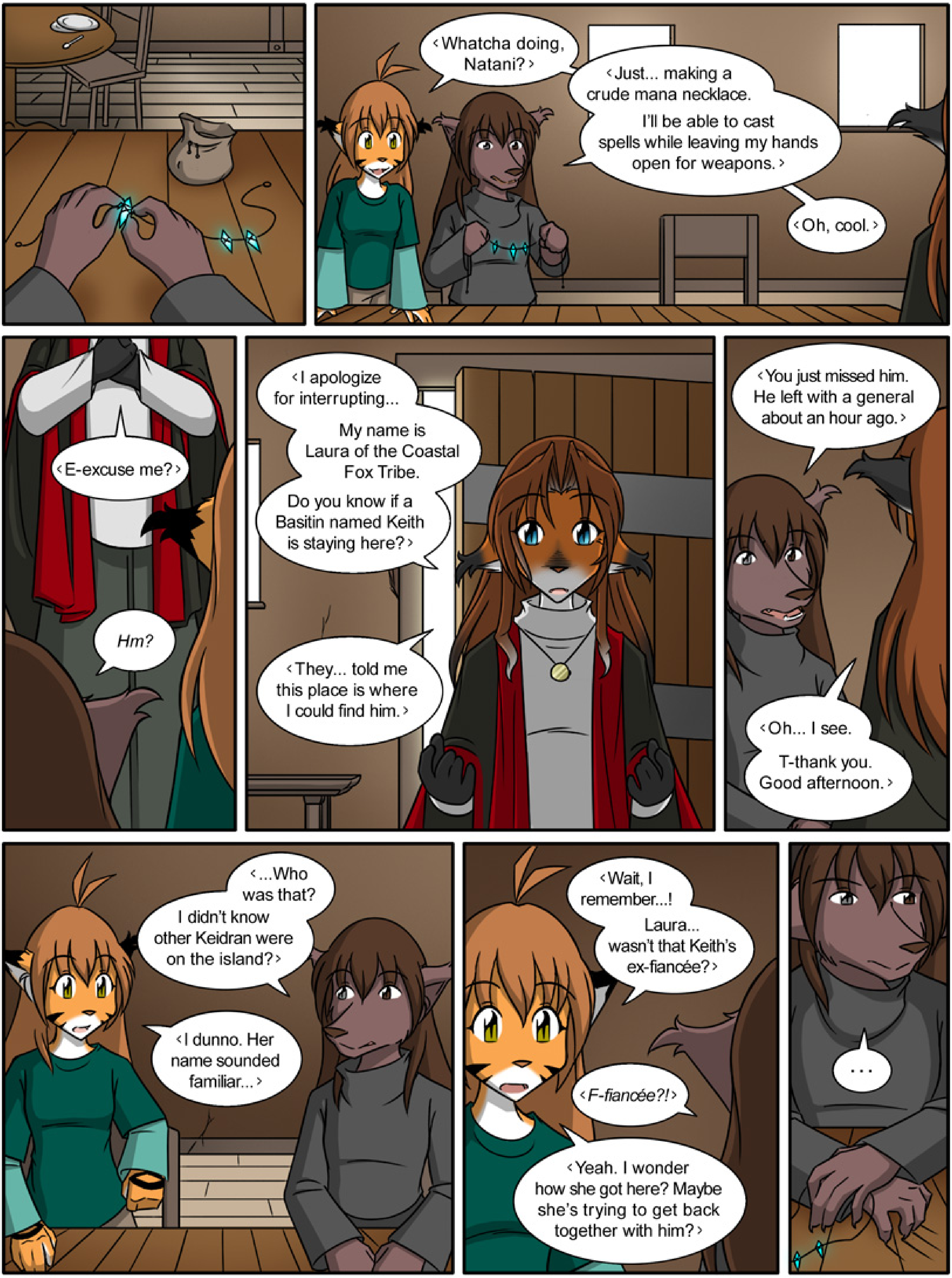
4 years, 400+ comics

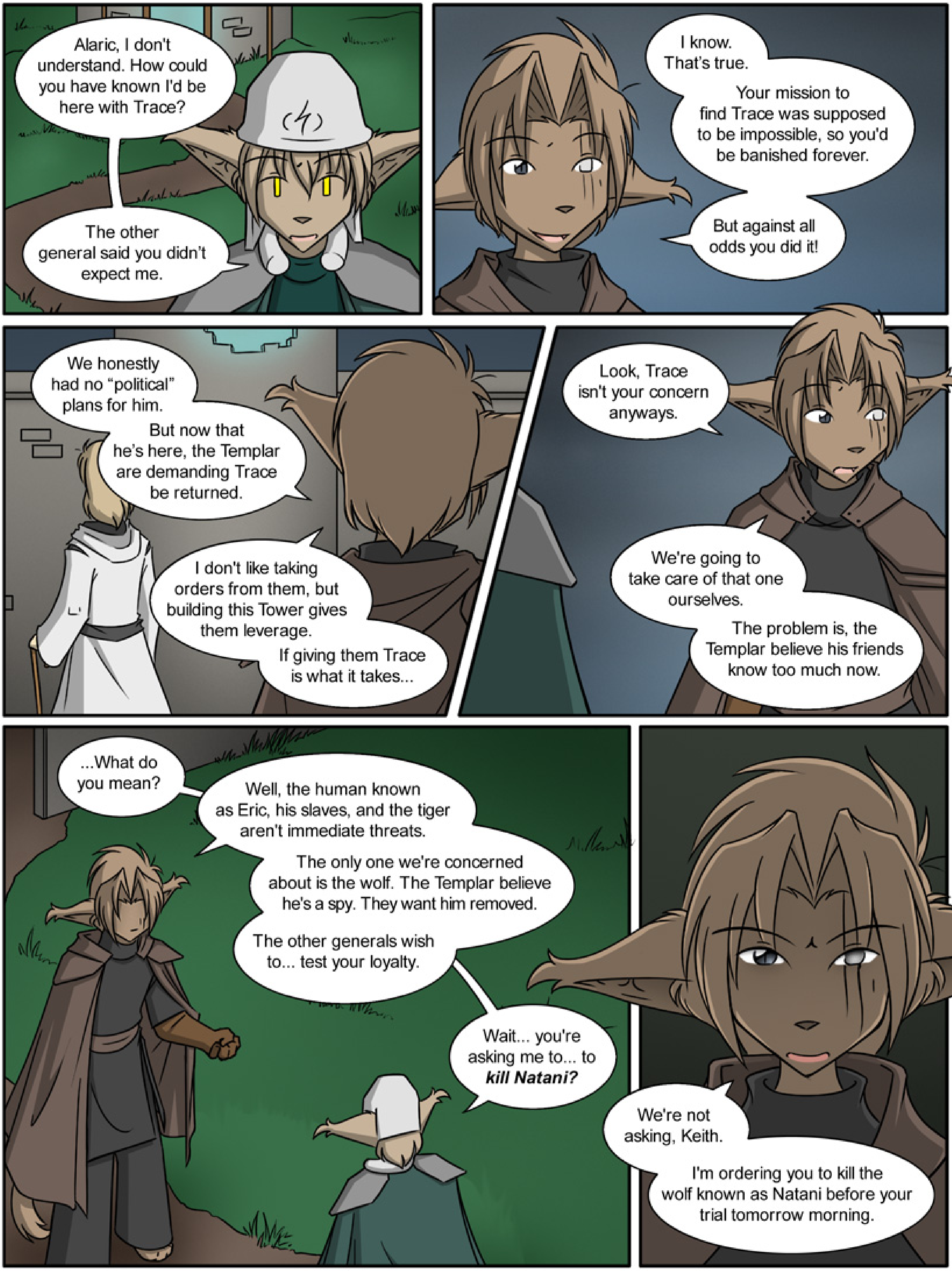
Thanks for reading!

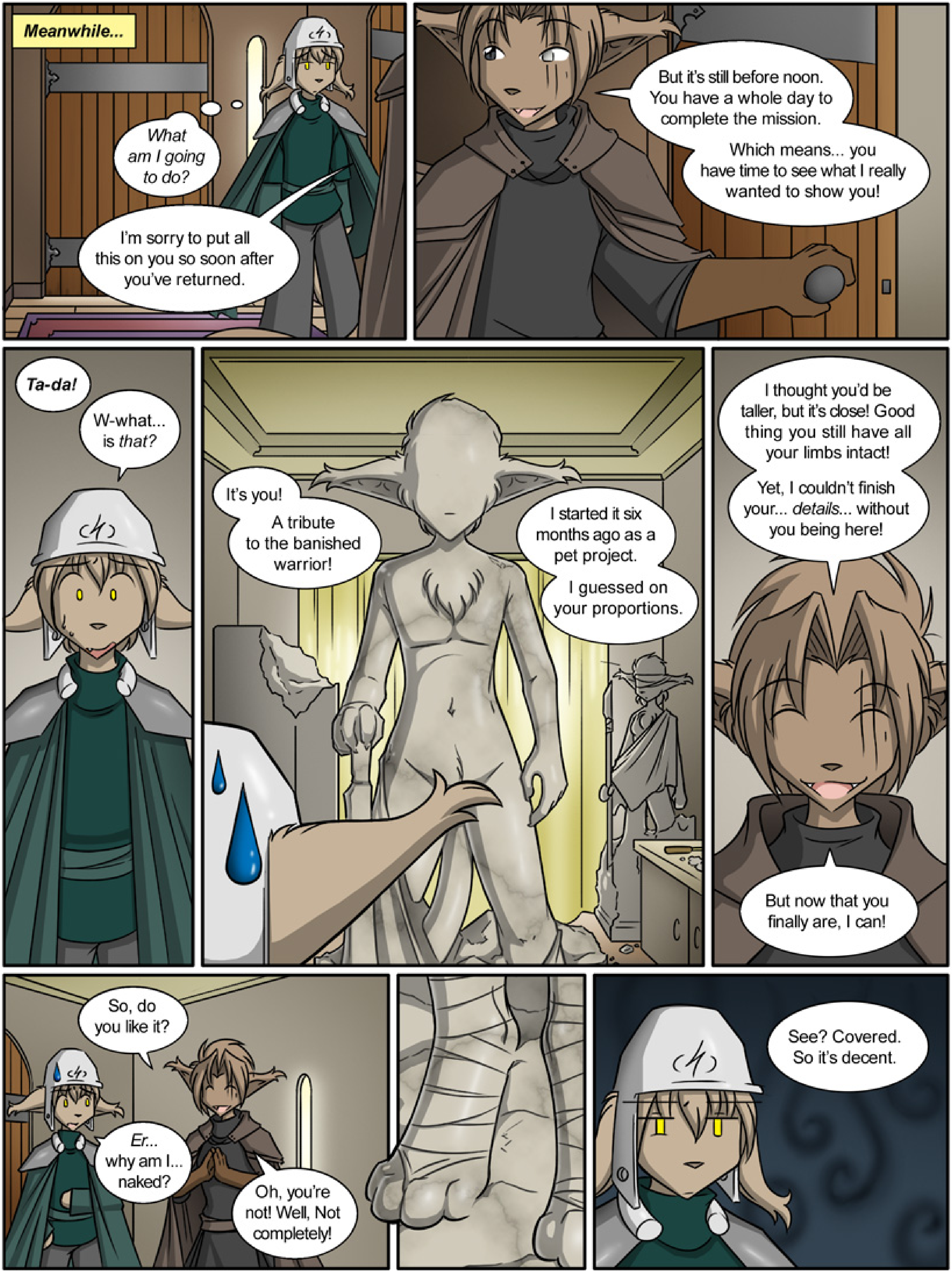

It was a **wolf**. Not a professional assassin or mercenary. Just some petty thief trying to take advantage of a couple of isolated humans.
The first arrow was for Saria.
Ah!
Saria, what happened?
Are you okay?
Y-yes, I think...
And the second arrow was for you.
Get down!
‹Oh, crap! A Templar!›
A keidran!
Saria, are you sure you're okay?
It just grazed me, I'll be okay.
Go inside and lock the door. The house wards will protect you.
I'm going after it!
Trace! Please be careful!
It wasn't your fault, Trace. You couldn't have known.

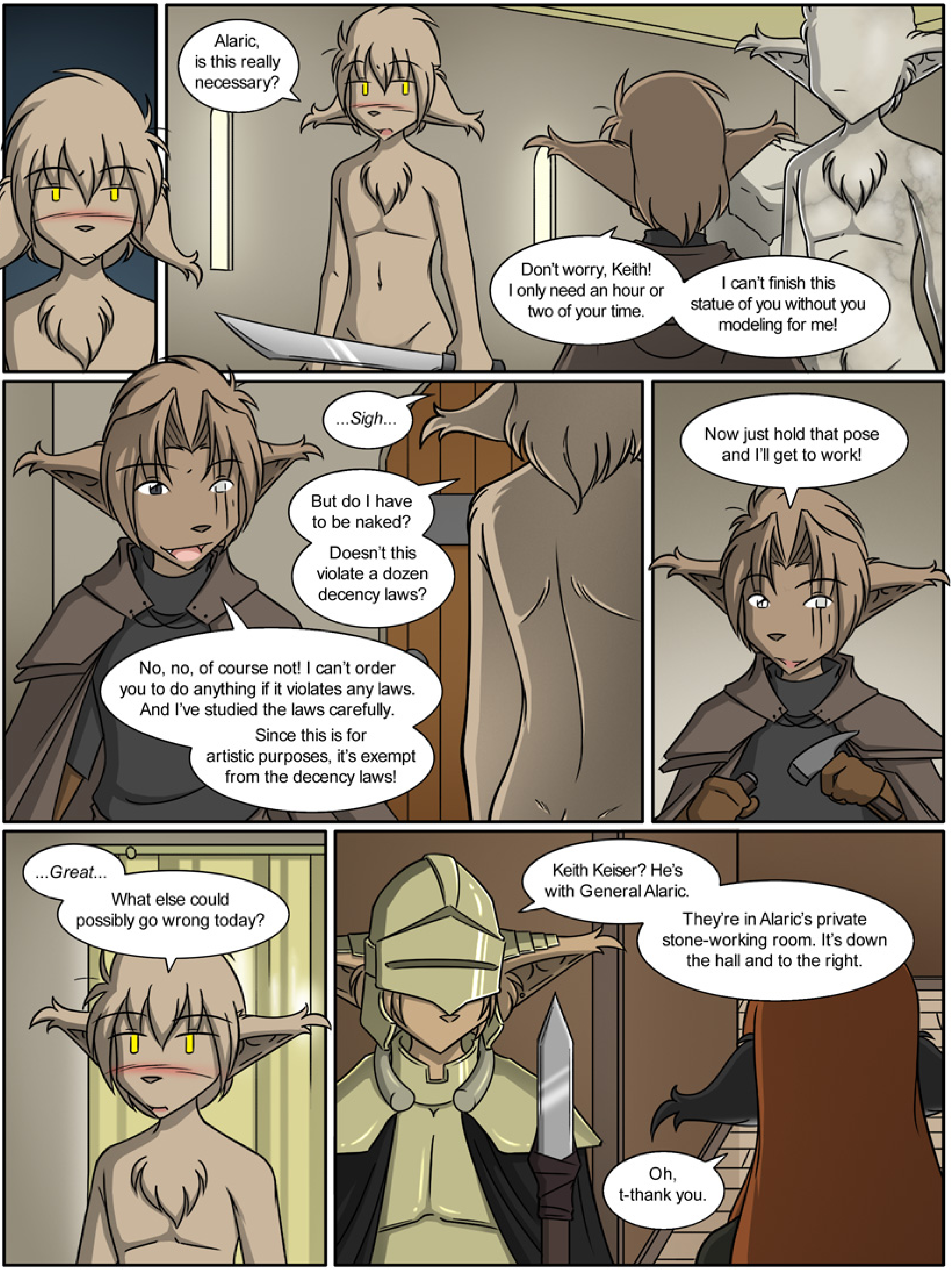

So... it killed her.
Yes, the poison spread throughout her body. She died before you could return.
And that's why I did all those terrible things.
Yes.. and no.
Your wife's death was the start...
But it was what you did afterwards that pushed you over the edge. **You tried to bring her back.**
In theory, it's possible to resurrect someone by stealing the life energy of other things. This is what you know as **dark magic**. But in practice, it's impossible. The dark energy kills the caster before the spell can finish.
By the time you were found, you were half-dead. Your mind had been nearly destroyed by the black magic you had attempted.
The black magic's effects on your mind warped your senses. You became crazed and paranoid.
For two years, you locked yourself away in your home, rarely leaving for anything.
And then four years ago, you emerged and proclaimed yourself Grand Templar.
You had the old Master Templars killed, and in their place, your own inner circle.
Master Spy, Master Architect, Master Strategist, Master Seer, Master Mage.
With these men, you took control. And quickly the Templar changed from a mage guild, into an order to rival the military.

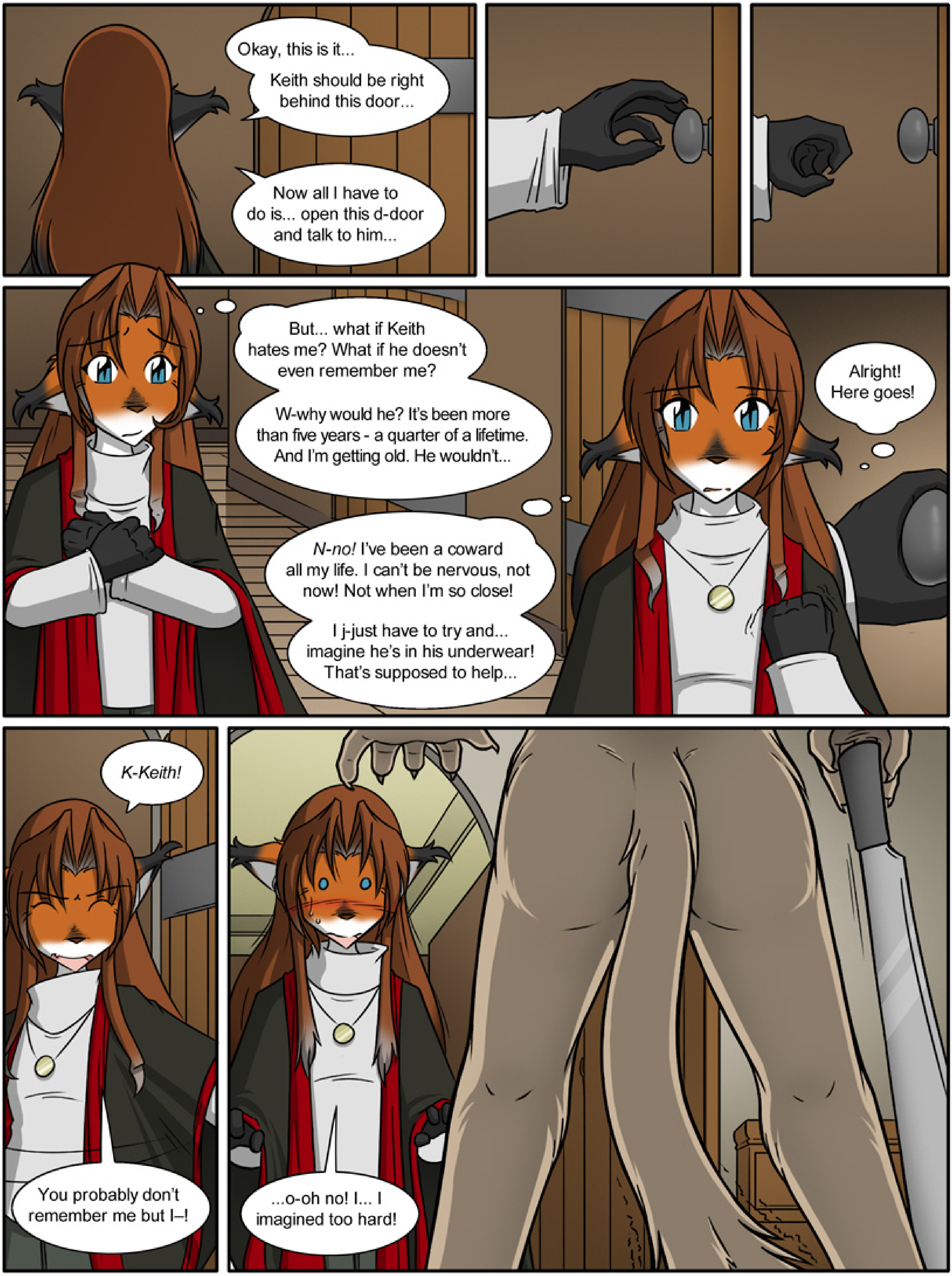

Back at the ship...
Come on~! You promised!
No, you black-mailed me!
We're friends, it's no big deal!
No way!
I'd show you! We're pals!
I... said...
NO!
BASH!
Woah... that's weird.
I'm smaller than I used to be... but I feel as strong as before, and my reach seems the same.
Maybe this really is just an illusion.
If that's the case, I should still be able to beat Evals in a fight...
Evals, the last two days have been nothing but stress. I just need to let off some steam.
So if you want to do something useful for once, get up and fight me.
Fight you? I can't do that...
You know I'd never strike a woman.
Then this is going to be a really one-sided fight!
No, wait! Aaah!

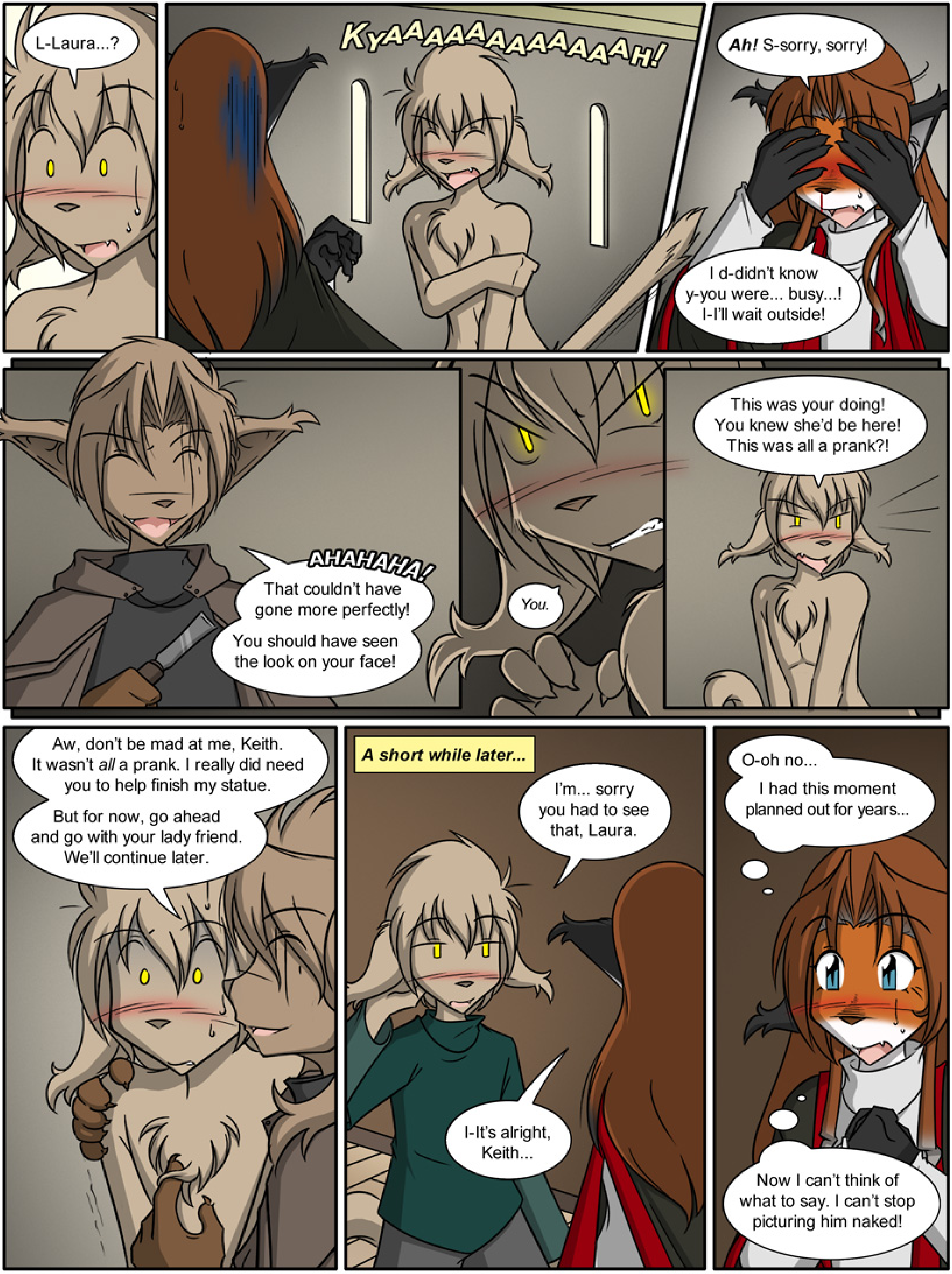

‹Whatcha doing, Natani?›
‹Just... making a crude mana necklace.
I'll be able to cast spells while leaving my hands open for weapons.›
‹Oh, cool.›
‹E-excuse me?›
Hm?
‹I apologize for interrupting...
My name is Laura of the Coastal Fox Tribe.
Do you know if a Basitin named Keith is staying here?›
‹They... told me this place is where I could find him.›
‹You just missed him. He left with a general about an hour ago.›
‹Oh... I see.
T-thank you. Good afternoon.›
‹...Who was that? I didn't know other Keidran were on the island?›
‹I dunno. Her name sounded familiar...›
‹Wait, I remember...!
Laura... wasn't that Keith's ex-fiancée?›
‹*F-fiancée?!*›
‹Yeah. I wonder how she got here? Maybe she's trying to get back together with him?›
...

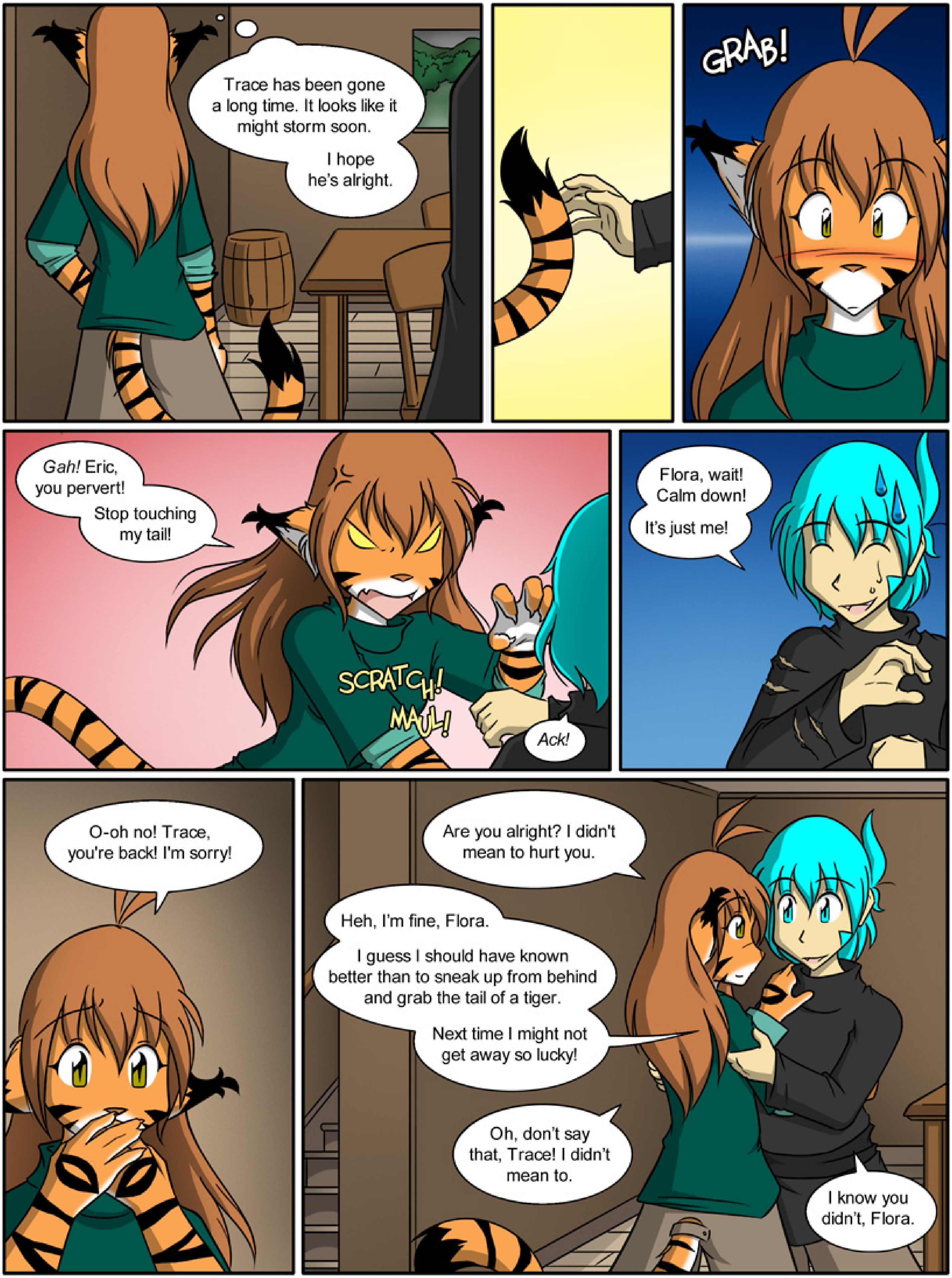

Alaric, I don't understand. How could you have known I'd be here with Trace?
The other general said you didn't expect me.
I know. That's true.
Your mission to find Trace was supposed to be impossible, so you'd be banished forever.
But against all odds you did it!
We honestly had no "political" plans for him.
But now that he's here, the Templar are demanding Trace be returned.
I don't like taking orders from them, but building this Tower gives them leverage.
If giving them Trace is what it takes...
Look, Trace isn't your concern anyways.
We're going to take care of that one ourselves.
The problem is, the Templar believe his friends know too much now.
...What do you mean?
Well, the human known as Eric, his slaves, and the tiger aren't immediate threats.
The only one we're concerned about is the wolf. The Templar believe he's a spy. They want him removed.
The other generals wish to... test your loyalty.
Wait... you're asking me to... to *kill Natani?*
We're not asking, Keith.
I'm ordering you to kill the wolf known as Natani before your trial tomorrow morning.

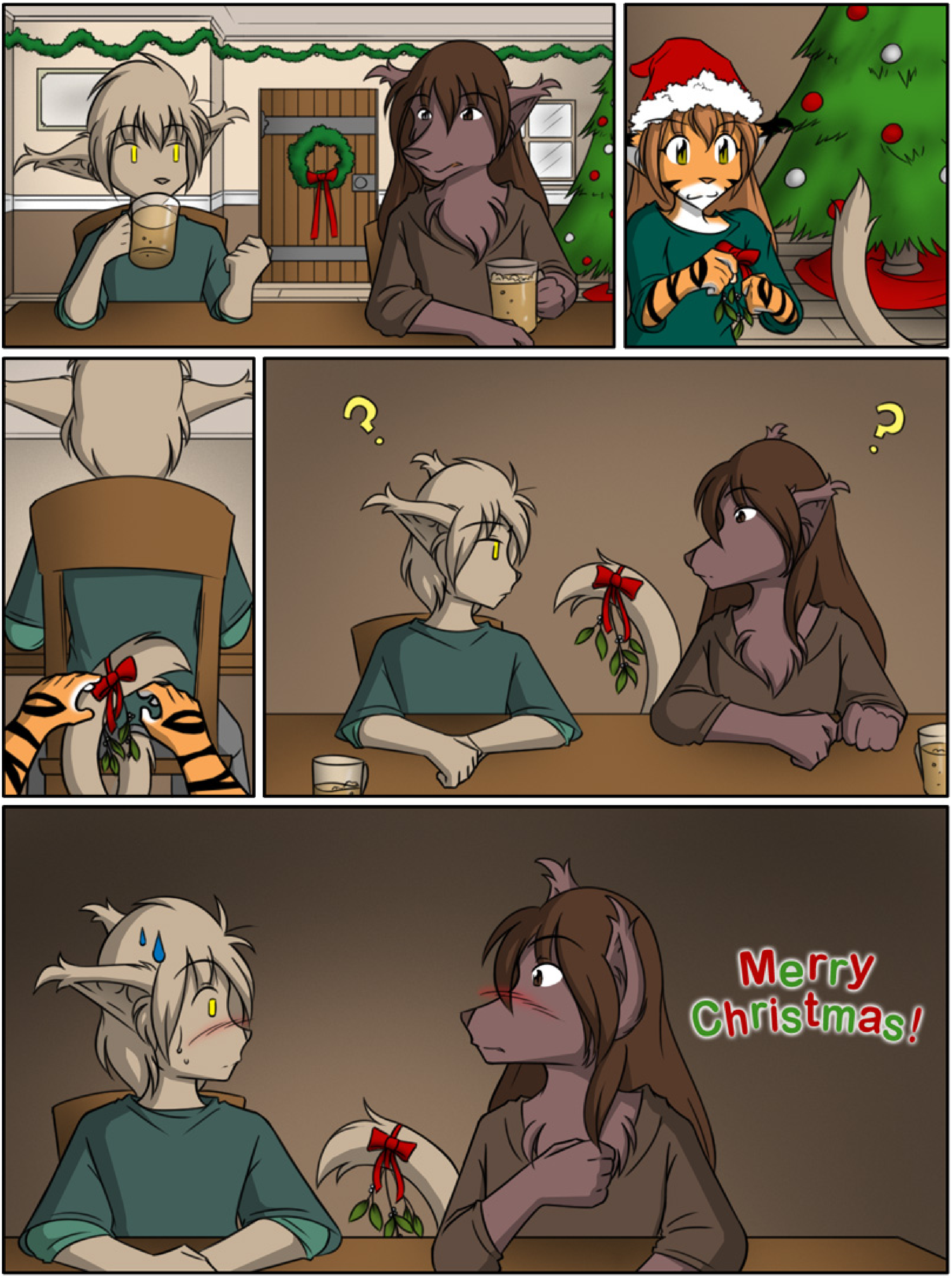

Meanwhile...
What am I going to do?
I'm sorry to put all this on you so soon after you've returned.
But it's still before noon. You have a whole day to complete the mission.
Which means... you have time to see what I really wanted to show you!
Ta-da!
W-what... is *that?*
It's you!
A tribute to the banished warrior!
I started it six months ago as a pet project.
I guessed on your proportions.
I thought you'd be taller, but it's close! Good thing you still have all your limbs intact!
Yet, I couldn't finish your... *details*... without you being here!
But now that you finally are, I can!
So, do you like it?
Er... why am I... naked?
Oh, you're not! Well, Not completely!
See? Covered. So it's decent.

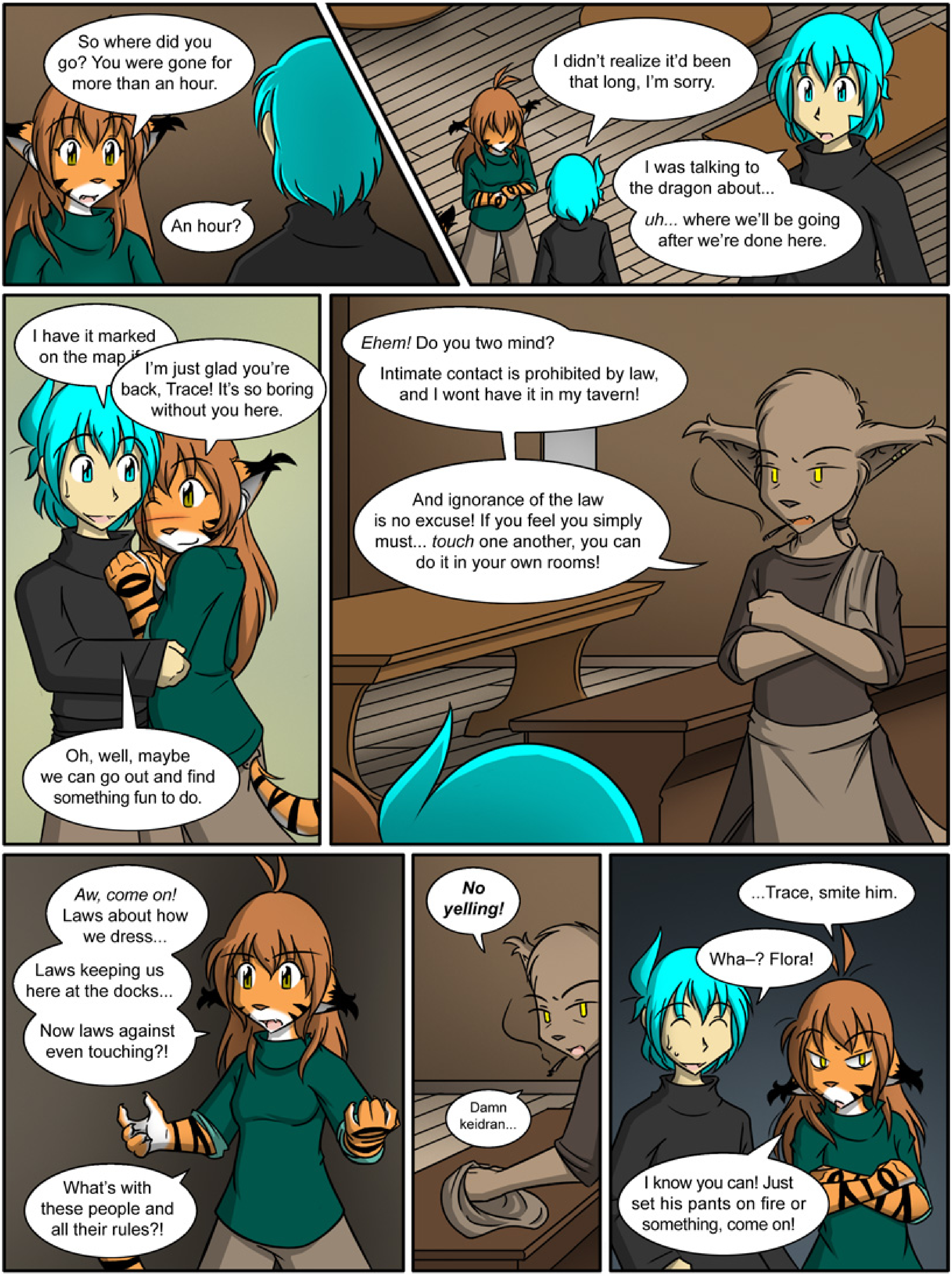

Alaric, is this really necessary?
Don't worry, Keith! I only need an hour or two of your time.
I can't finish this statue of you without you modeling for me!
...Sigh...
But do I have to be naked?
Doesn't this violate a dozen decency laws?
No, no, of course not! I can't order you to do anything if it violates any laws. And I've studied the laws carefully.
Since this is for artistic purposes, it's exempt from the decency laws!
Now just hold that pose and I'll get to work!
...Great...
What else could possibly go wrong today?
Keith Keiser? He's with General Alaric.
They're in Alaric's private stone-working room. It's down the hall and to the right.
Oh, t-thank you.

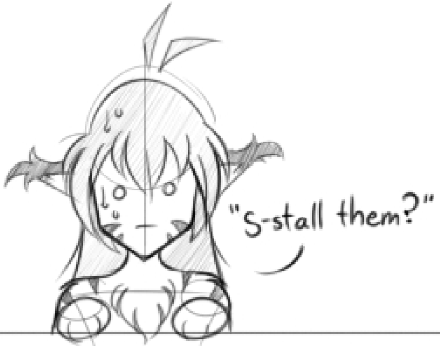

Okay, this is it...
Keith should be right behind this door...
Now all I have to do is... open this d-door and talk to him...
But... what if Keith hates me? What if he doesn't even remember me?
W-why would he? It's been more than five years - a quarter of a lifetime. And I'm getting old. He wouldn't...
N-no! I've been a coward all my life. I can't be nervous, not now! Not when I'm so close!
I j-just have to try and... imagine he's in his underwear! That's supposed to help...
Alright! Here goes!
K-Keith!
You probably don't remember me but I–!
...o-oh no! I... I imagined too hard!

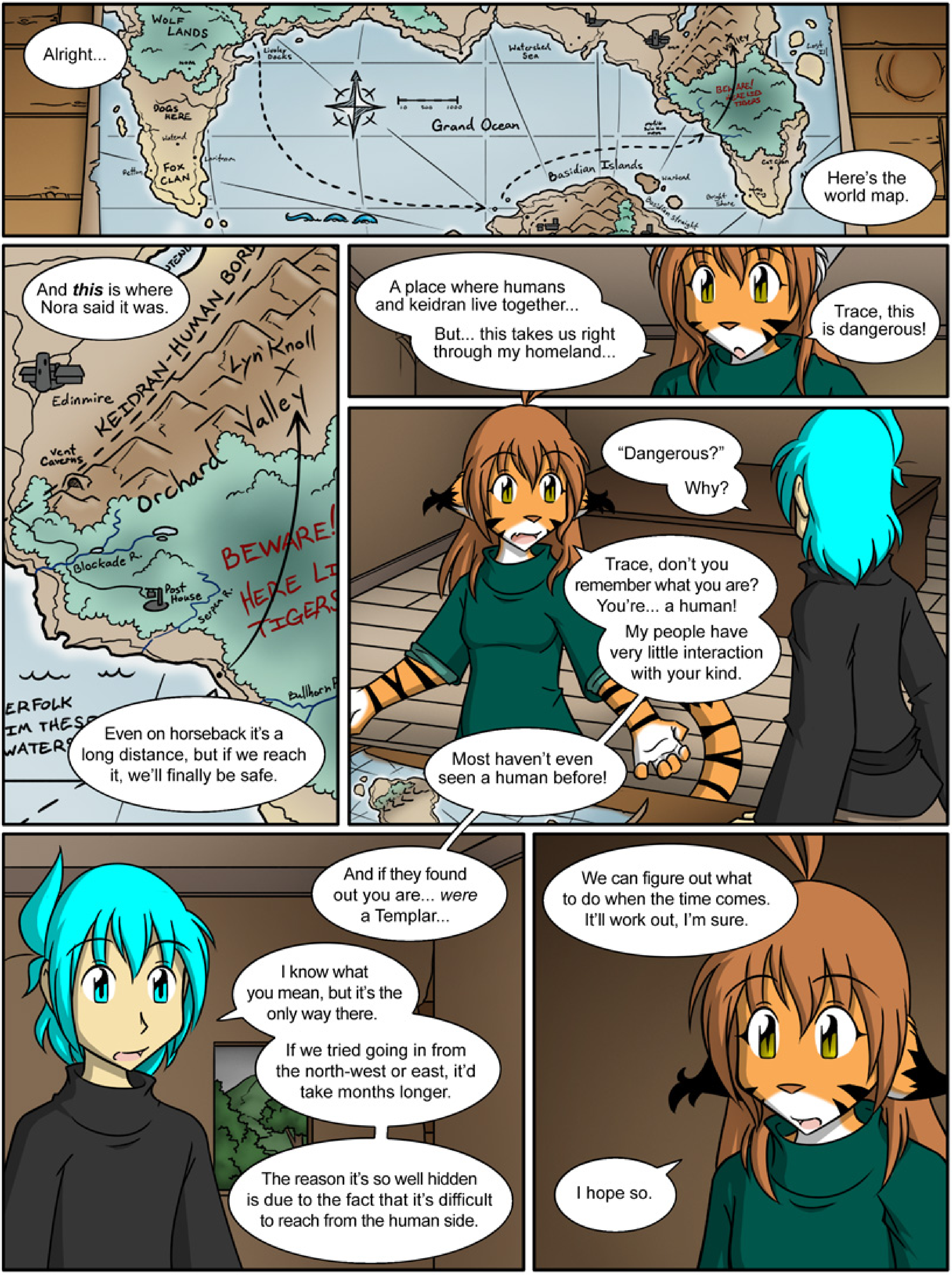

L-Laura...?
KYAAAAAAAAAAAH!
Ah! S-sorry, sorry!
I d-didn't know y-you were... busy...! I-I'll wait outside!
AHAHAHA! That couldn't have gone more perfectly!
You should have seen the look on your face!
You.
This was your doing! You knew she'd be here! This was all a prank?!
Aw, don't be mad at me, Keith. It wasn't *all* a prank. I really did need you to help finish my statue.
But for now, go ahead and go with your lady friend. We'll continue later.
A short while later...
I'm... sorry you had to see that, Laura.
I-It's alright, Keith...
O-oh no... I had this moment planned out for years...
Now I can't think of what to say. I can't stop picturing him naked!

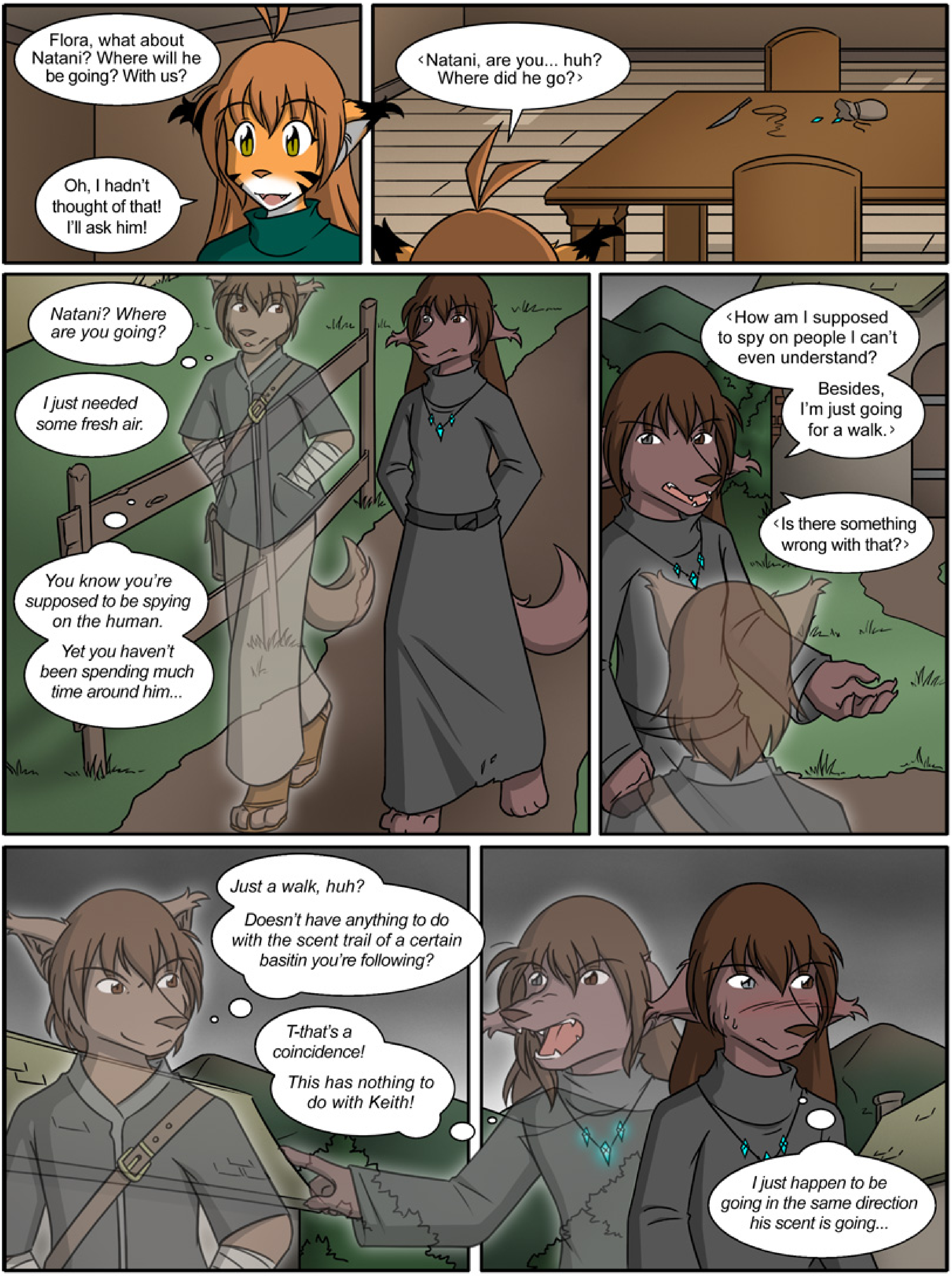

Trace has been gone a long time. It looks like it might storm soon.
I hope he's alright.
GRAB!
Gah! Eric, you pervert!
Stop touching my tail!
SCRATCH!
MAUL!
Ack!
Flora, wait! Calm down!
It's just me!
O-oh no! Trace, you're back! I'm sorry!
Are you alright? I didn't mean to hurt you.
Heh, I'm fine, Flora.
I guess I should have known better than to sneak up from behind and grab the tail of a tiger.
Next time I might not get away so lucky!
Oh, don't say that, Trace! I didn't mean to.
I know you didn't, Flora.

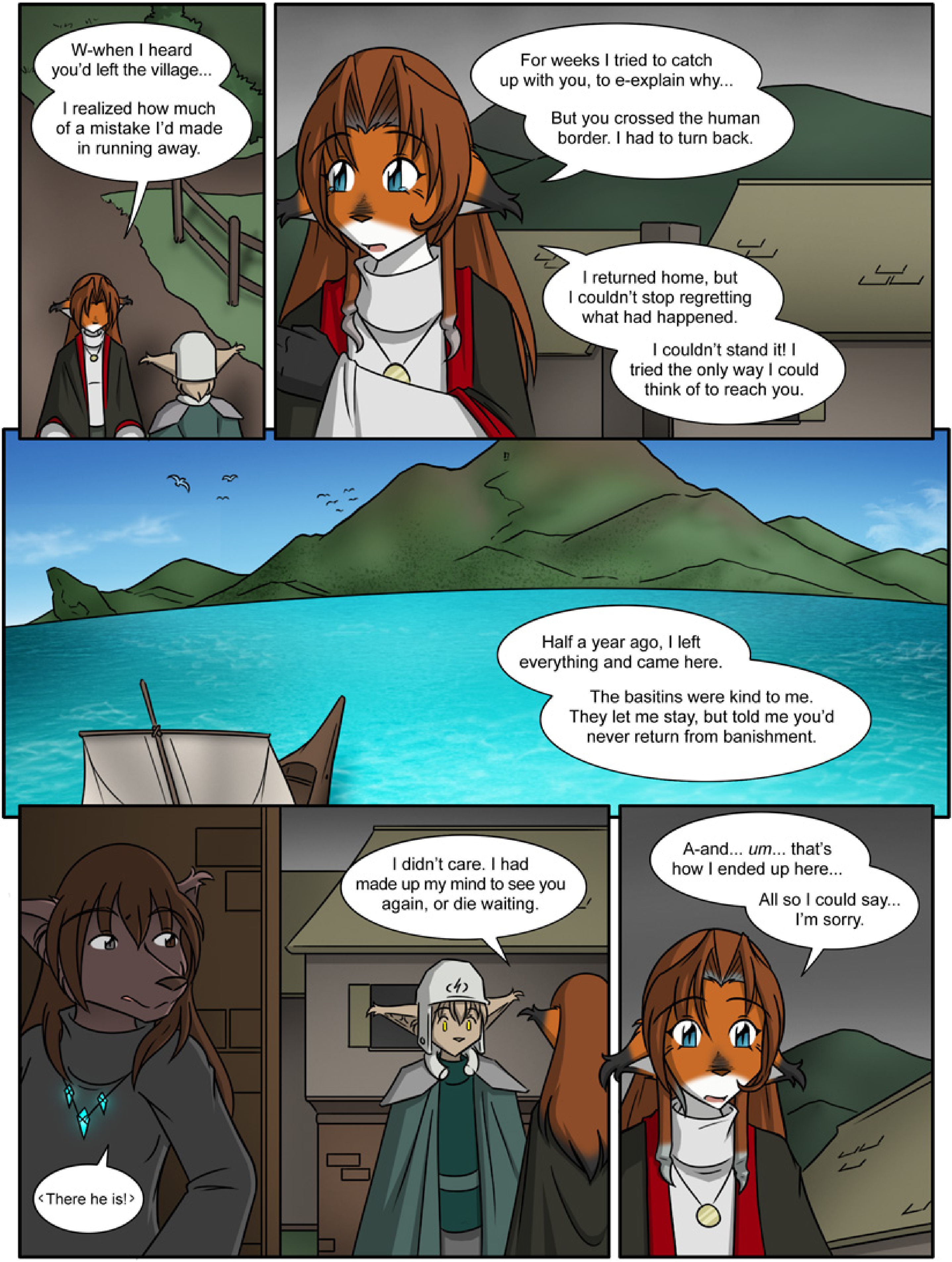

?
?
Merry Christmas!

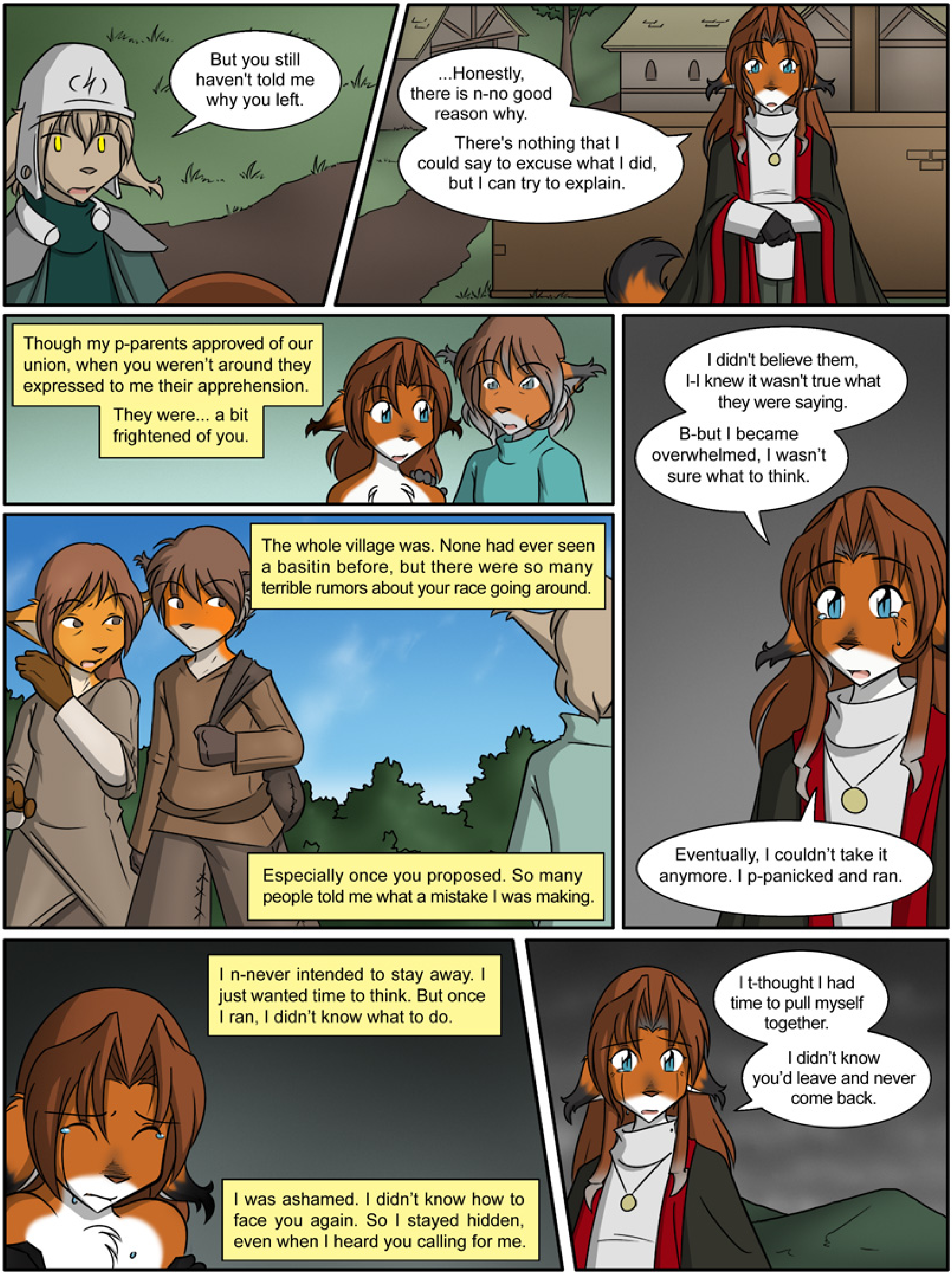

So where did you go? You were gone for more than an hour.
An hour?
I didn't realize it'd been that long, I'm sorry.
I was talking to the dragon about...
uh... where we'll be going after we're done here.
I have it marked on the map if
I'm just glad you're back, Trace! It's so boring without you here.
Oh, well, maybe we can go out and find something fun to do.
Ehem! Do you two mind?
Intimate contact is prohibited by law, and I wont have it in my tavern!
And ignorance of the law is no excuse! If you feel you simply must... *touch* one another, you can do it in your own rooms!
Aw, come on! Laws about how we dress...
Laws keeping us here at the docks...
Now laws against even touching?!
What's with these people and all their rules?!
No yelling!
Damn keidran...
...Trace, smite him.
Wha–? Flora!
I know you can! Just set his pants on fire or something, come on!

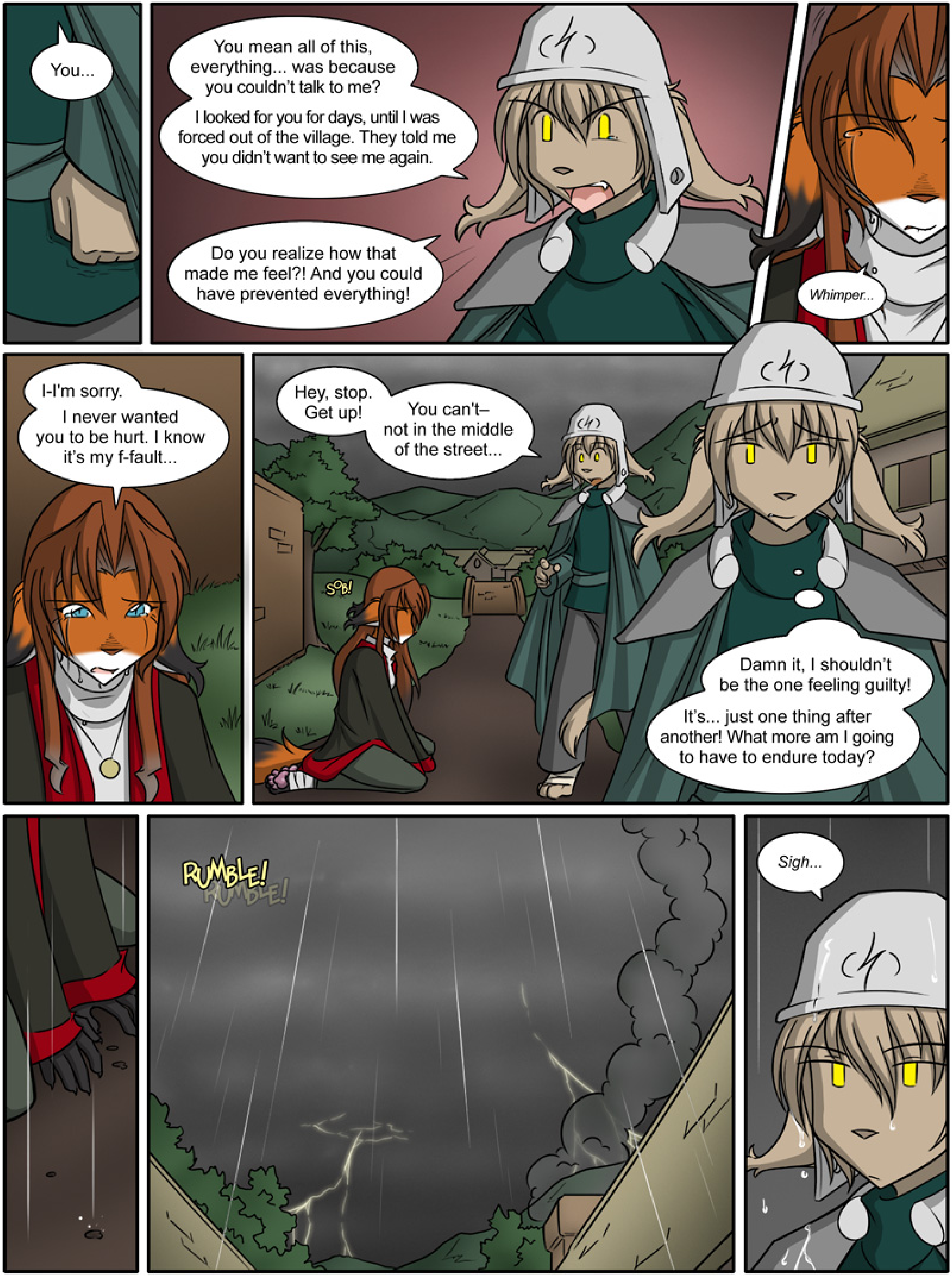

"S-stall them?"

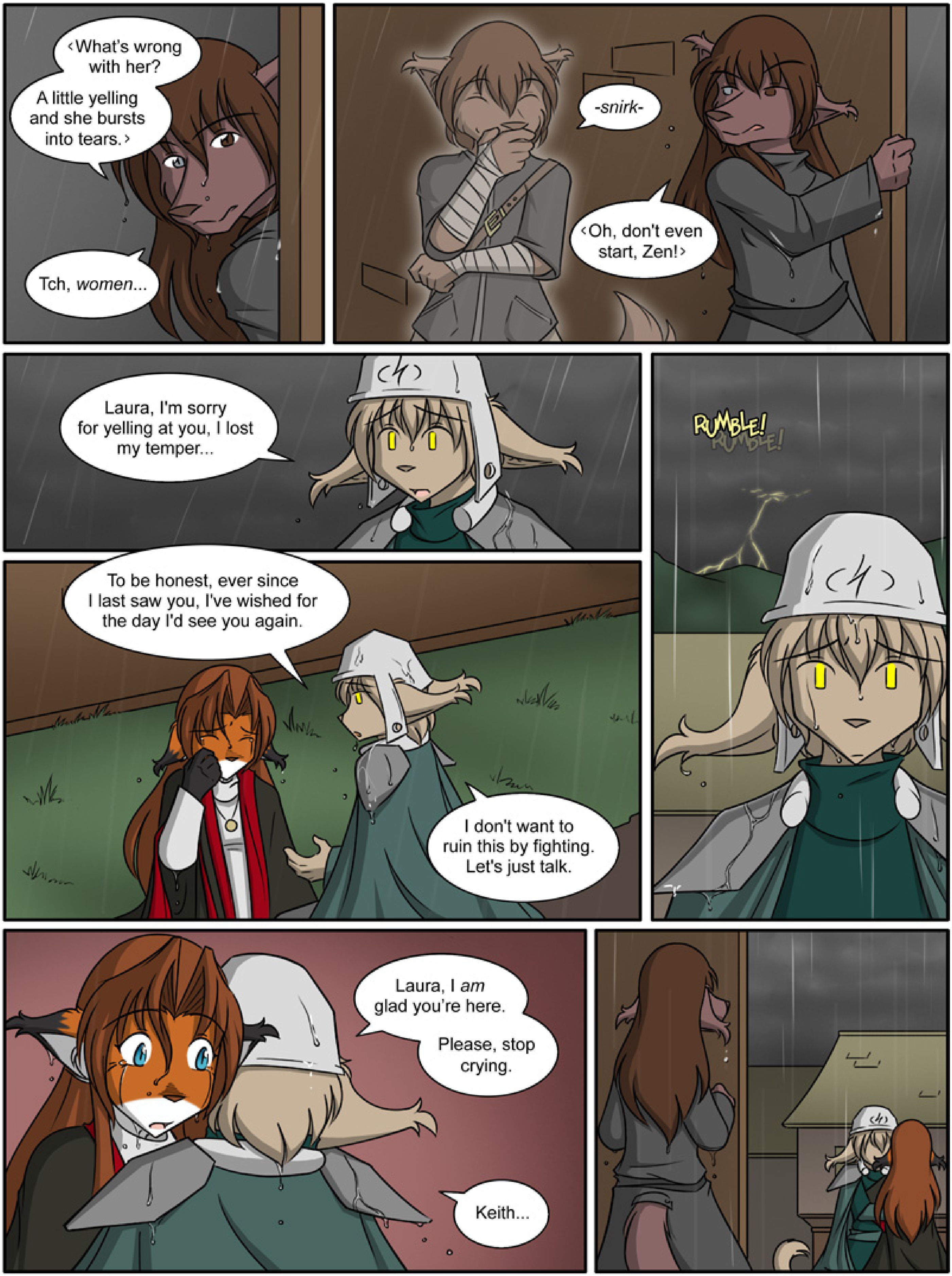

WOLF LANDS
DOGS HERE
FOX CLAN
Grand Ocean
Watershed Sea
Basidian Islands
Basidian Straight
BEWARE! HERE LIE TIGERS
Alright...
Here's the world map.
KEIDRAN-HUMAN BORD
Lyn'Knoll
Valley
Orchard
Edinmire
Vent Caverns
Blockade R.
Post House
Serpen R.
Bullhorn R
BEWARE! HERE LI TIGERS
ERFOLK IM THES WATERS
And **this** is where Nora said it was.
Even on horseback it's a long distance, but if we reach it, we'll finally be safe.
A place where humans and keidran live together...
But... this takes us right through my homeland...
Trace, this is dangerous!
"Dangerous?"
Why?
Trace, don't you remember what you are? You're... a human!
My people have very little interaction with your kind.
Most haven't even seen a human before!
And if they found out you are... *were* a Templar...
I know what you mean, but it's the only way there.
If we tried going in from the north-west or east, it'd take months longer.
The reason it's so well hidden is due to the fact that it's difficult to reach from the human side.
We can figure out what to do when the time comes. It'll work out, I'm sure.
I hope so.

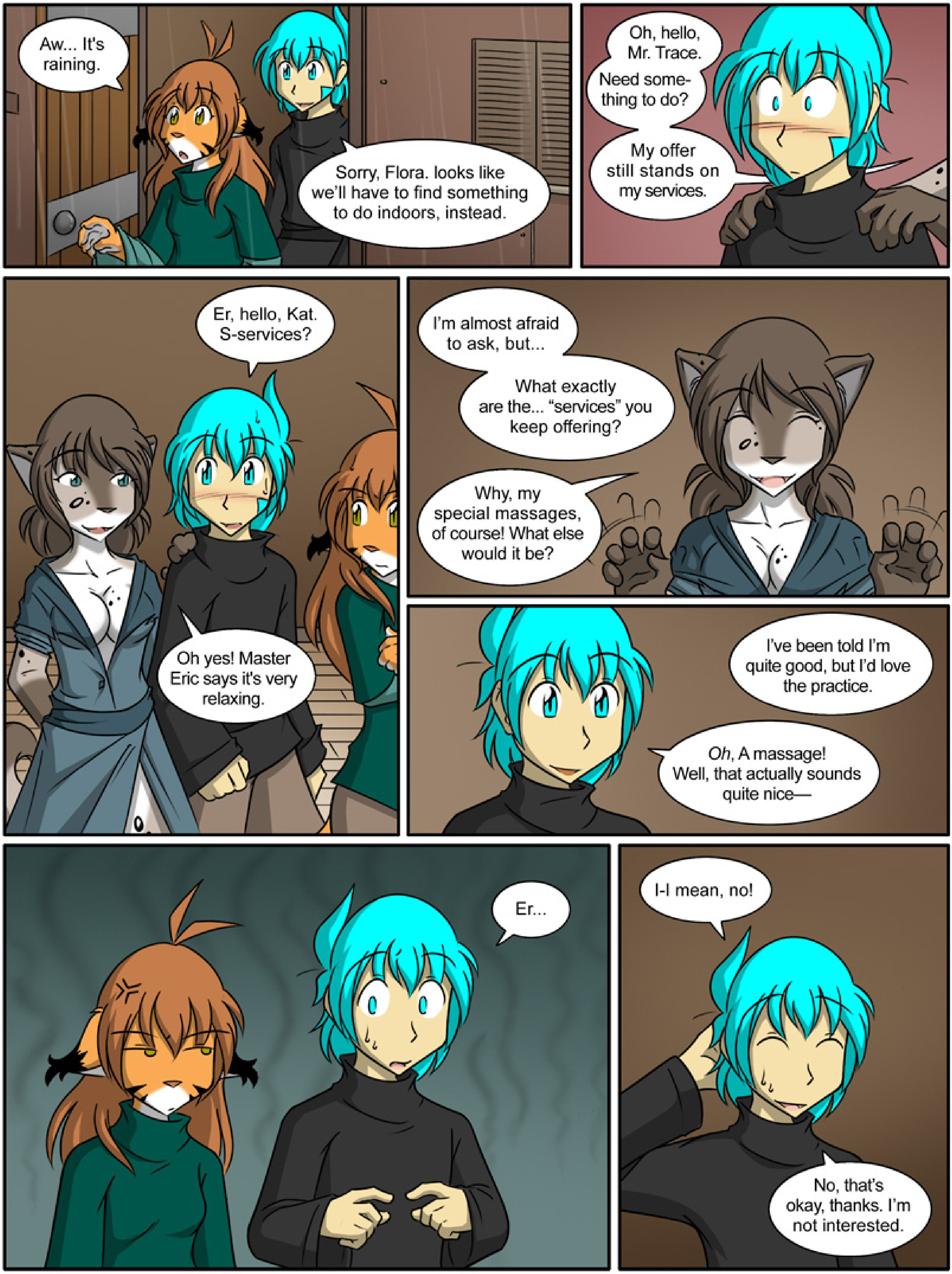

Flora, what about Natani? Where will he be going? With us?
Oh, I hadn't thought of that! I'll ask him!
‹Natani, are you... huh? Where did he go?›
Natani? Where are you going?
I just needed some fresh air.
You know you're supposed to be spying on the human.
Yet you haven't been spending much time around him...
‹How am I supposed to spy on people I can't even understand?
Besides, I'm just going for a walk.›
‹Is there something wrong with that?›
Just a walk, huh?
Doesn't have anything to do with the scent trail of a certain basitin you're following?
T-that's a coincidence!
This has nothing to do with Keith!
I just happen to be going in the same direction his scent is going...

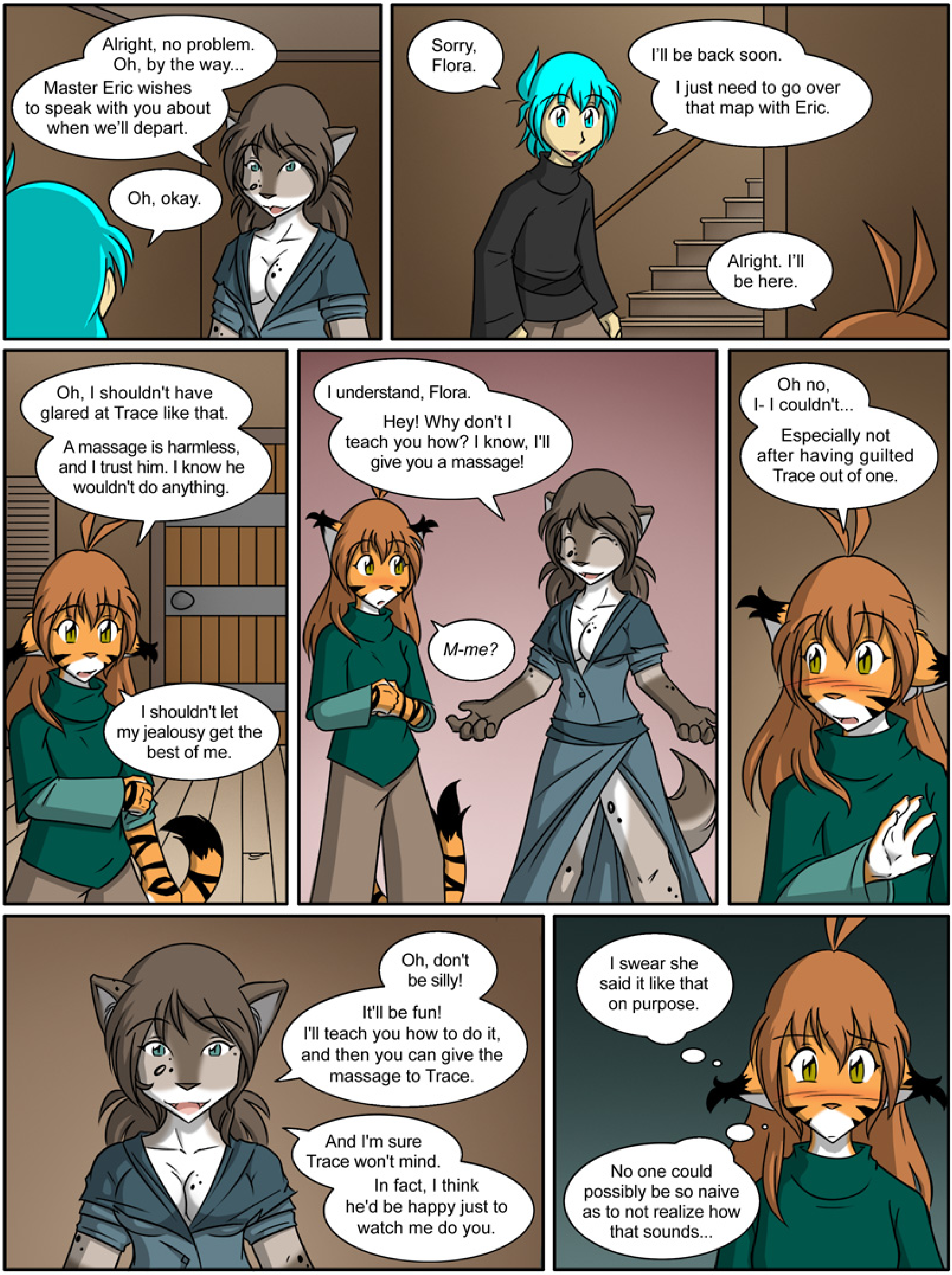

W-when I heard you'd left the village...
I realized how much of a mistake I'd made in running away.
For weeks I tried to catch up with you, to e-explain why...
But you crossed the human border. I had to turn back.
I returned home, but I couldn't stop regretting what had happened.
I couldn't stand it! I tried the only way I could think of to reach you.
Half a year ago, I left everything and came here.
The basitins were kind to me. They let me stay, but told me you'd never return from banishment.
‹There he is!›
I didn't care. I had made up my mind to see you again, or die waiting.
A-and... *um*... that's how I ended up here...
All so I could say... I'm sorry.

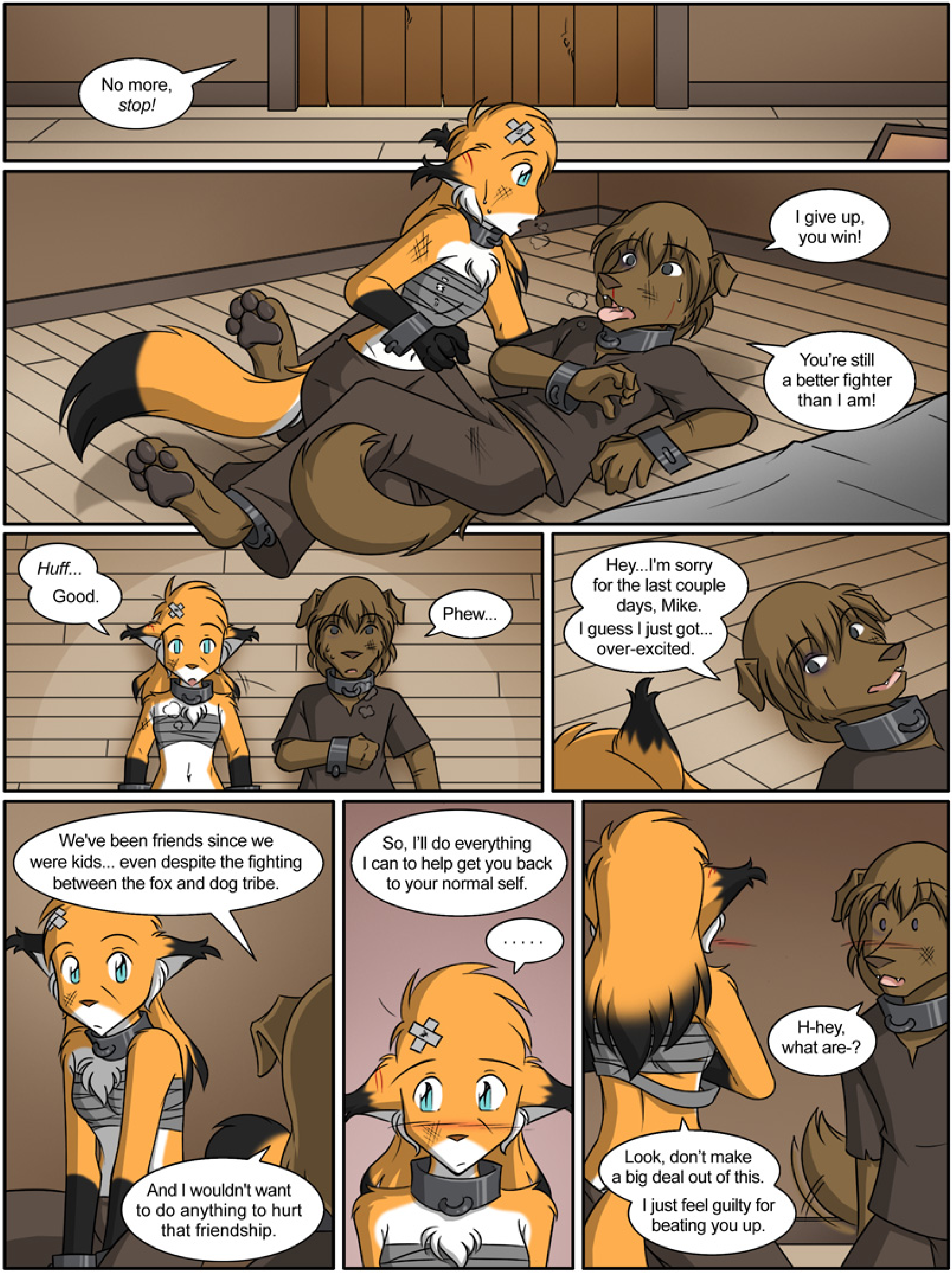

But you still haven't told me why you left.
...Honestly, there is n-no good reason why.
There's nothing that I could say to excuse what I did, but I can try to explain.
Though my p-parents approved of our union, when you weren't around they expressed to me their apprehension.
They were... a bit frightened of you.
The whole village was. None had ever seen a basitin before, but there were so many terrible rumors about your race going around.
Especially once you proposed. So many people told me what a mistake I was making.
I didn't believe them, I-I knew it wasn't true what they were saying.
B-but I became overwhelmed, I wasn't sure what to think.
Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore. I p-panicked and ran.
I n-never intended to stay away. I just wanted time to think. But once I ran, I didn't know what to do.
I was ashamed. I didn't know how to face you again. So I stayed hidden, even when I heard you calling for me.
I t-thought I had time to pull myself together.
I didn't know you'd leave and never come back.

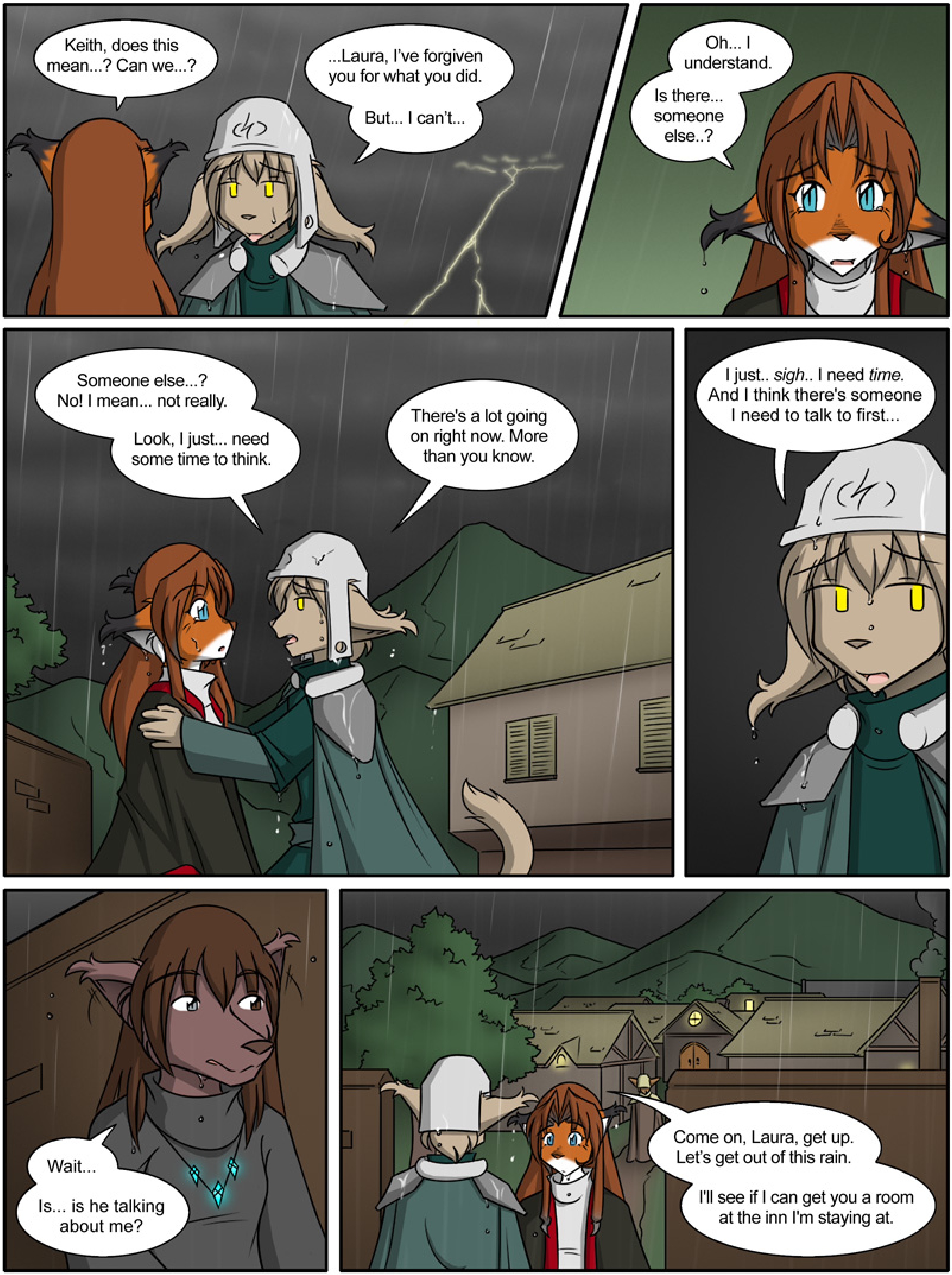

You...
You mean all of this, everything... was because you couldn't talk to me?
I looked for you for days, until I was forced out of the village. They told me you didn't want to see me again.
Do you realize how that made me feel?! And you could have prevented everything!
Whimper...
I-I'm sorry.
I never wanted you to be hurt. I know it's my f-fault...
Hey, stop. Get up!
You can't– not in the middle of the street...
SOB!
Damn it, I shouldn't be the one feeling guilty!
It's... just one thing after another! What more am I going to have to endure today?
RUMBLE!
RUMBLE!
Sigh...

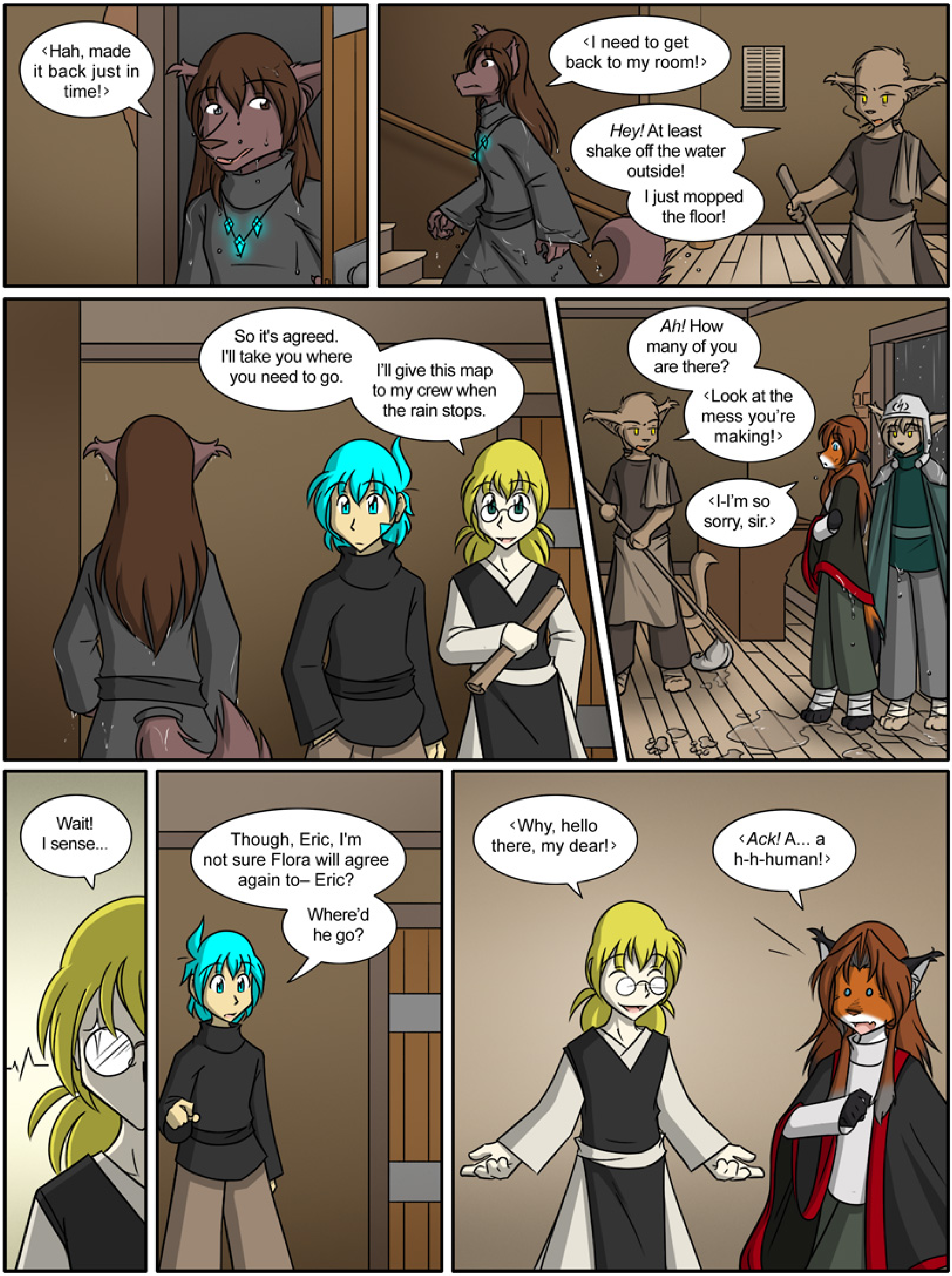

‹What's wrong with her?
A little yelling and she bursts into tears.›
Tch, *women*...
-snirk-
‹Oh, don't even start, Zen!›
Laura, I'm sorry for yelling at you, I lost my temper...
RUMBLE!
RUMBLE!
To be honest, ever since I last saw you, I've wished for the day I'd see you again.
I don't want to ruin this by fighting. Let's just talk.
Laura, I *am* glad you're here.
Please, stop crying.
Keith...

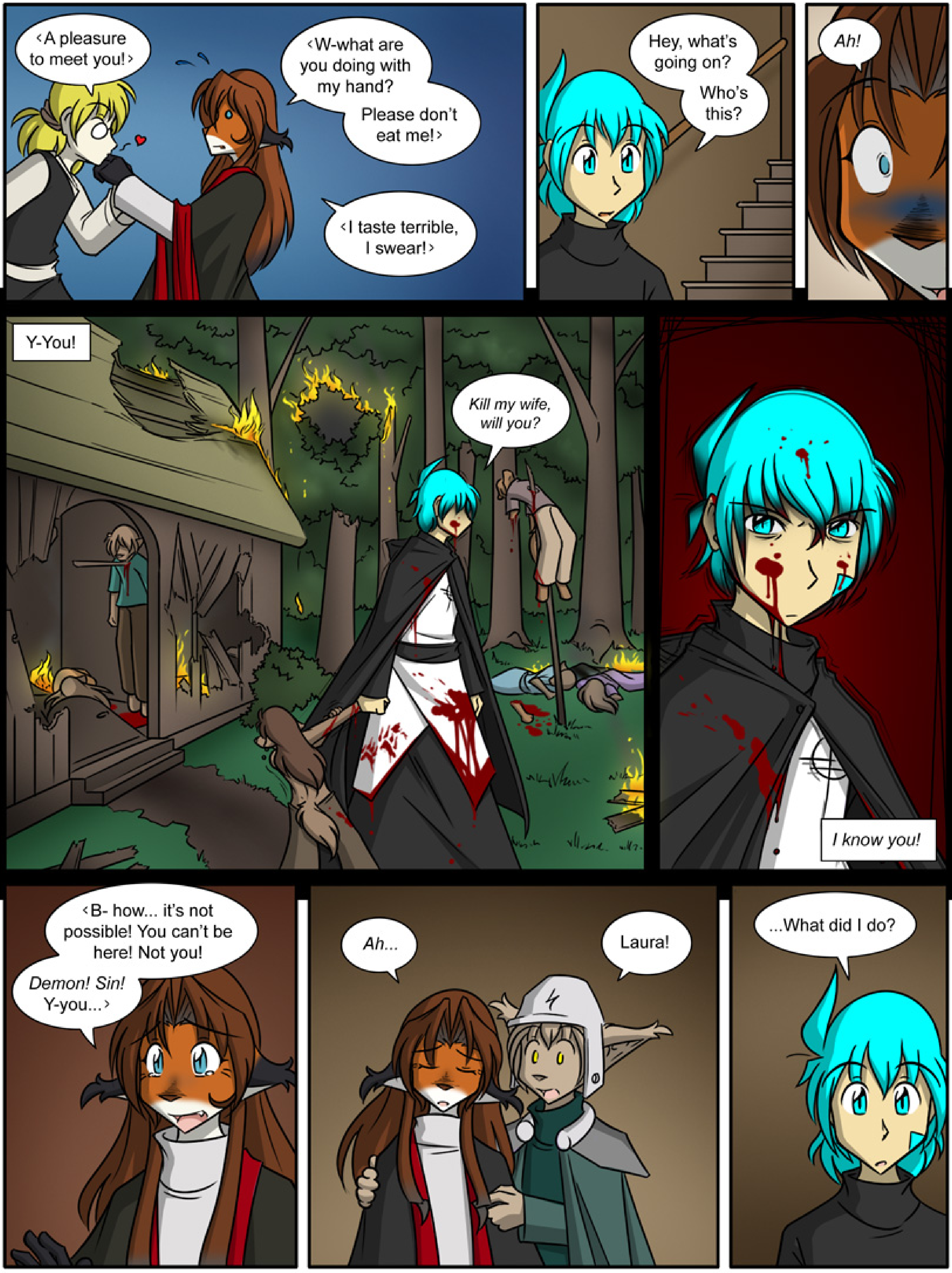

Aw... It's raining.
Sorry, Flora. looks like we'll have to find something to do indoors, instead.
Oh, hello, Mr. Trace.
Need something to do?
My offer still stands on my services.
Er, hello, Kat. S-services?
Oh yes! Master Eric says it's very relaxing.
I'm almost afraid to ask, but...
What exactly are the... "services" you keep offering?
Why, my special massages, of course! What else would it be?
I've been told I'm quite good, but I'd love the practice.
Oh, A massage! Well, that actually sounds quite nice—
Er...
I-I mean, no!
No, that's okay, thanks. I'm not interested.

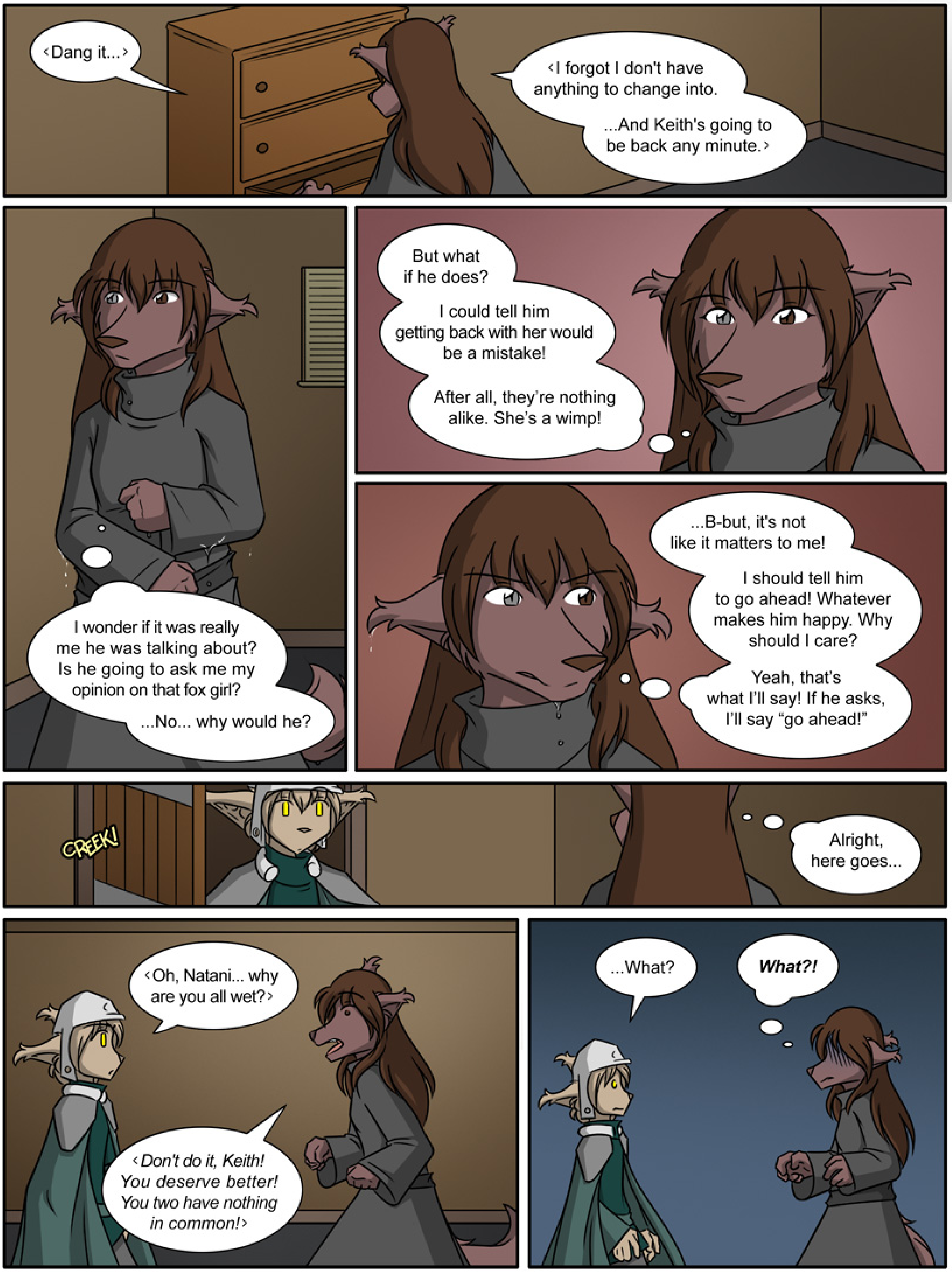

Alright, no problem. Oh, by the way...
Master Eric wishes to speak with you about when we'll depart.
Oh, okay.
Sorry, Flora.
I'll be back soon.
I just need to go over that map with Eric.
Alright. I'll be here.
Oh, I shouldn't have glared at Trace like that.
A massage is harmless, and I trust him. I know he wouldn't do anything.
I shouldn't let my jealousy get the best of me.
I understand, Flora.
Hey! Why don't I teach you how? I know, I'll give you a massage!
M-me?
Oh no, I- I couldn't...
Especially not after having guilted Trace out of one.
Oh, don't be silly!
It'll be fun! I'll teach you how to do it, and then you can give the massage to Trace.
And I'm sure Trace won't mind.
In fact, I think he'd be happy just to watch me do you.
I swear she said it like that on purpose.
No one could possibly be so naive as to not realize how that sounds...

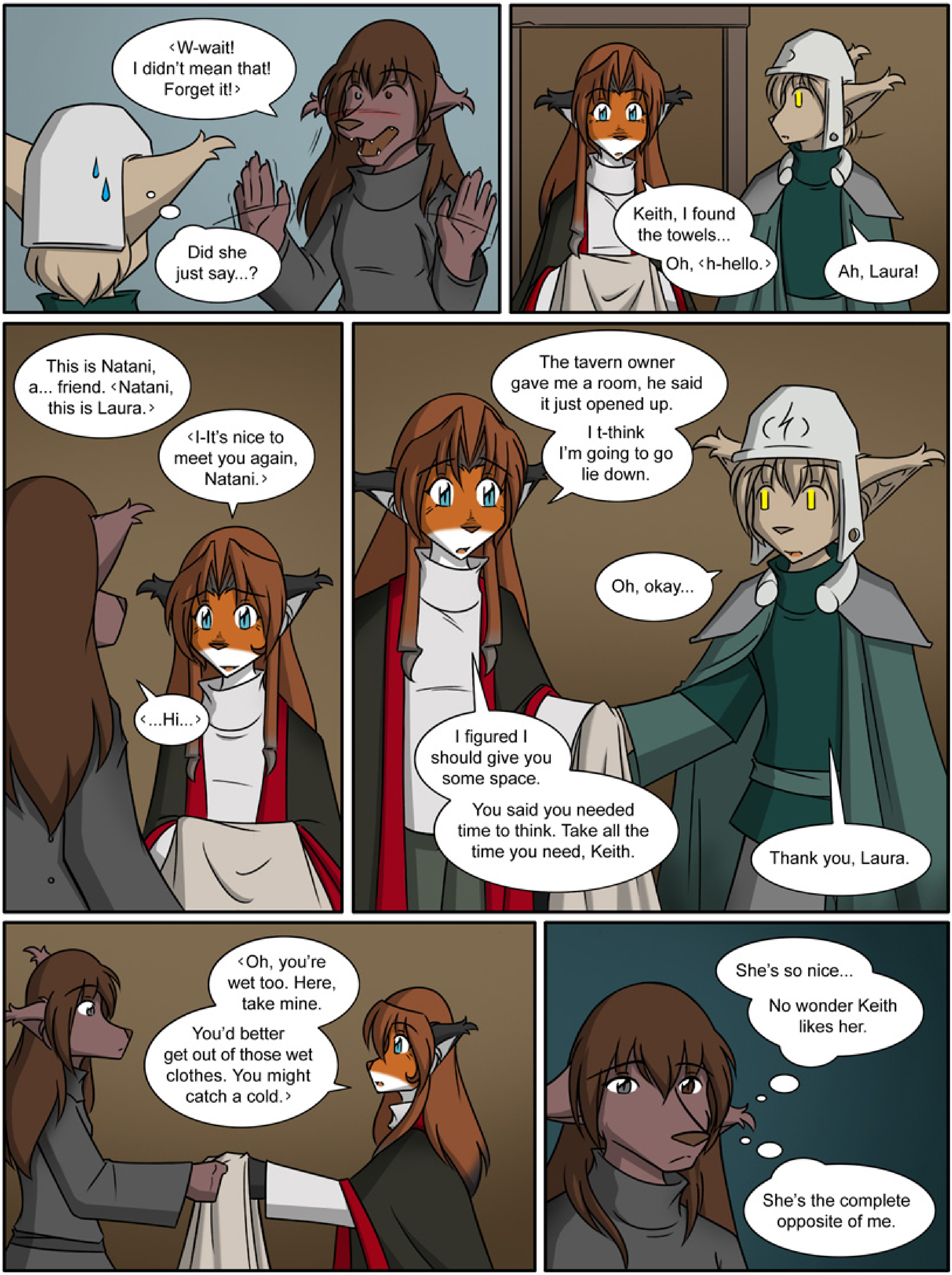

No more, *stop!*
I give up, you win!
You're still a better fighter than I am!
Huff... Good.
Phew...
Hey...I'm sorry for the last couple days, Mike.
I guess I just got... over-excited.
We've been friends since we were kids... even despite the fighting between the fox and dog tribe.
And I wouldn't want to do anything to hurt that friendship.
So, I'll do everything I can to help get you back to your normal self.
. . . . .
H-hey, what are-?
Look, don't make a big deal out of this.
I just feel guilty for beating you up.

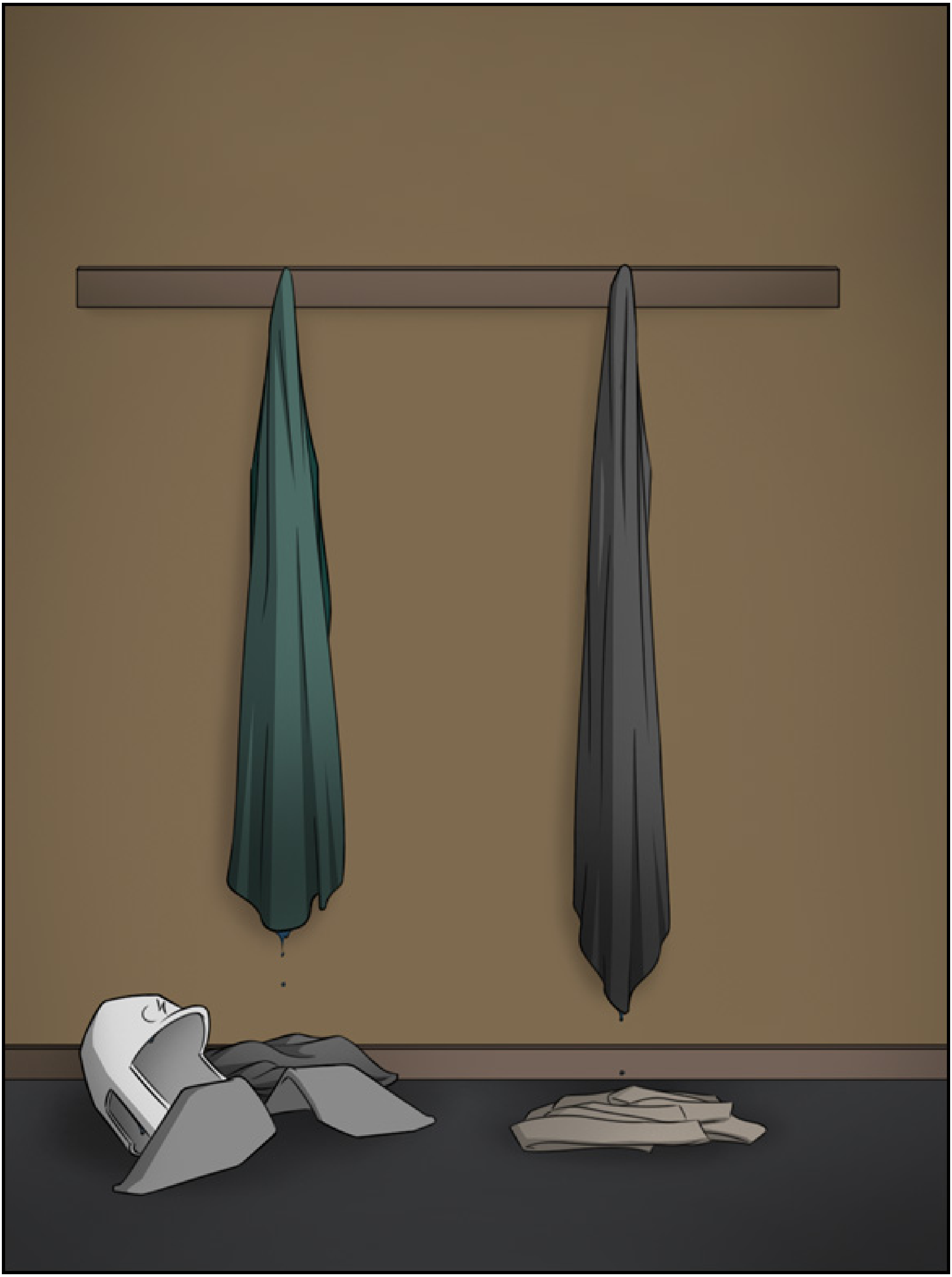

Keith, does this mean...? Can we...?
...Laura, I've forgiven you for what you did.
But... I can't...
Oh... I understand.
Is there... someone else..?
Someone else...? No! I mean... not really.
Look, I just... need some time to think.
There's a lot going on right now. More than you know.
I just.. *sigh*.. I need *time*. And I think there's someone I need to talk to first...
Wait...
Is... is he talking about me?
Come on, Laura, get up. Let's get out of this rain.
I'll see if I can get you a room at the inn I'm staying at.

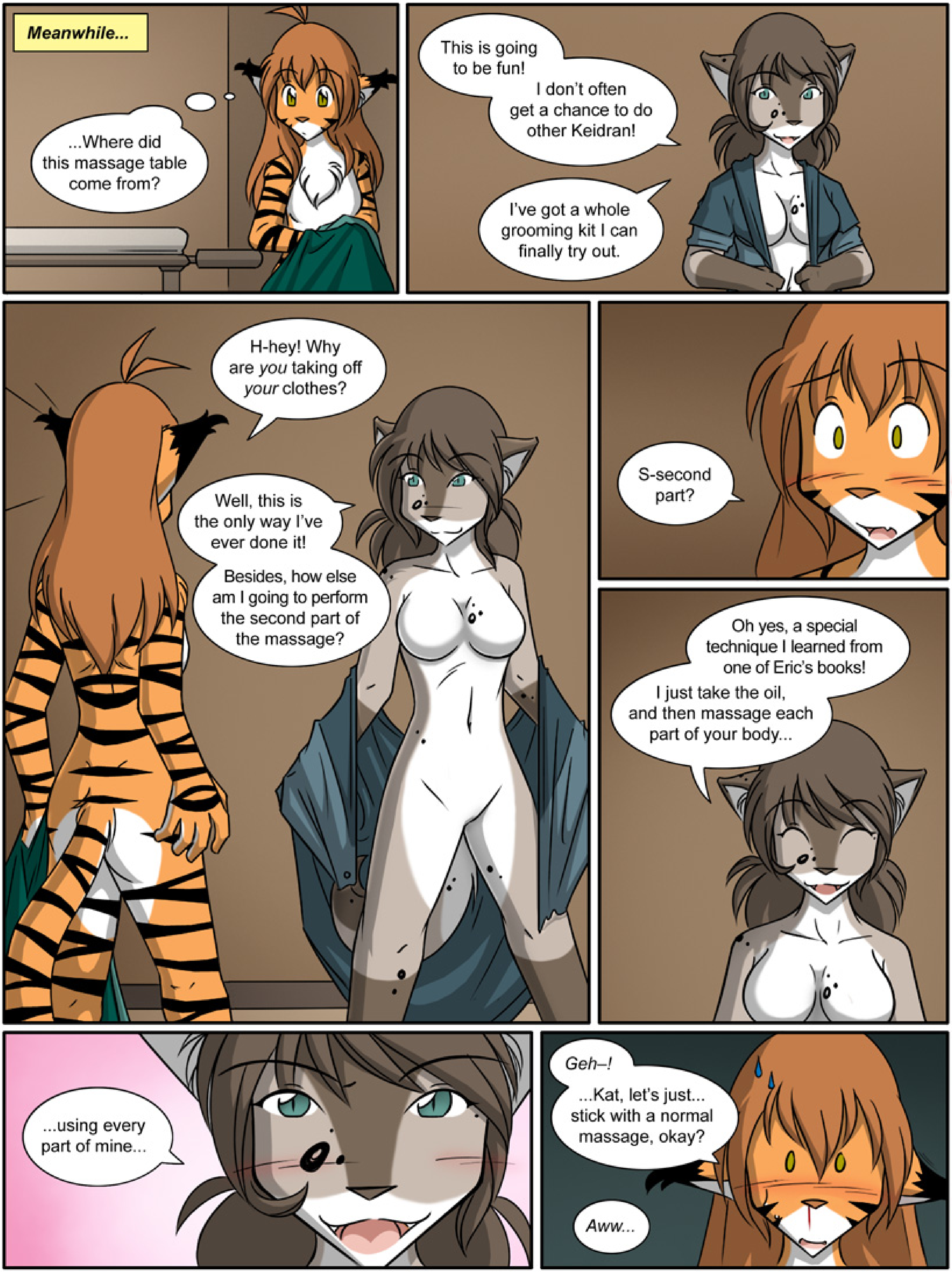

‹Hah, made it back just in time!›
‹I need to get back to my room!›
Hey! At least shake off the water outside!
I just mopped the floor!
So it's agreed. I'll take you where you need to go.
I'll give this map to my crew when the rain stops.
Ah! How many of you are there?
‹Look at the mess you're making!›
‹I-I'm so sorry, sir.›
Wait! I sense...
Though, Eric, I'm not sure Flora will agree again to– Eric?
Where'd he go?
‹Why, hello there, my dear!›
‹*Ack!* A... a h-h-human!›

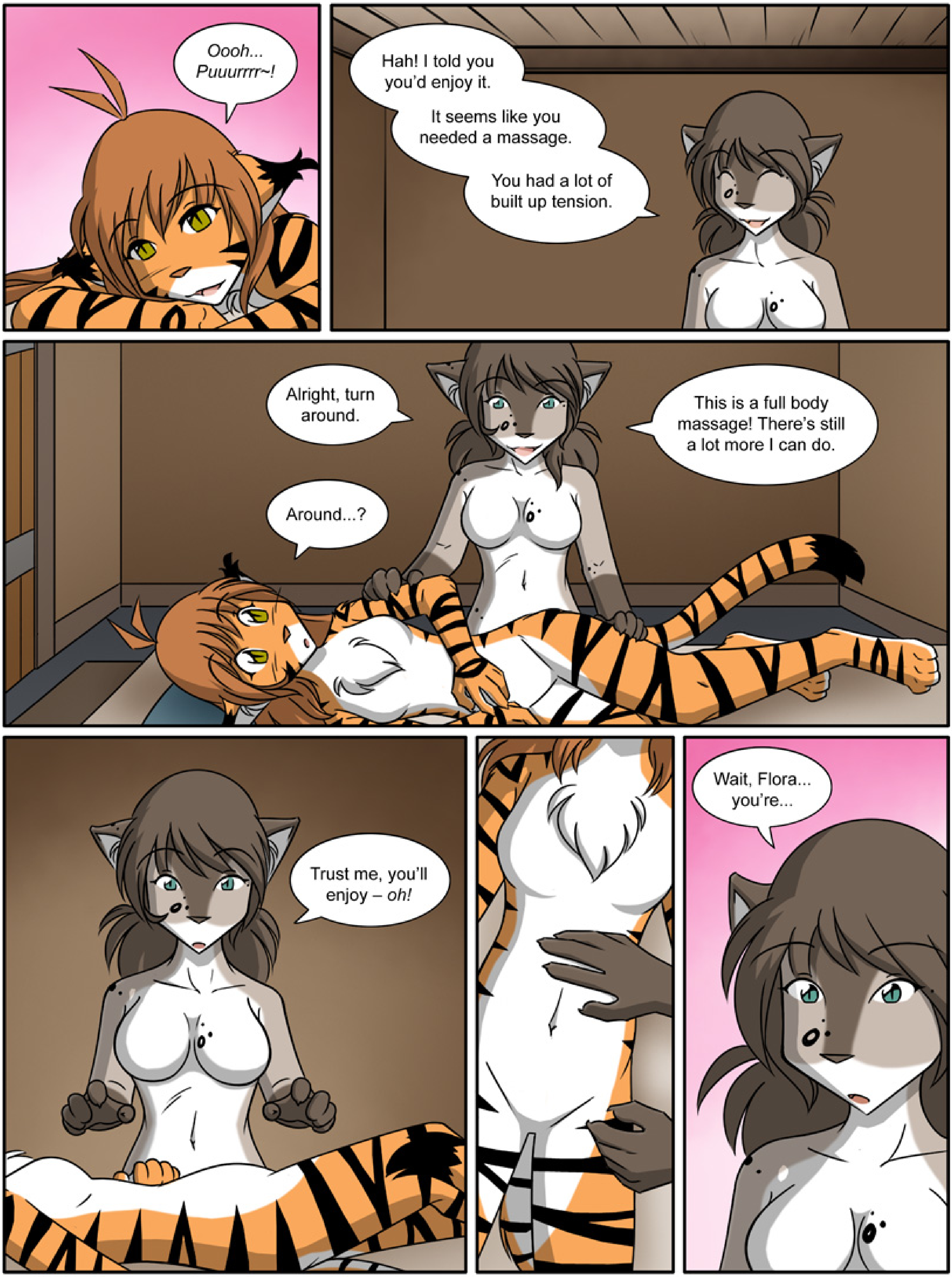

‹A pleasure to meet you!›
‹W-what are you doing with my hand?
Please don't eat me!›
‹I taste terrible, I swear!›
Hey, what's going on?
Who's this?
Ah!
Y-You!
Kill my wife, will you?
I know you!
‹B- how... it's not possible! You can't be here! Not you!
Demon! Sin! Y-you...›
Ah...
Laura!
...What did I do?

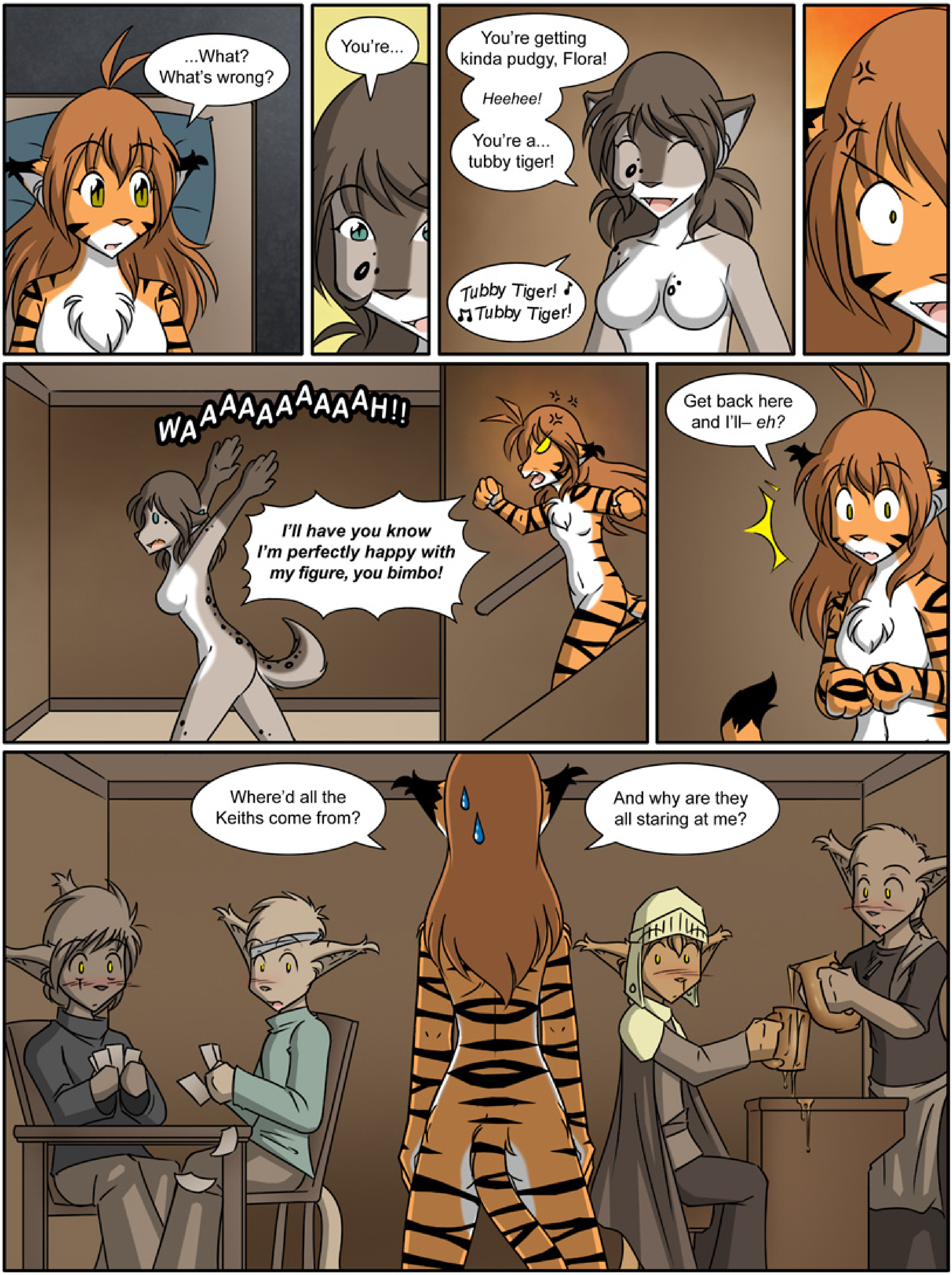

‹Dang it...›
‹I forgot I don't have anything to change into.
...And Keith's going to be back any minute.›
I wonder if it was really me he was talking about? Is he going to ask me my opinion on that fox girl?
...No... why would he?
But what if he does?
I could tell him getting back with her would be a mistake!
After all, they're nothing alike. She's a wimp!
...B-but, it's not like it matters to me!
I should tell him to go ahead! Whatever makes him happy. Why should I care?
Yeah, that's what I'll say! If he asks, I'll say "go ahead!"
CREEK!
Alright, here goes...
‹Oh, Natani... why are you all wet?›
‹Don't do it, Keith! You deserve better! You two have nothing in common!›
...What?
What?!

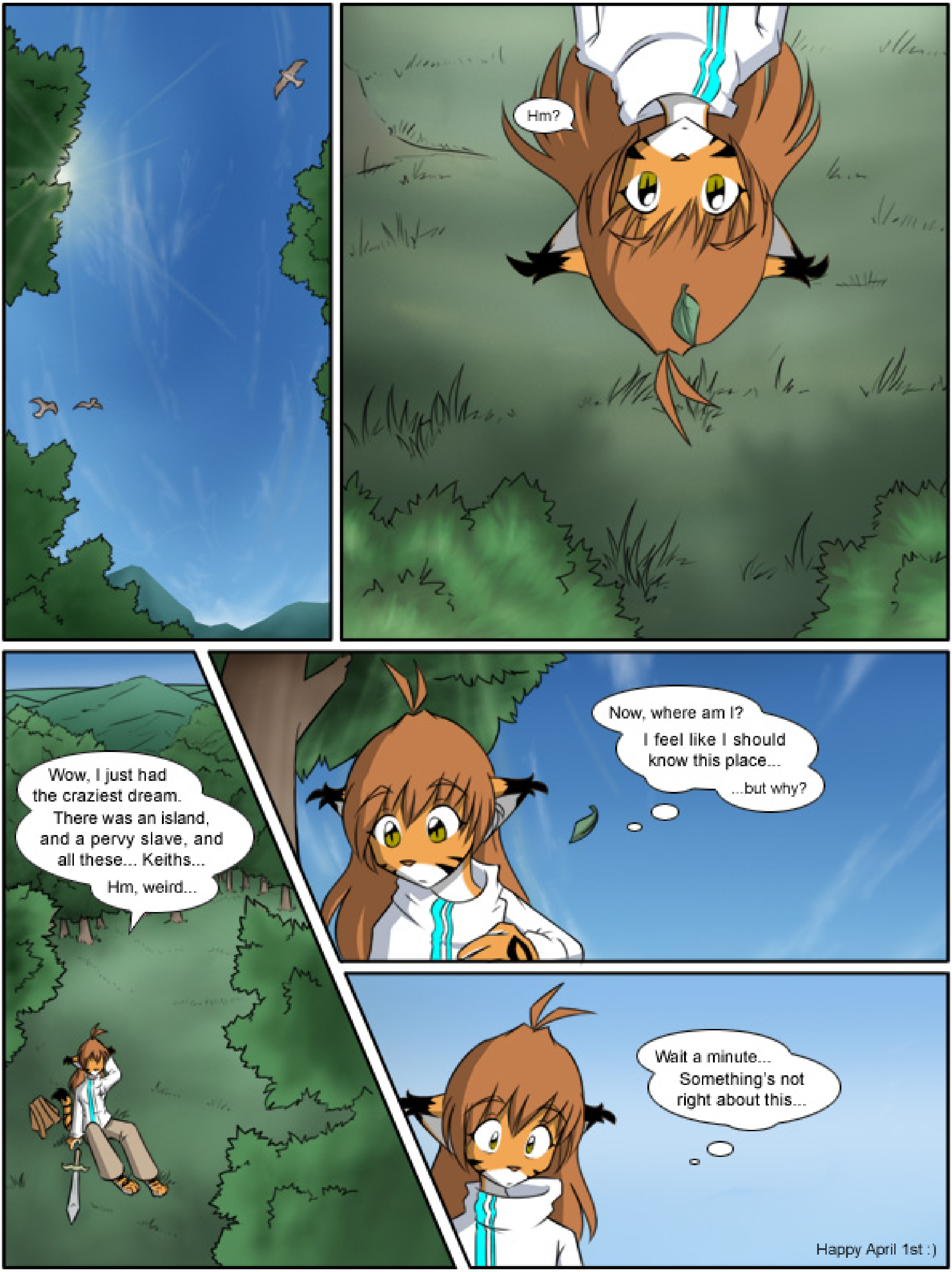

<W-wait! I didn't mean that! Forget it!>
Did she just say...?
Keith, I found the towels...
Oh, <h-hello.>
Ah, Laura!
This is Natani, a... friend. <Natani, this is Laura.>
<I-It's nice to meet you again, Natani.>
<...Hi...>
The tavern owner gave me a room, he said it just opened up.
I t-think I'm going to go lie down.
Oh, okay...
I figured I should give you some space.
You said you needed time to think. Take all the time you need, Keith.
Thank you, Laura.
<Oh, you're wet too. Here, take mine.
You'd better get out of those wet clothes. You might catch a cold.>
She's so nice...
No wonder Keith likes her.
She's the complete opposite of me.



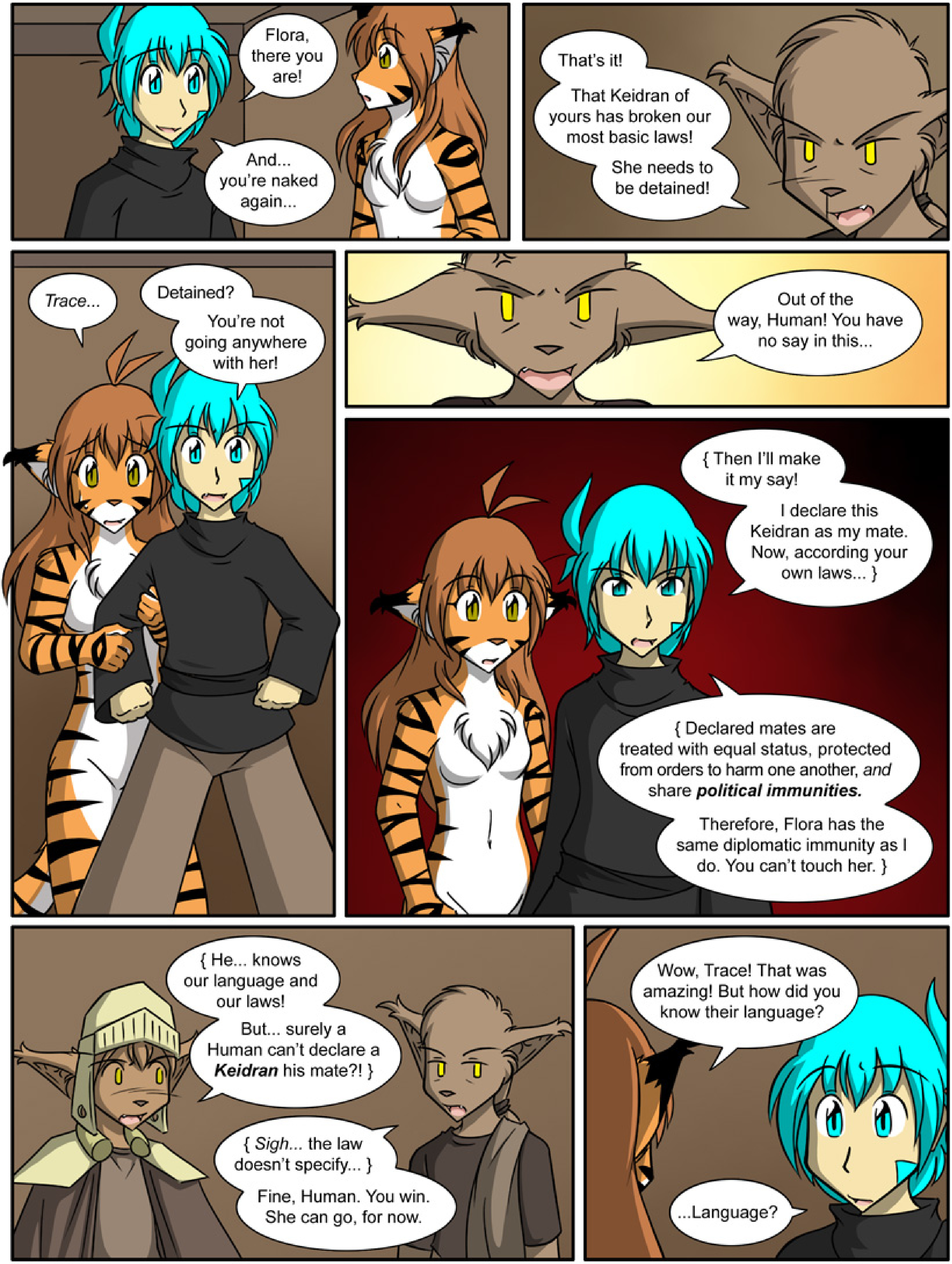

Meanwhile...
...Where did this massage table come from?
This is going to be fun!
I don't often get a chance to do other Keidran!
I've got a whole grooming kit I can finally try out.
H-hey! Why are *you* taking off *your* clothes?
Well, this is the only way I've ever done it!
Besides, how else am I going to perform the second part of the massage?
S-second part?
Oh yes, a special technique I learned from one of Eric's books!
I just take the oil, and then massage each part of your body...
...using every part of mine...
Geh–!
...Kat, let's just... stick with a normal massage, okay?
Aww...

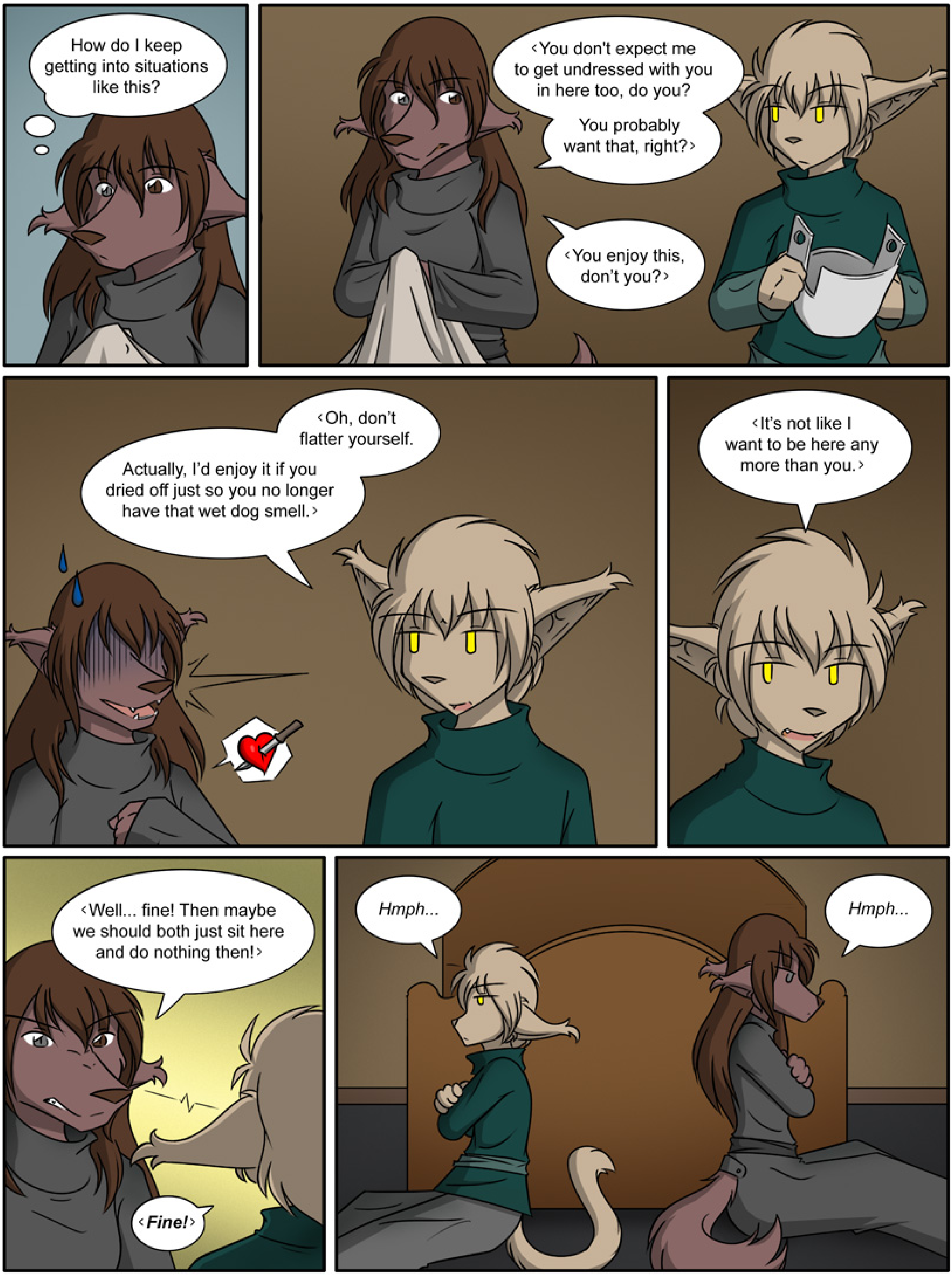

Oooh... Puuurrrr~!
Hah! I told you you'd enjoy it.
It seems like you needed a massage.
You had a lot of built up tension.
Alright, turn around.
Around...?
This is a full body massage! There's still a lot more I can do.
Trust me, you'll enjoy – *oh!*
Wait, Flora... you're...

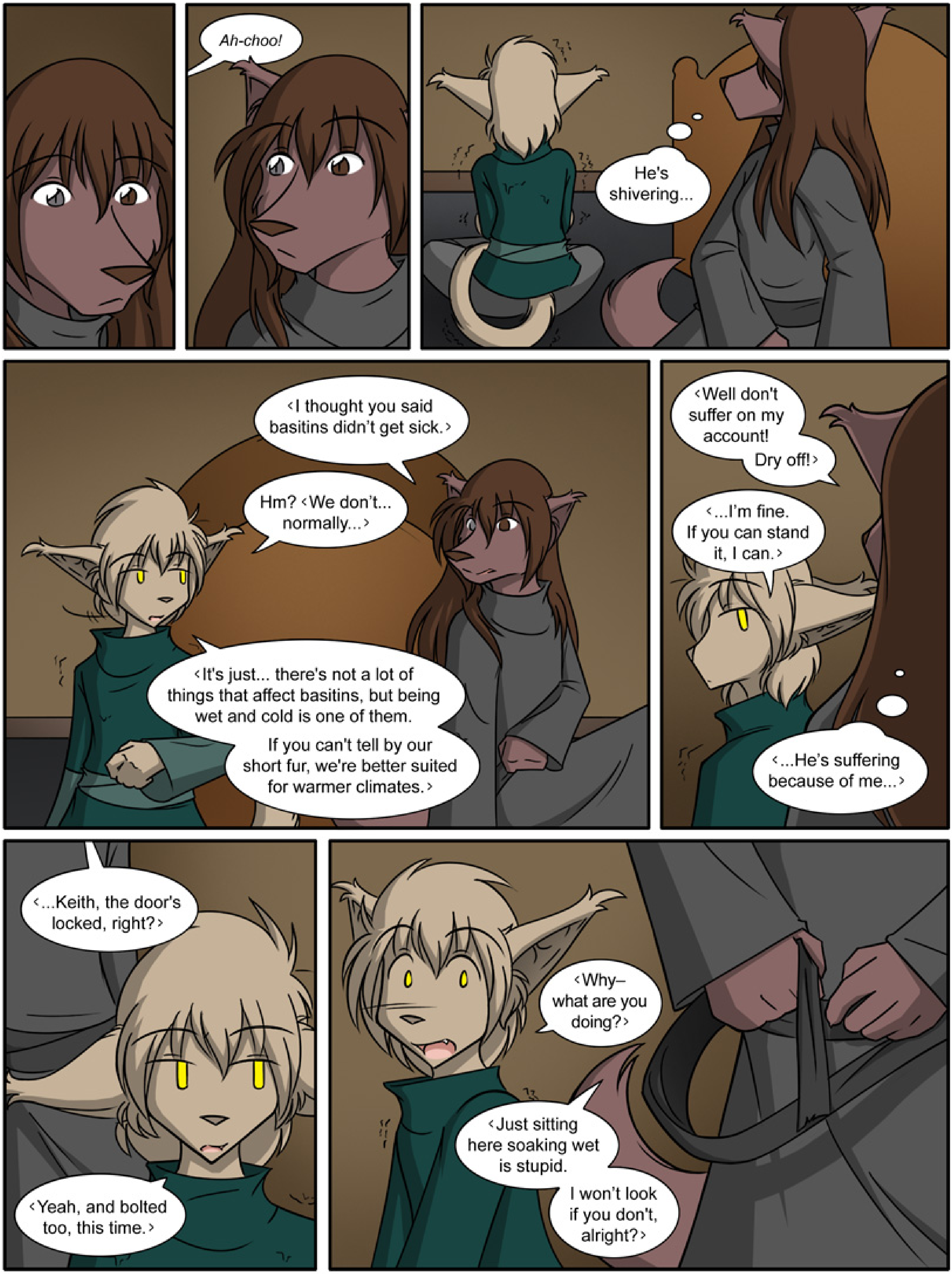

...What? What's wrong?
You're...
You're getting kinda pudgy, Flora!
Heehee!
You're a... tubby tiger!
Tubby Tiger! ♪ ♫ Tubby Tiger!
WAAAAAAAAAAH!!
I'll have you know I'm perfectly happy with my figure, you bimbo!
Get back here and I'll– eh?
Where'd all the Keiths come from?
And why are they all staring at me?

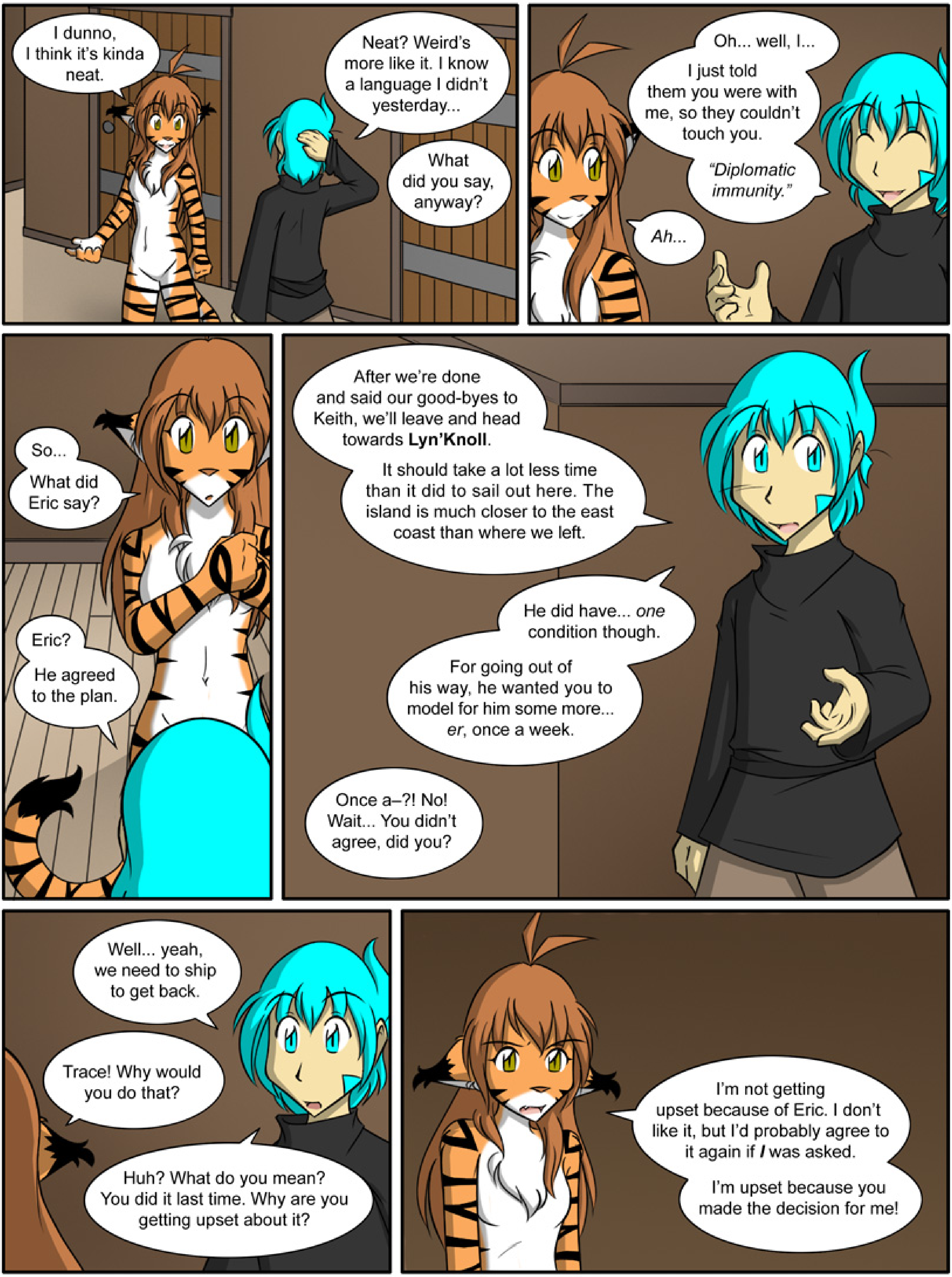

Hm?
Wow, I just had the craziest dream. There was an island, and a pervy slave, and all these... Keiths...
Hm, weird...
Now, where am I?
I feel like I should know this place...
...but why?
Wait a minute...
Something's not right about this...

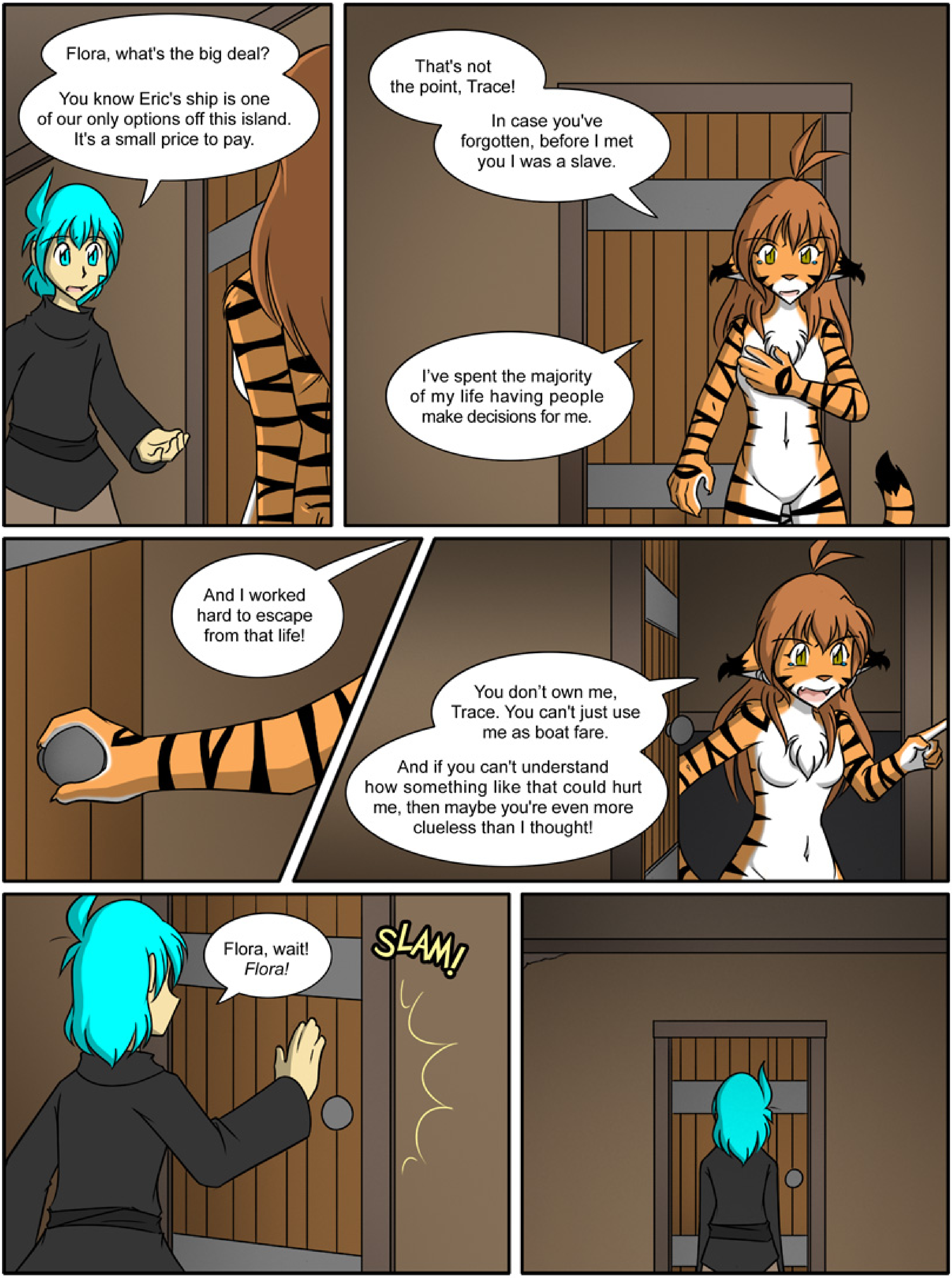
Happy April 1st :)

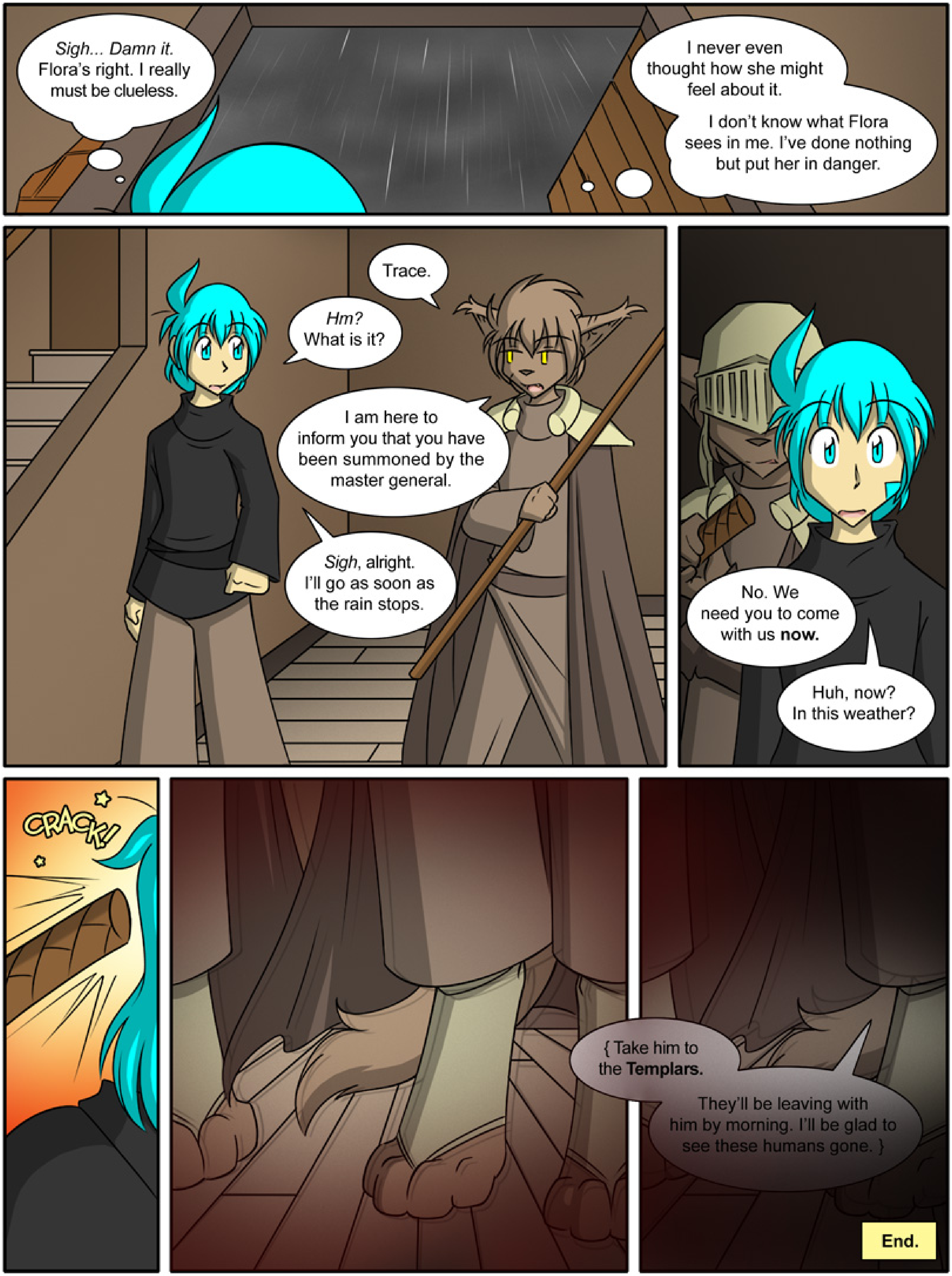

Flora, there you are!
And... you're naked again...
That's it!
That Keidran of yours has broken our most basic laws!
She needs to be detained!
Trace...
Detained?
You're not going anywhere with her!
Out of the way, Human! You have no say in this...
{ Then I'll make it my say!
I declare this Keidran as my mate. Now, according your own laws... }
{ Declared mates are treated with equal status, protected from orders to harm one another, *and* share ***political immunities.***
Therefore, Flora has the same diplomatic immunity as I do. You can't touch her. }
{ He... knows our language and our laws!
But... surely a Human can't declare a ***Keidran*** his mate?! }
{ *Sigh*... the law doesn't specify... }
Fine, Human. You win. She can go, for now.
Wow, Trace! That was amazing! But how did you know their language?
...Language?


How do I keep getting into situations like this?
‹You don't expect me to get undressed with you in here too, do you?
You probably want that, right?›
‹You enjoy this, don't you?›
‹Oh, don't flatter yourself.
Actually, I'd enjoy it if you dried off just so you no longer have that wet dog smell.›
‹It's not like I want to be here any more than you.›
‹Well... fine! Then maybe we should both just sit here and do nothing then!›
‹*Fine!*›
Hmph...
Hmph...


Ah-choo!
He's shivering...
<I thought you said basitins didn't get sick.>
Hm? <We don't... normally...>
<It's just... there's not a lot of things that affect basitins, but being wet and cold is one of them.
If you can't tell by our short fur, we're better suited for warmer climates.>
<Well don't suffer on my account!
Dry off!>
<...I'm fine. If you can stand it, I can.>
<...He's suffering because of me...>
<...Keith, the door's locked, right?>
<Yeah, and bolted too, this time.>
<Why– what are you doing?>
<Just sitting here soaking wet is stupid.
I won't look if you don't, alright?>

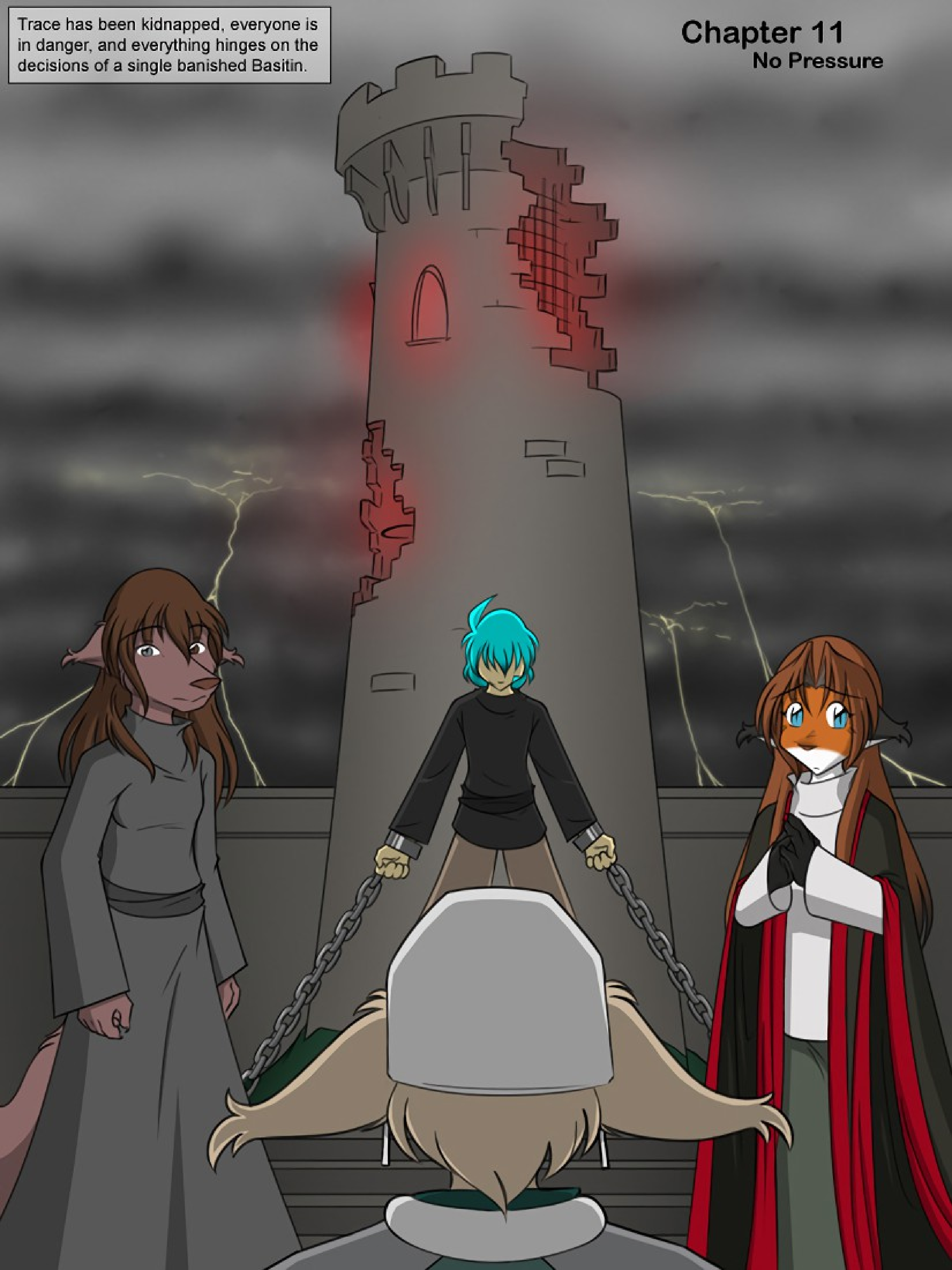

I dunno, I think it's kinda neat.
Neat? Weird's more like it. I know a language I didn't yesterday...
What did you say, anyway?
Oh... well, I...
I just told them you were with me, so they couldn't touch you.
"Diplomatic immunity."
Ah...
So... What did Eric say?
Eric? He agreed to the plan.
After we're done and said our good-byes to Keith, we'll leave and head towards **Lyn'Knoll**.
It should take a lot less time than it did to sail out here. The island is much closer to the east coast than where we left.
He did have... *one* condition though.
For going out of his way, he wanted you to model for him some more... *er*, once a week.
Once a–?! No! Wait... You didn't agree, did you?
Well... yeah, we need to ship to get back.
Trace! Why would you do that?
Huh? What do you mean? You did it last time. Why are you getting upset about it?
I'm not getting upset because of Eric. I don't like it, but I'd probably agree to it again if ***I*** was asked.
I'm upset because you made the decision for me!


Flora, what's the big deal?
You know Eric's ship is one of our only options off this island. It's a small price to pay.
That's not the point, Trace!
In case you've forgotten, before I met you I was a slave.
I've spent the majority of my life having people make decisions for me.
And I worked hard to escape from that life!
You don't own me, Trace. You can't just use me as boat fare.
And if you can't understand how something like that could hurt me, then maybe you're even more clueless than I thought!
Flora, wait! *Flora!*
SLAM!

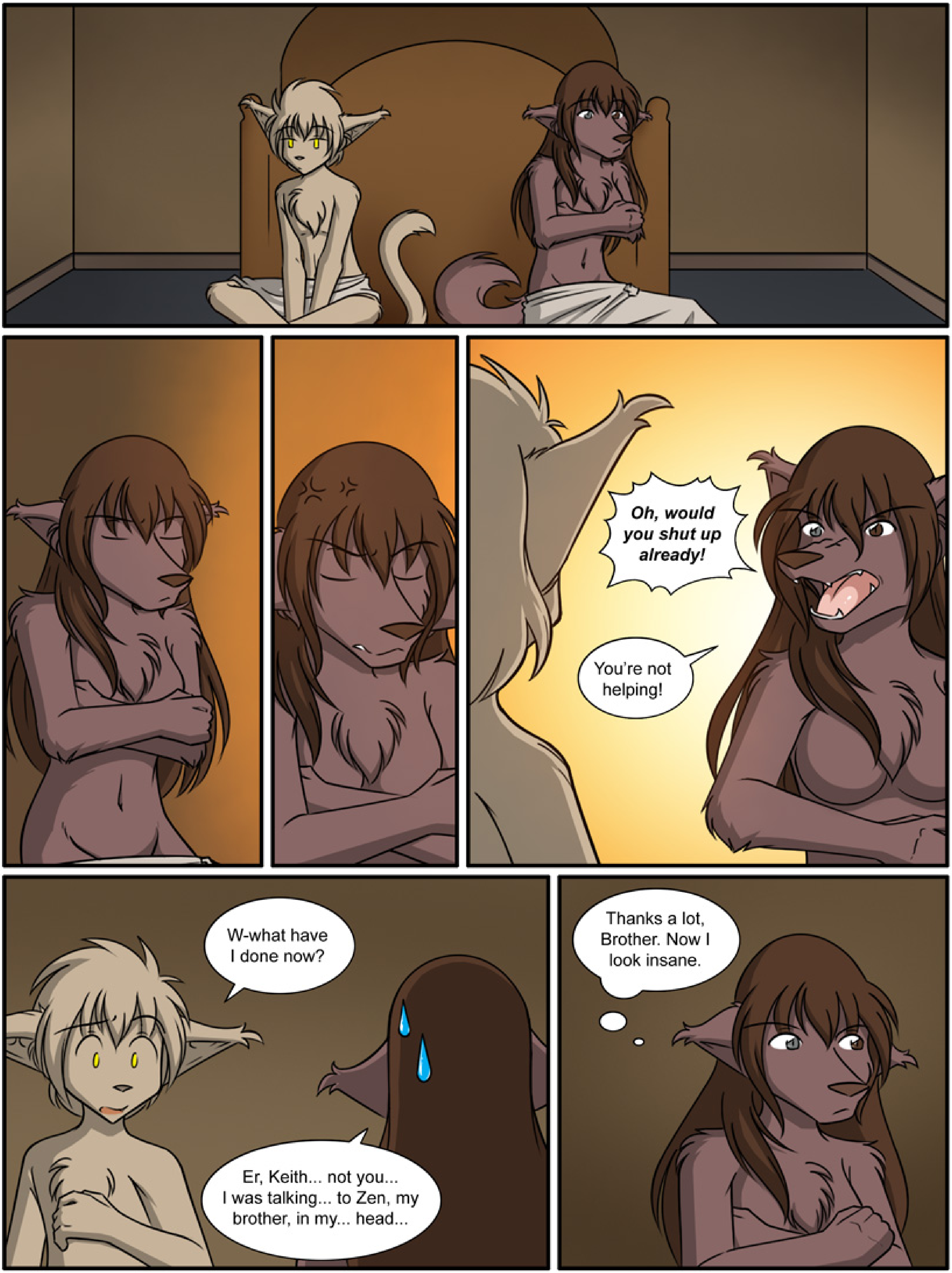

Sigh... Damn it. Flora's right. I really must be clueless.
I never even thought how she might feel about it.
I don't know what Flora sees in me. I've done nothing but put her in danger.
Trace.
Hm? What is it?
I am here to inform you that you have been summoned by the master general.
Sigh, alright. I'll go as soon as the rain stops.
No. We need you to come with us **now.**
Huh, now? In this weather?
CRACK!
{ Take him to the **Templars.**
They'll be leaving with him by morning. I'll be glad to see these humans gone. }
End.

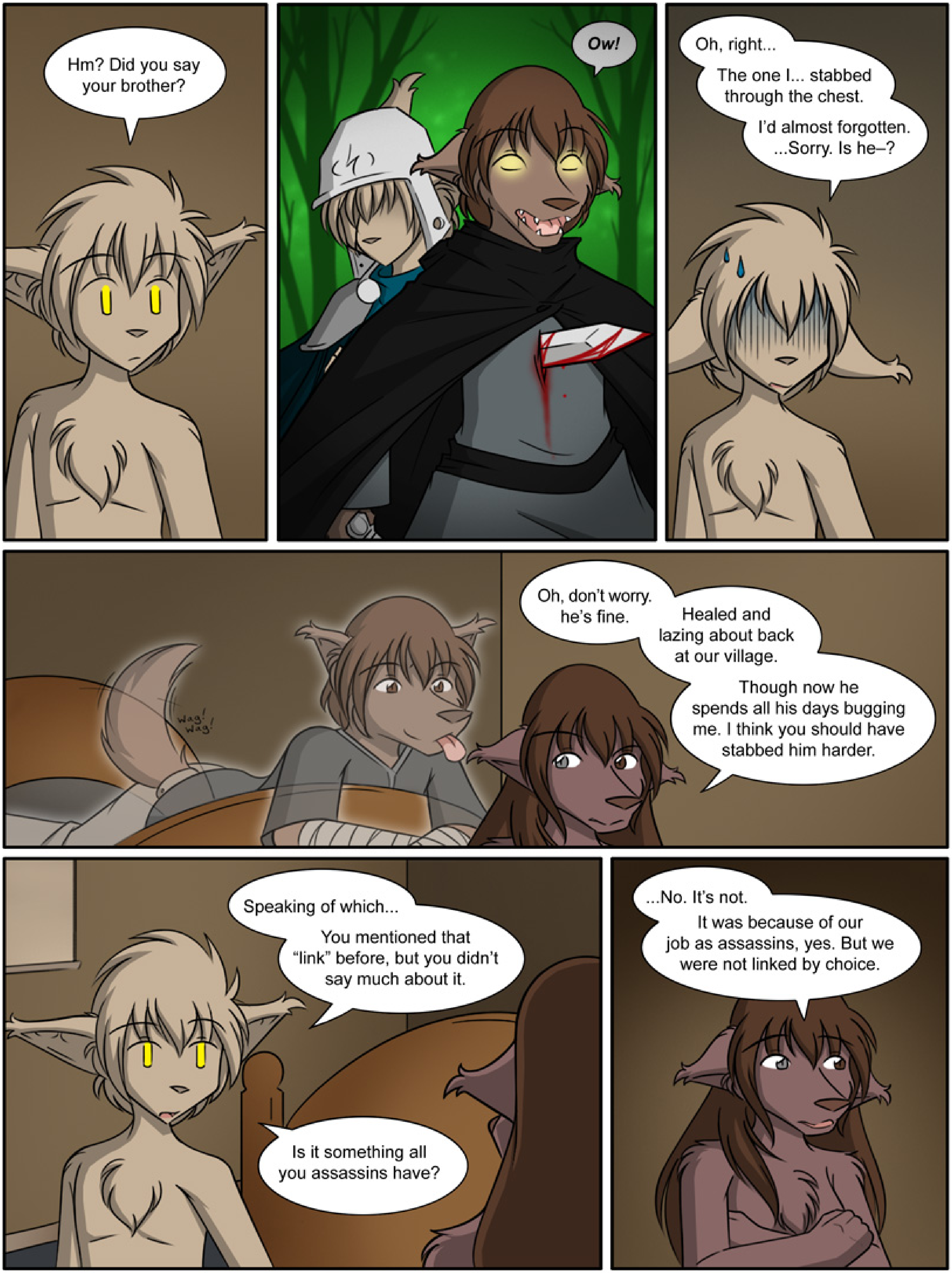
Chapter 11

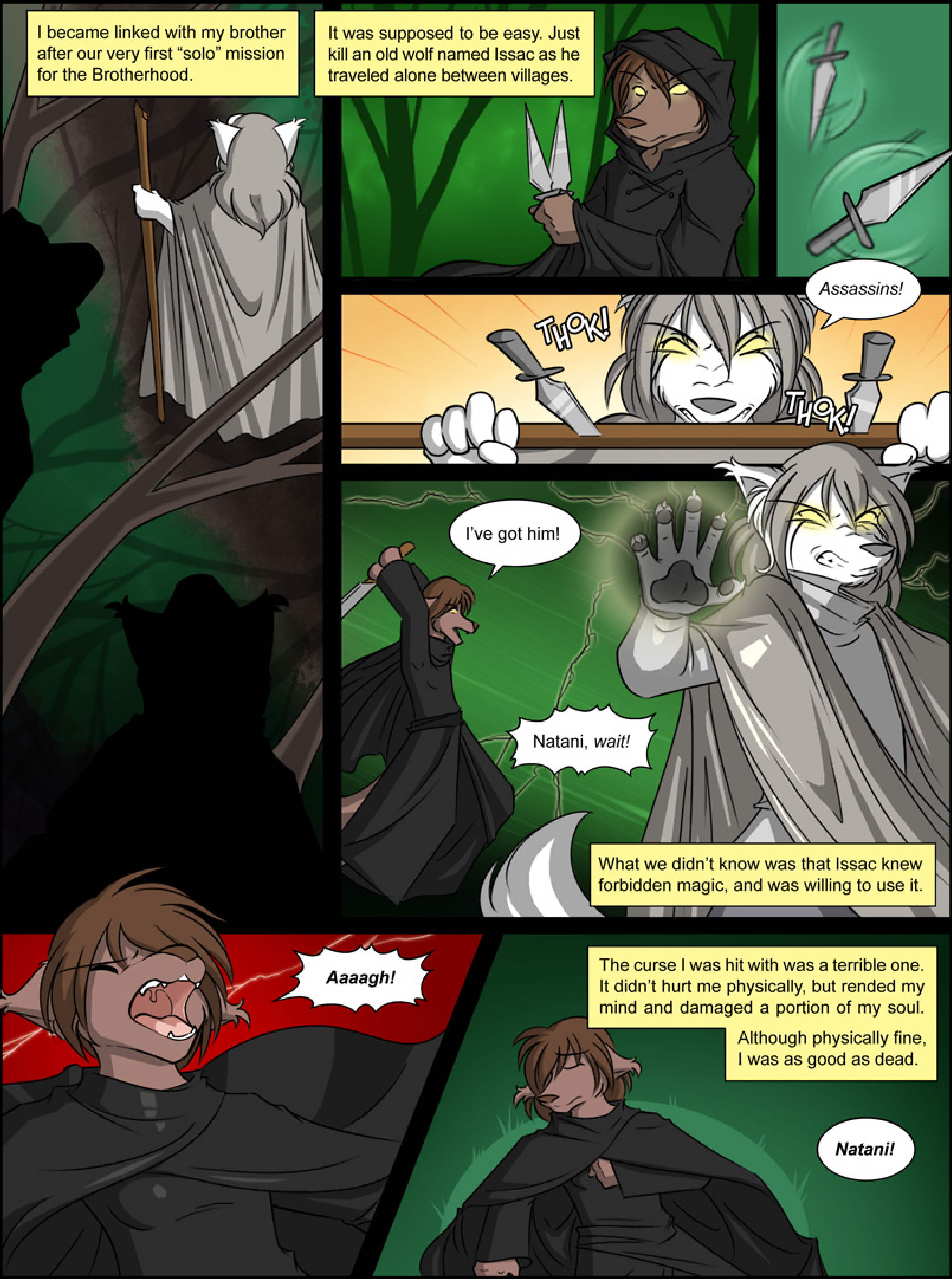
No Pressure

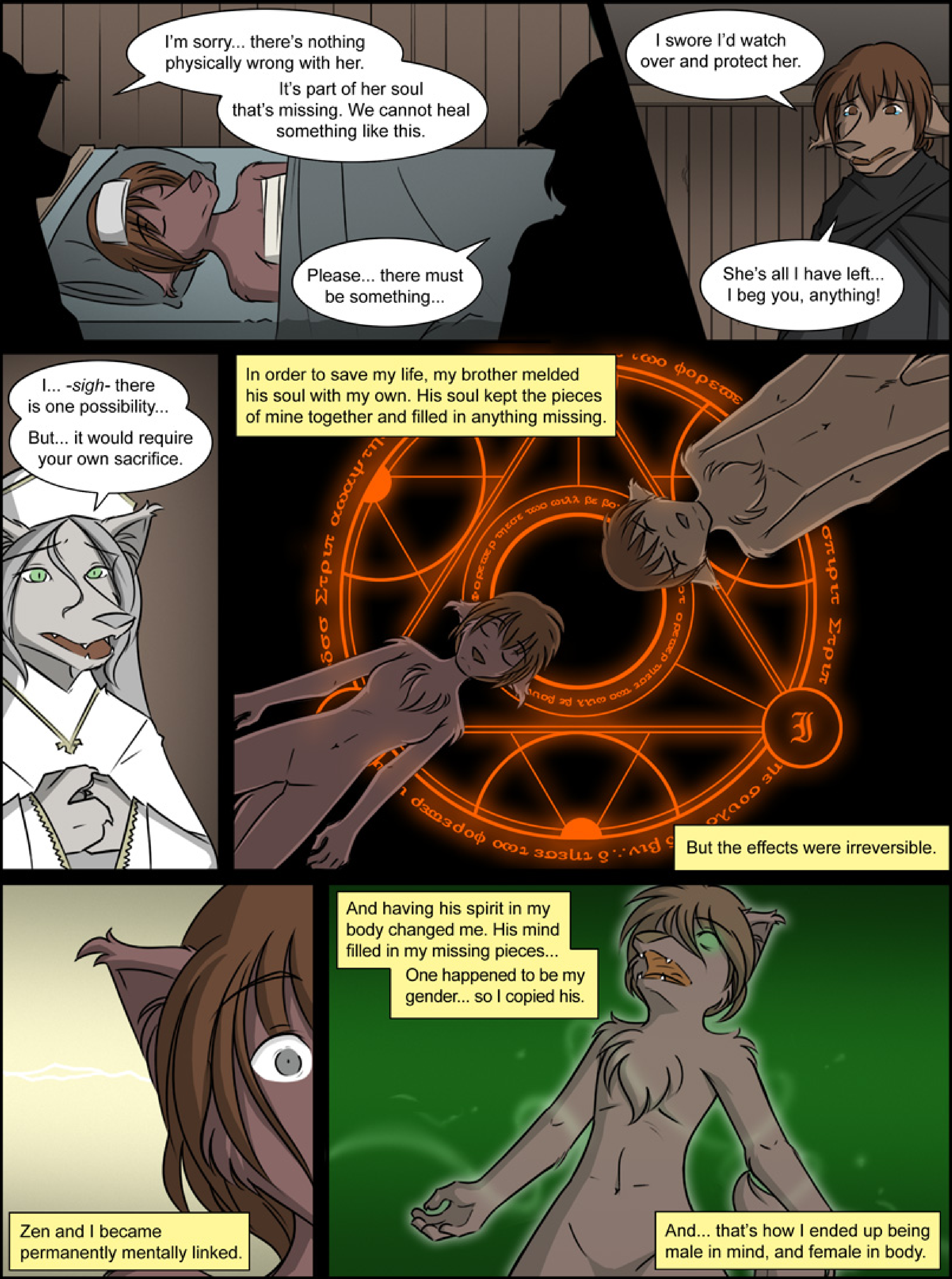


Trace has been kidnapped, everyone is in danger, and everything hinges on the decisions of a single banished Basitin.

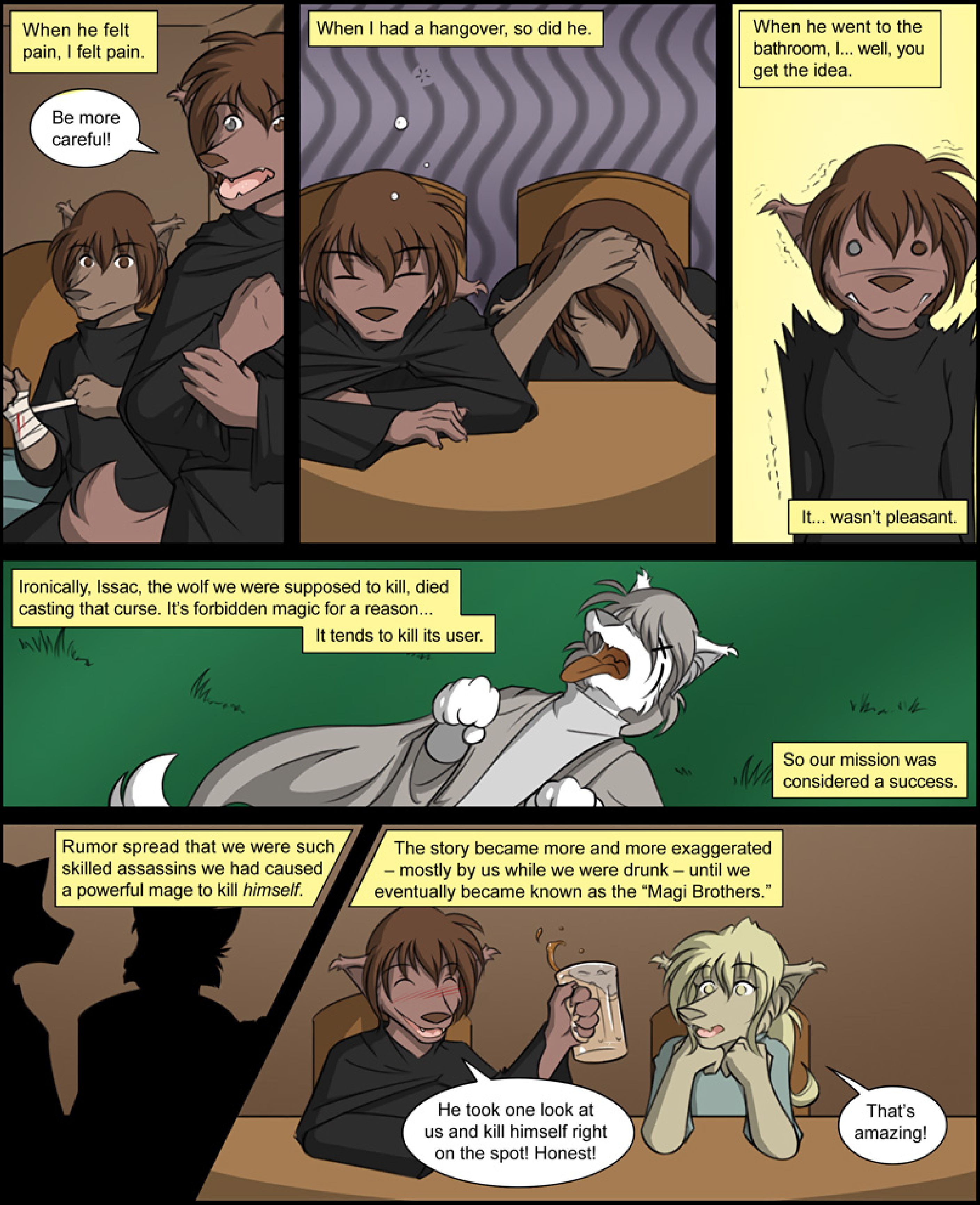

Oh, would you shut up already!
You're not helping!
W-what have I done now?
Er, Keith... not you... I was talking... to Zen, my brother, in my... head...
Thanks a lot, Brother. Now I look insane.


Hm? Did you say your brother?
Ow!
Oh, right...
The one I... stabbed through the chest.
I'd almost forgotten. ...Sorry. Is he–?
Wag! Wag!
Oh, don't worry. he's fine.
Healed and lazing about back at our village.
Though now he spends all his days bugging me. I think you should have stabbed him harder.
Speaking of which...
You mentioned that "link" before, but you didn't say much about it.
Is it something all you assassins have?
...No. It's not.
It was because of our job as assassins, yes. But we were not linked by choice.


I became linked with my brother after our very first "solo" mission for the Brotherhood.
It was supposed to be easy. Just kill an old wolf named Issac as he traveled alone between villages.
THOK!
Assassins!
THOK!
I've got him!
Natani, *wait!*
What we didn't know was that Issac knew forbidden magic, and was willing to use it.
Aaaagh!
The curse I was hit with was a terrible one. It didn't hurt me physically, but rended my mind and damaged a portion of my soul.
Although physically fine, I was as good as dead.
Natani!


I'm sorry... there's nothing physically wrong with her.
It's part of her soul that's missing. We cannot heal something like this.
Please... there must be something...
I swore I'd watch over and protect her.
She's all I have left... I beg you, anything!
I... -*sigh*- there is one possibility...
But... it would require your own sacrifice.
In order to save my life, my brother melded his soul with my own. His soul kept the pieces of mine together and filled in anything missing.
But the effects were irreversible.
Zen and I became permanently mentally linked.
And having his spirit in my body changed me. His mind filled in my missing pieces...
One happened to be my gender... so I copied his.
And... that's how I ended up being male in mind, and female in body.

It took a while to adjust to being mentally linked to my brother.
In the beginning, we didn't know how to block out thoughts and sensations from each other.


When he felt pain, I felt pain.
Be more careful!
When I had a hangover, so did he.
When he went to the bathroom, I... well, you get the idea.
It... wasn't pleasant.
Ironically, Issac, the wolf we were supposed to kill, died casting that curse. It's forbidden magic for a reason...
It tends to kill its user.
So our mission was considered a success.
Rumor spread that we were such skilled assassins we had caused a powerful mage to kill *himself*.
The story became more and more exaggerated – mostly by us while we were drunk – until we eventually became known as the "Magi Brothers."
He took one look at us and kill himself right on the spot! Honest!
That's amazing!

Updates

My father has recently had a surgery to fix the damage caused by his cancer and the medication treating said cancer. I have spent the past week in and out of the hospital and haven't had enough time to work on the next page.

He has returned from the hospital now, but he is on oxygen and needs almost constant supervision, so I am not sure how much free time I will have in the next couple of weeks. He has had a tracheal tube put into place and cannot eat, but we hope it will be removed sometime later this month, once his throat heals.

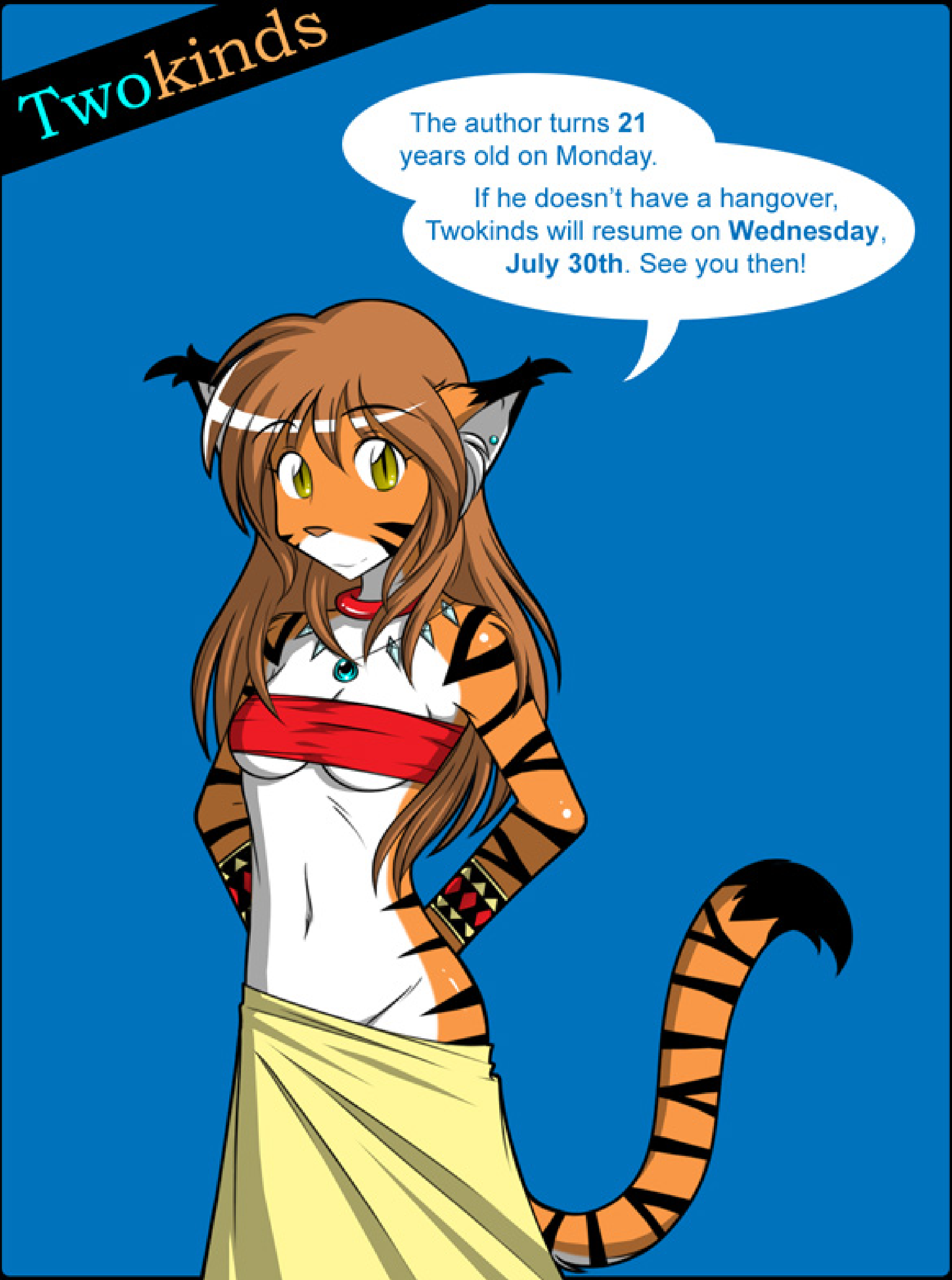
I apologize for not updated recently, but more so for not putting up any new information until now. I am having difficult finding time to do much of anything in the last week. Fear not for the state of the comic, though, I will continue to work on new material whenever I can scrounge up enough time. I cannot give a definitive date yet, but I will post new comics as soon as I finish them.

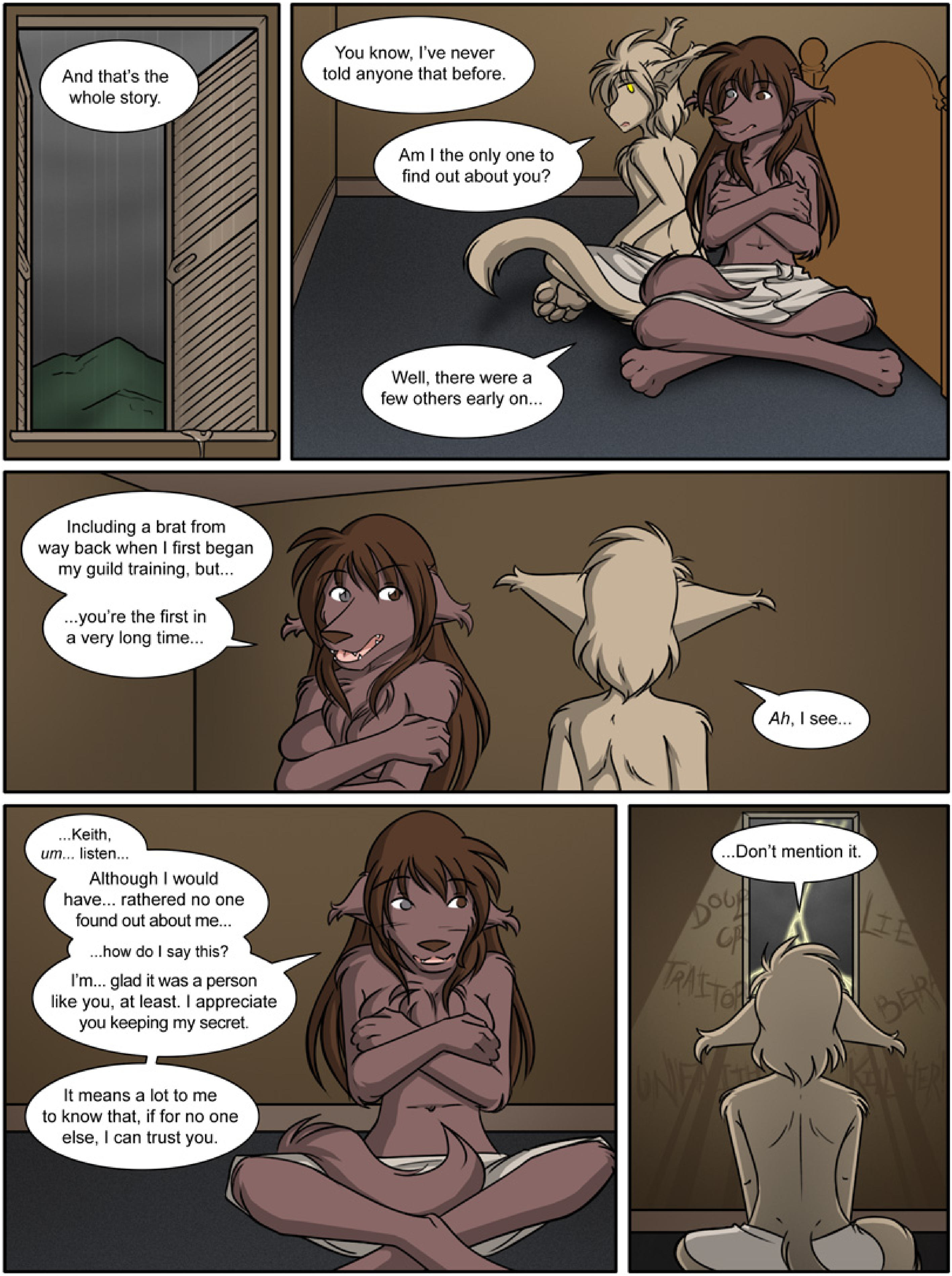
Thank you for your support,
Tom

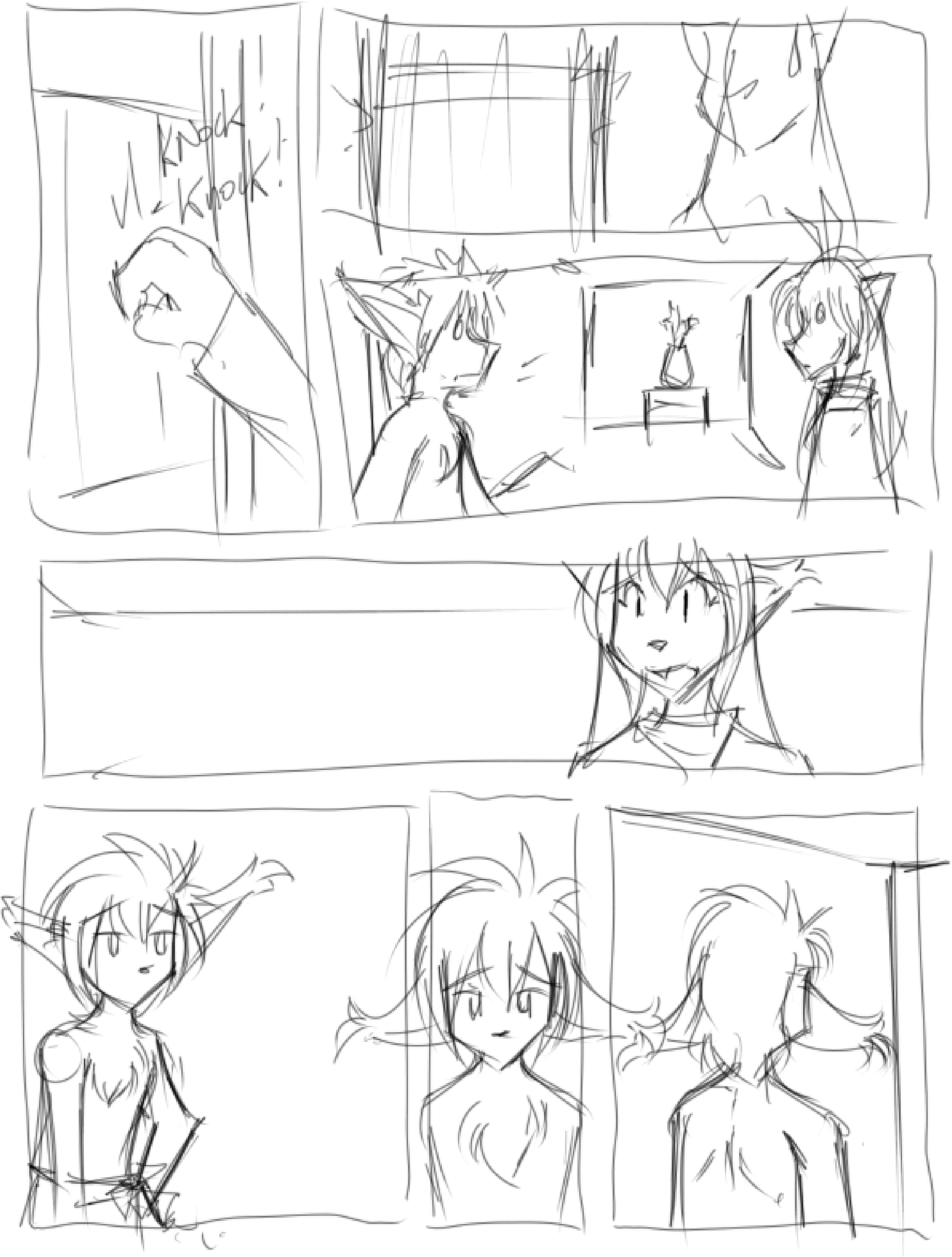
Cliffton M. Fischbach

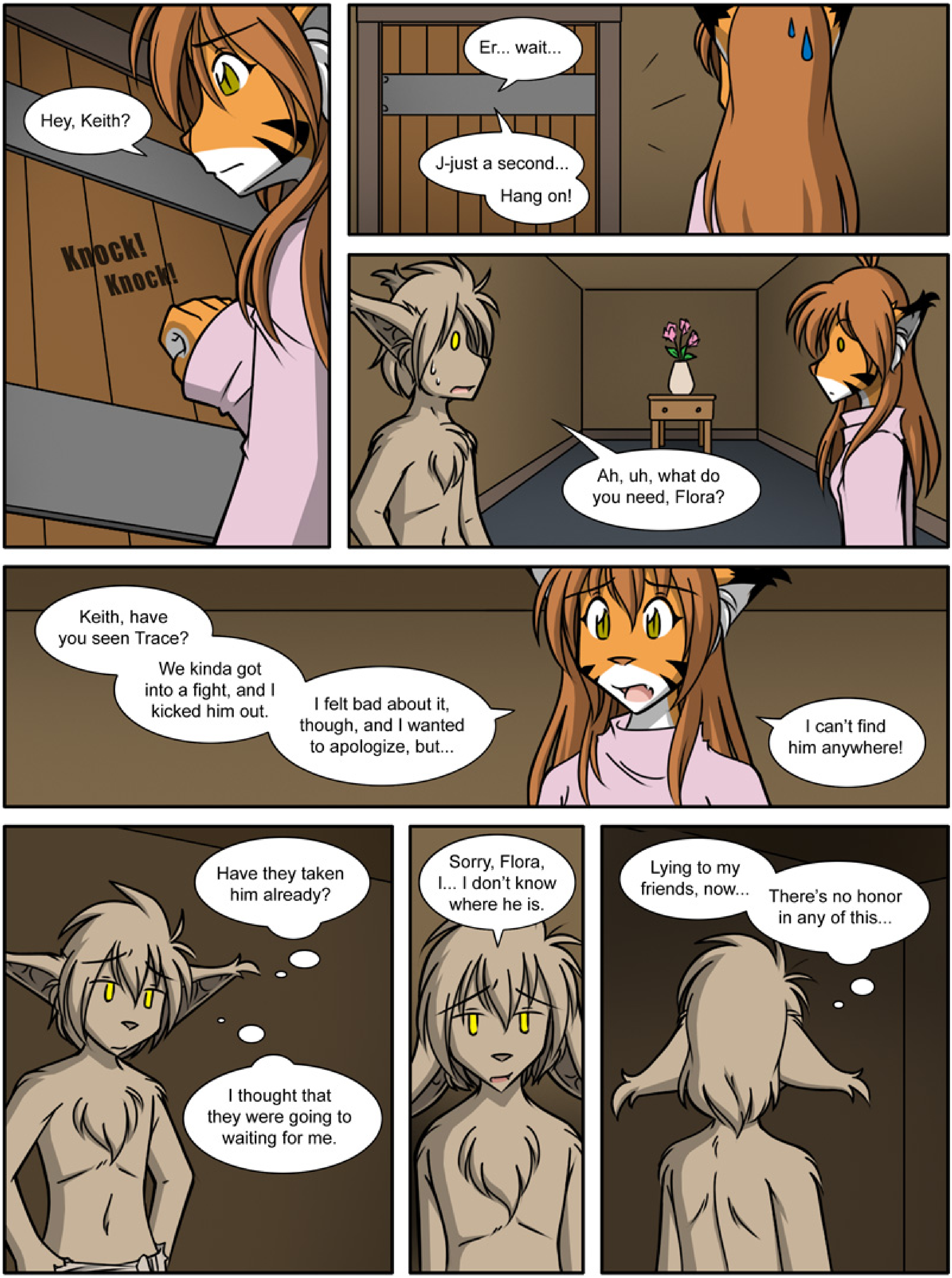
June 8th, 1941 - July 4th, 2008

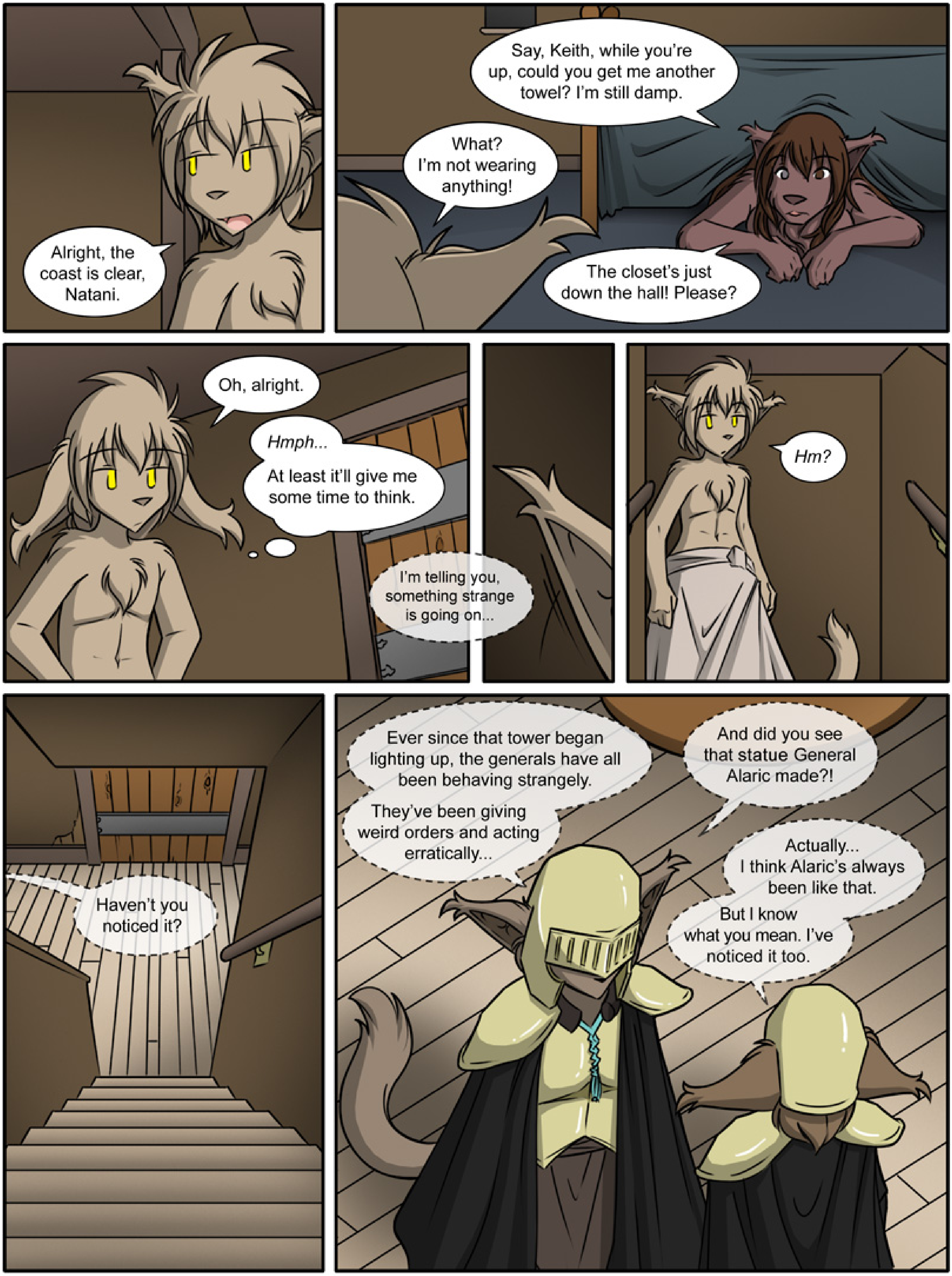
I love you, Dad.
Thank you for everything.

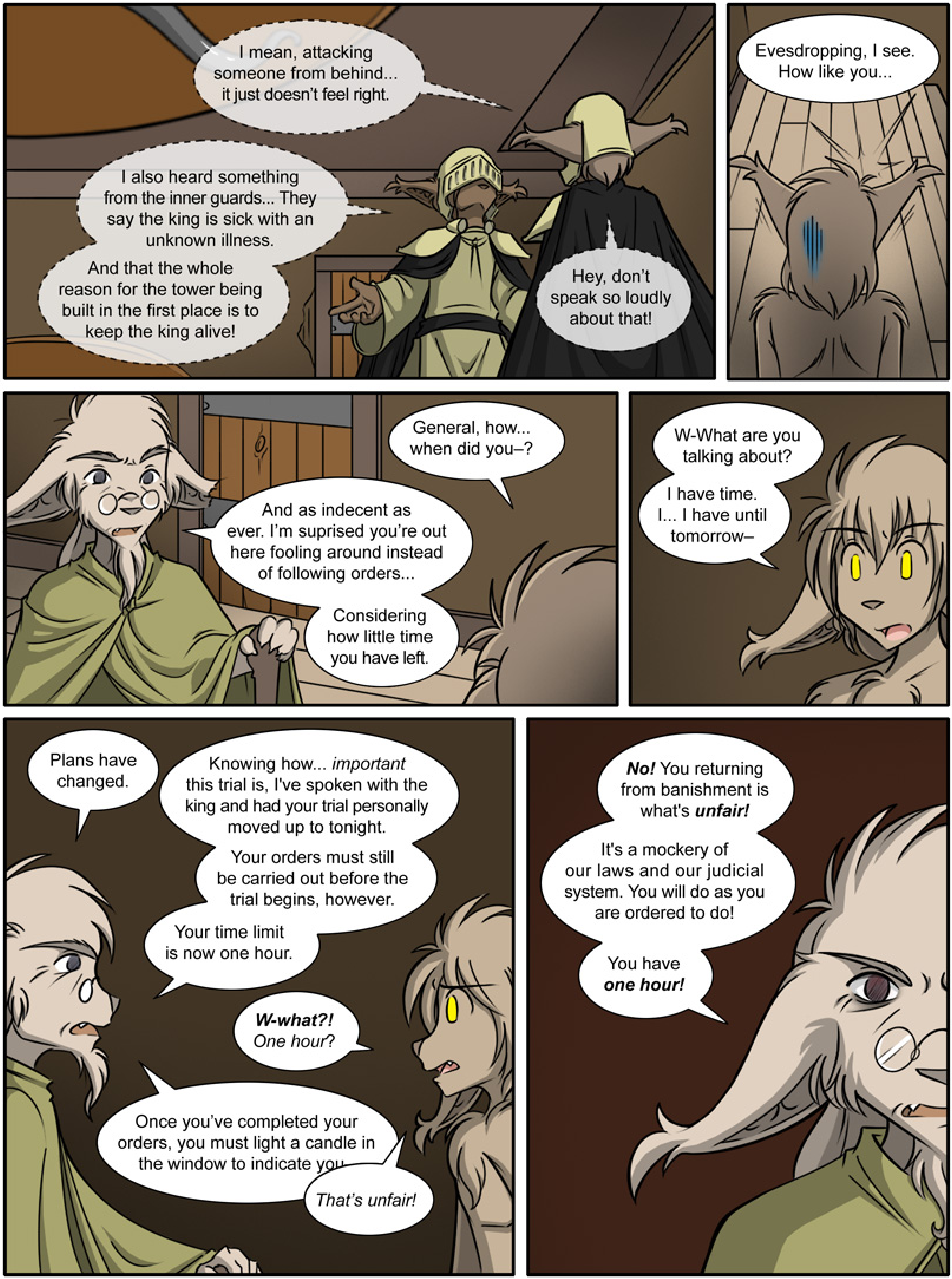

Twokinds
The author turns **21** years old on Monday.
If he doesn't have a hangover, Twokinds will resume on **Wednesday**, **July 30th**. See you then!

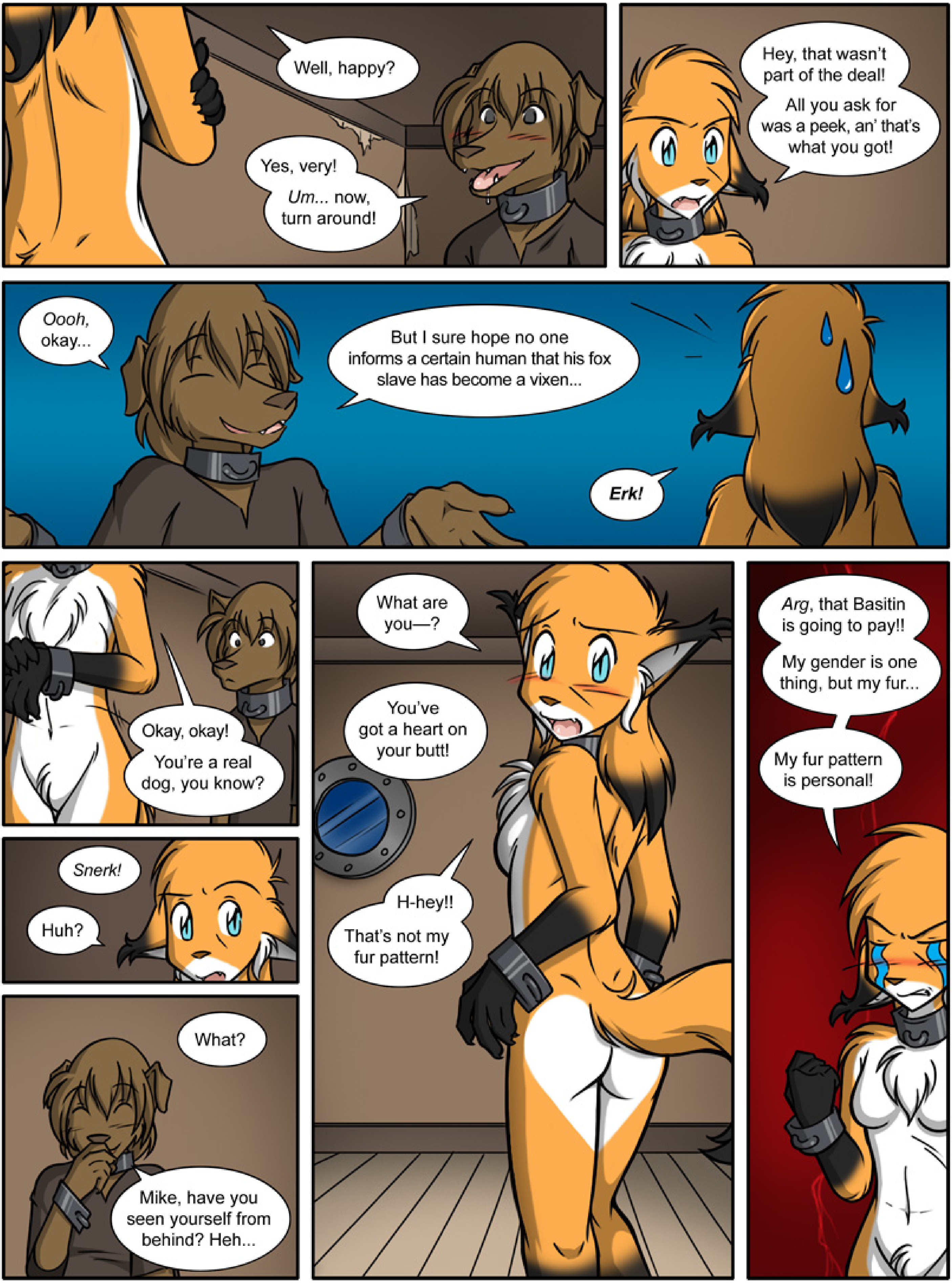

And that's the whole story.
You know, I've never told anyone that before.
Am I the only one to find out about you?
Well, there were a few others early on...
Including a brat from way back when I first began my guild training, but...
...you're the first in a very long time...
Ah, I see...
...Keith, *um*... listen...
Although I would have... rathered no one found out about me...
...how do I say this?
I'm... glad it was a person like you, at least. I appreciate you keeping my secret.
It means a lot to me to know that, if for no one else, I can trust you.
...Don't mention it.
LIE
TRAITOR
KILLER!

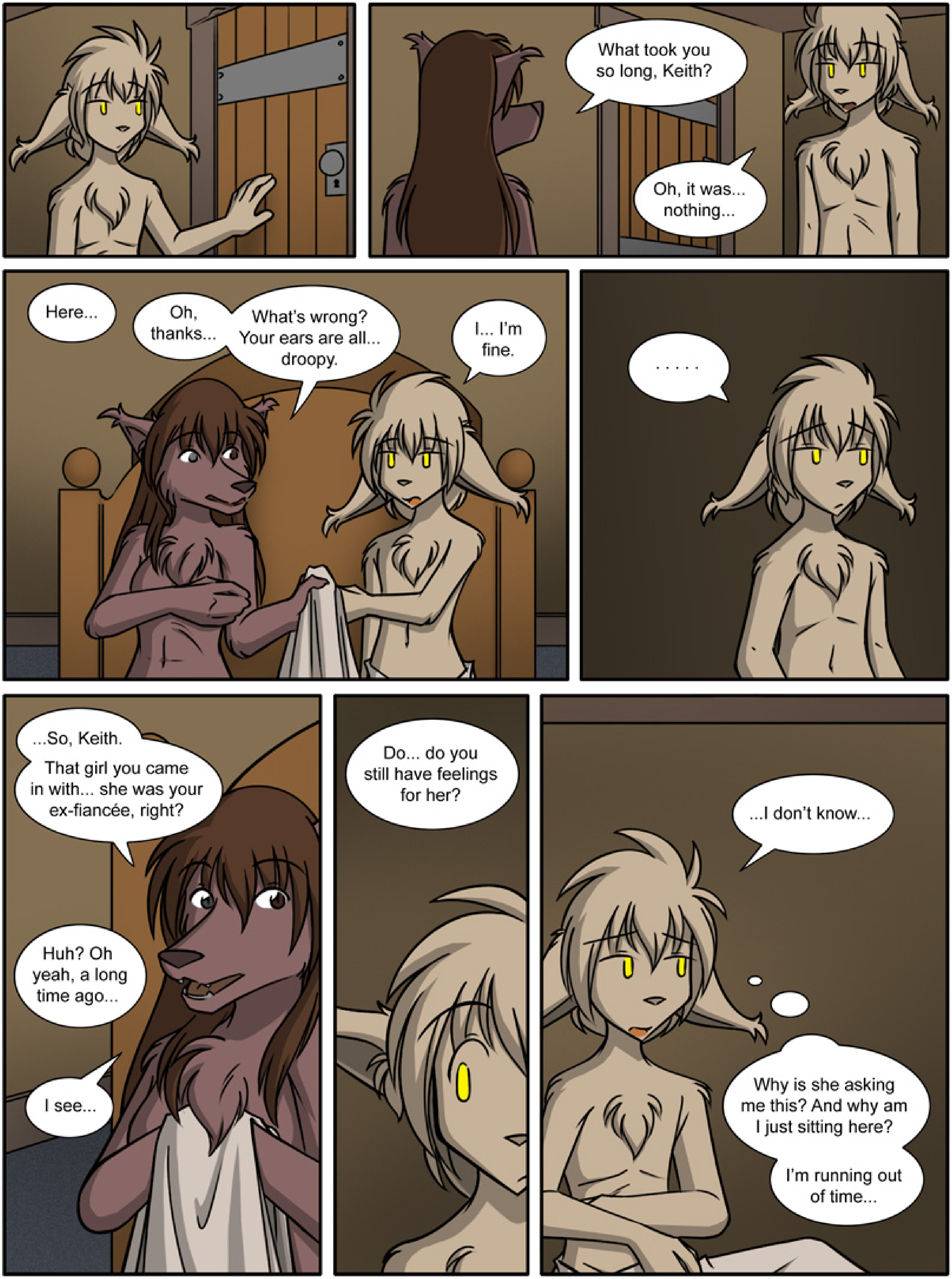

Knock! Knock!

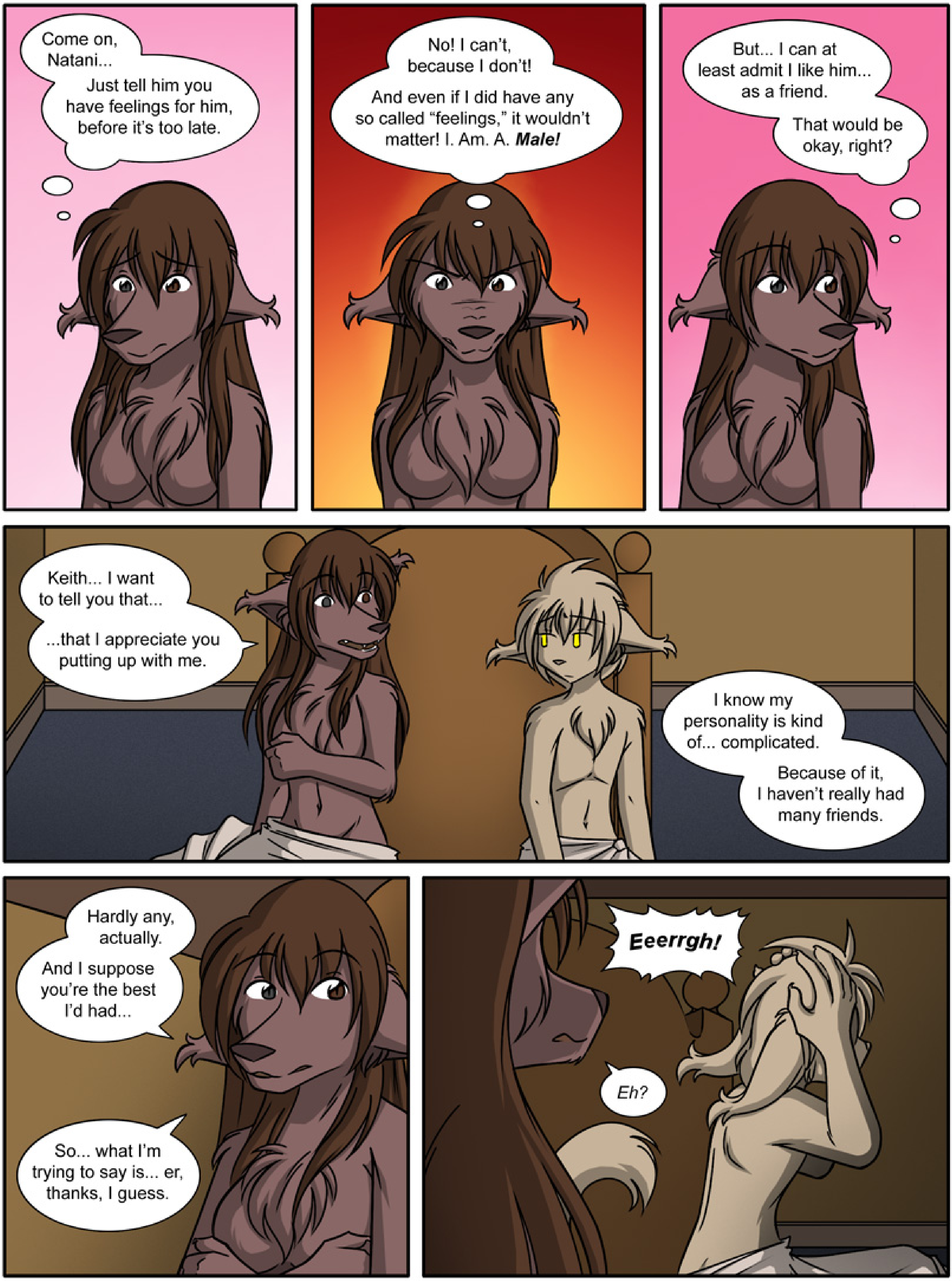

Hey, Keith?
Knock! Knock!
Er... wait...
J-just a second...
Hang on!
Ah, uh, what do you need, Flora?
Keith, have you seen Trace?
We kinda got into a fight, and I kicked him out.
I felt bad about it, though, and I wanted to apologize, but...
I can't find him anywhere!
Have they taken him already?
I thought that they were going to waiting for me.
Sorry, Flora, I... I don't know where he is.
Lying to my friends, now...
There's no honor in any of this...

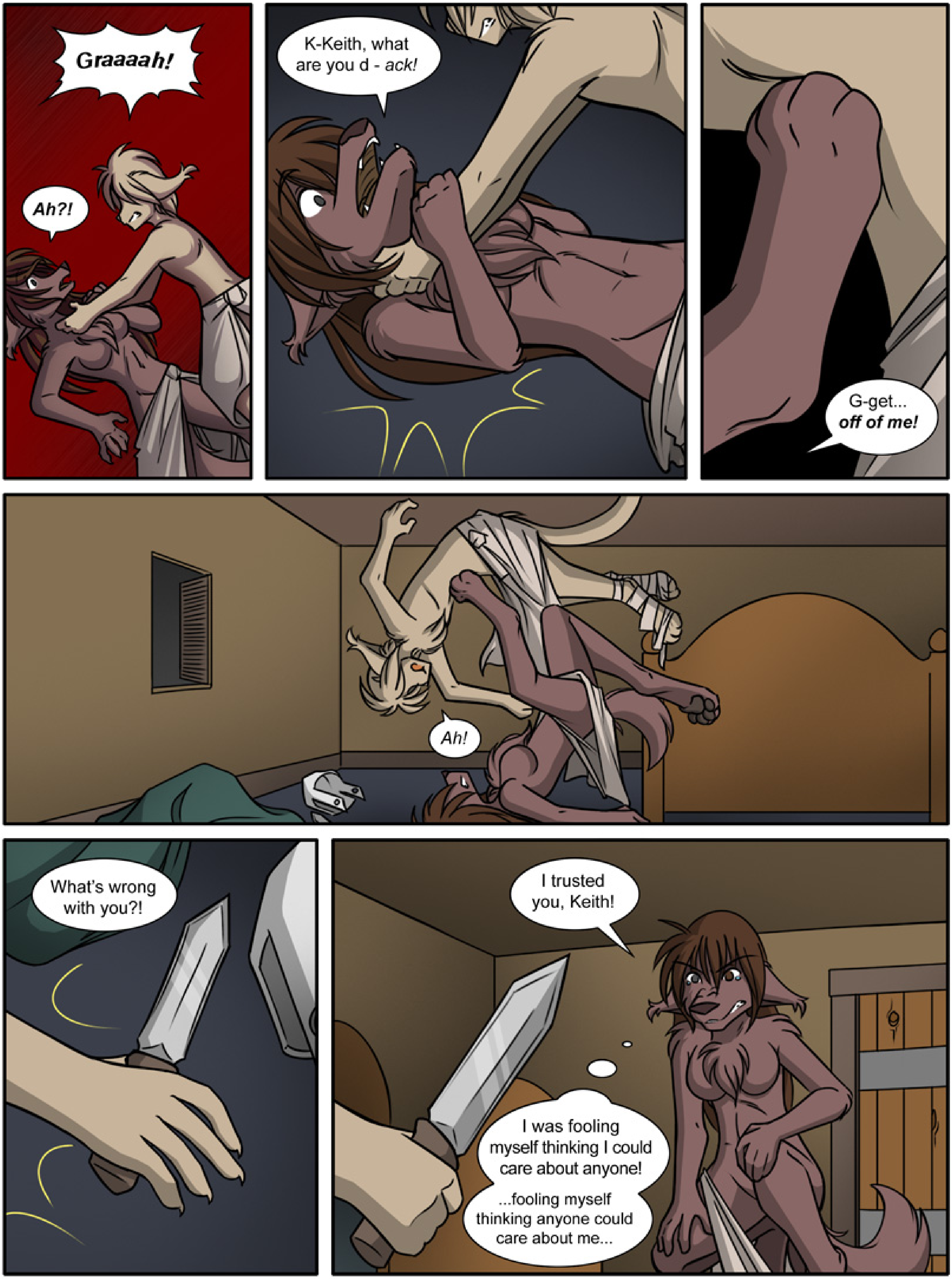

Alright, the coast is clear, Natani.
Say, Keith, while you're up, could you get me another towel? I'm still damp.
What? I'm not wearing anything!
The closet's just down the hall! Please?
Oh, alright.
Hmph...
At least it'll give me some time to think.
I'm telling you, something strange is going on...
Hm?
Haven't you noticed it?
Ever since that tower began lighting up, the generals have all been behaving strangely.
They've been giving weird orders and acting erratically...
And did you see that statue General Alaric made?!
Actually... I think Alaric's always been like that.
But I know what you mean. I've noticed it too.

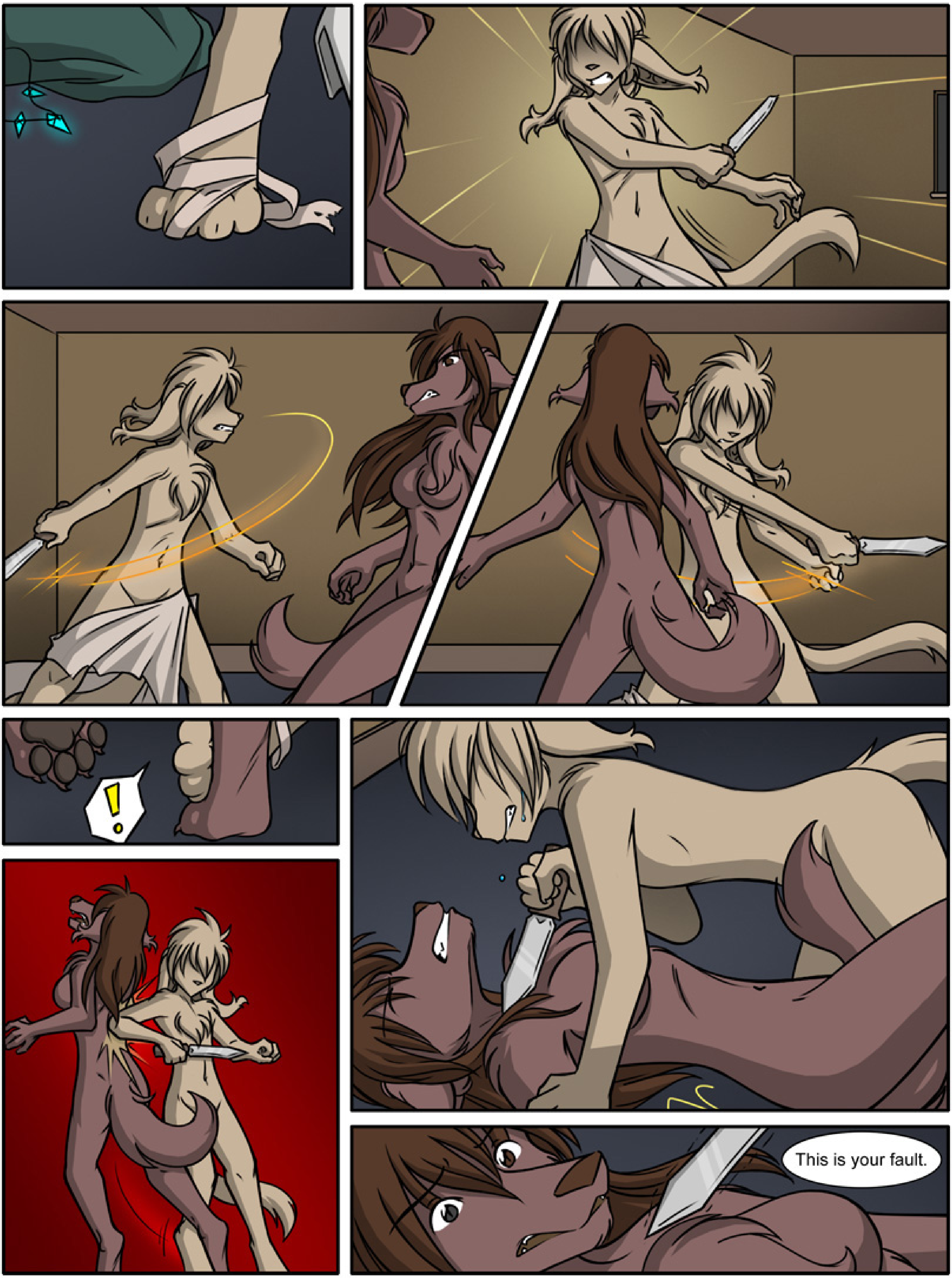

I mean, attacking someone from behind... it just doesn't feel right.
I also heard something from the inner guards... They say the king is sick with an unknown illness.
And that the whole reason for the tower being built in the first place is to keep the king alive!
Hey, don't speak so loudly about that!
Evesdropping, I see. How like you...
General, how... when did you–?
And as indecent as ever. I'm suprised you're out here fooling around instead of following orders...
Considering how little time you have left.
W-What are you talking about?
I have time. I... I have until tomorrow–
Plans have changed.
Knowing how... *important* this trial is, I've spoken with the king and had your trial personally moved up to tonight.
Your orders must still be carried out before the trial begins, however.
Your time limit is now one hour.
W-what?! *One hour?*
Once you've completed your orders, you must light a candle in the window to indicate you–
That's unfair!
No! You returning from banishment is what's ***unfair!***
It's a mockery of our laws and our judicial system. You will do as you are ordered to do!
You have ***one hour!***

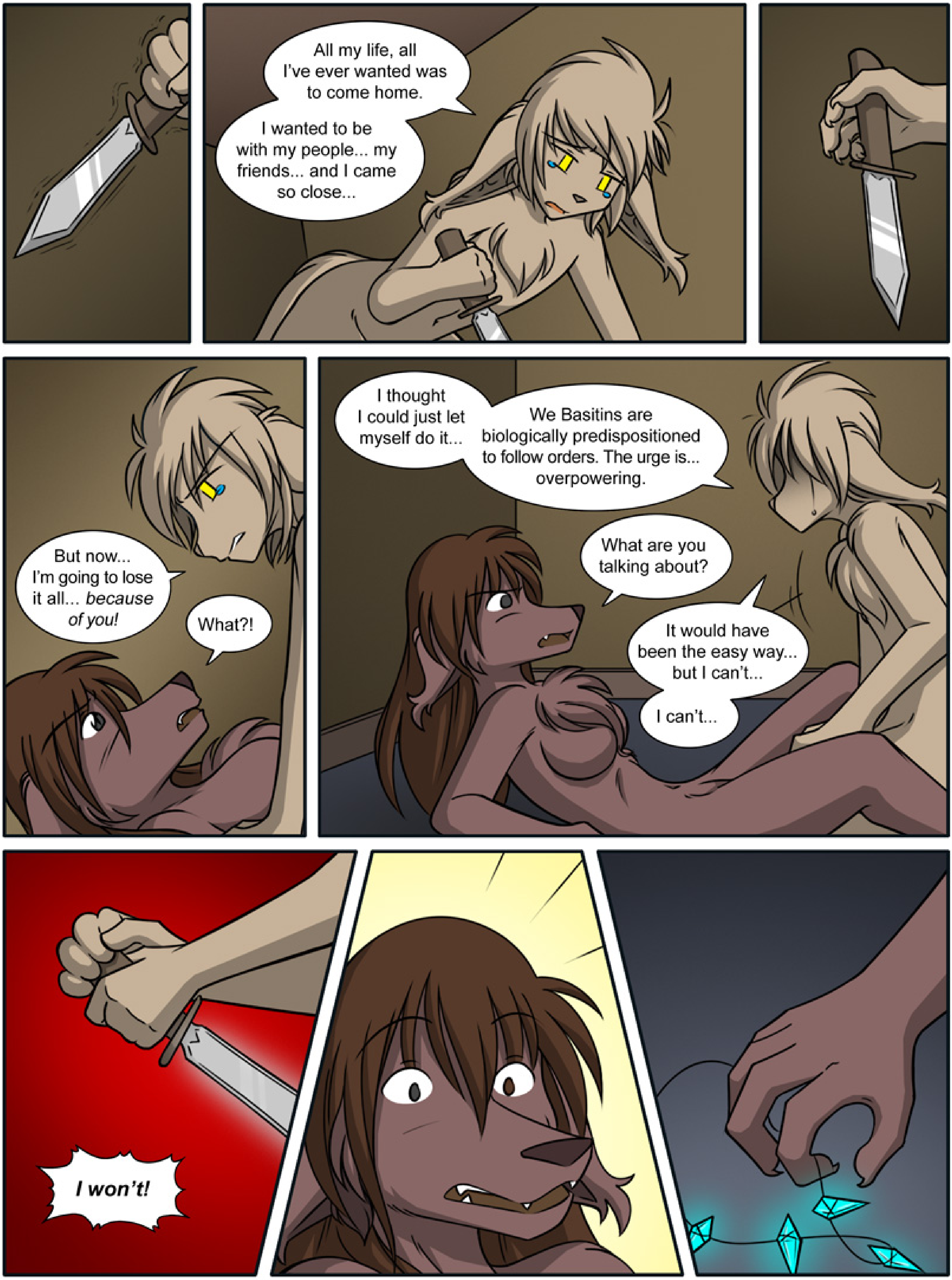

Well, happy?
Yes, very! *Um...* now, turn around!
Hey, that wasn't part of the deal!
All you ask for was a peek, an' that's what you got!
Oooh, okay...
But I sure hope no one informs a certain human that his fox slave has become a vixen...
Erk!
Okay, okay!
You're a real dog, you know?
Snerk!
Huh?
What?
Mike, have you seen yourself from behind? Heh...
What are you—?
You've got a heart on your butt!
H-hey!!
That's not my fur pattern!
Arg, that Basitin is going to pay!!
My gender is one thing, but my fur...
My fur pattern is personal!

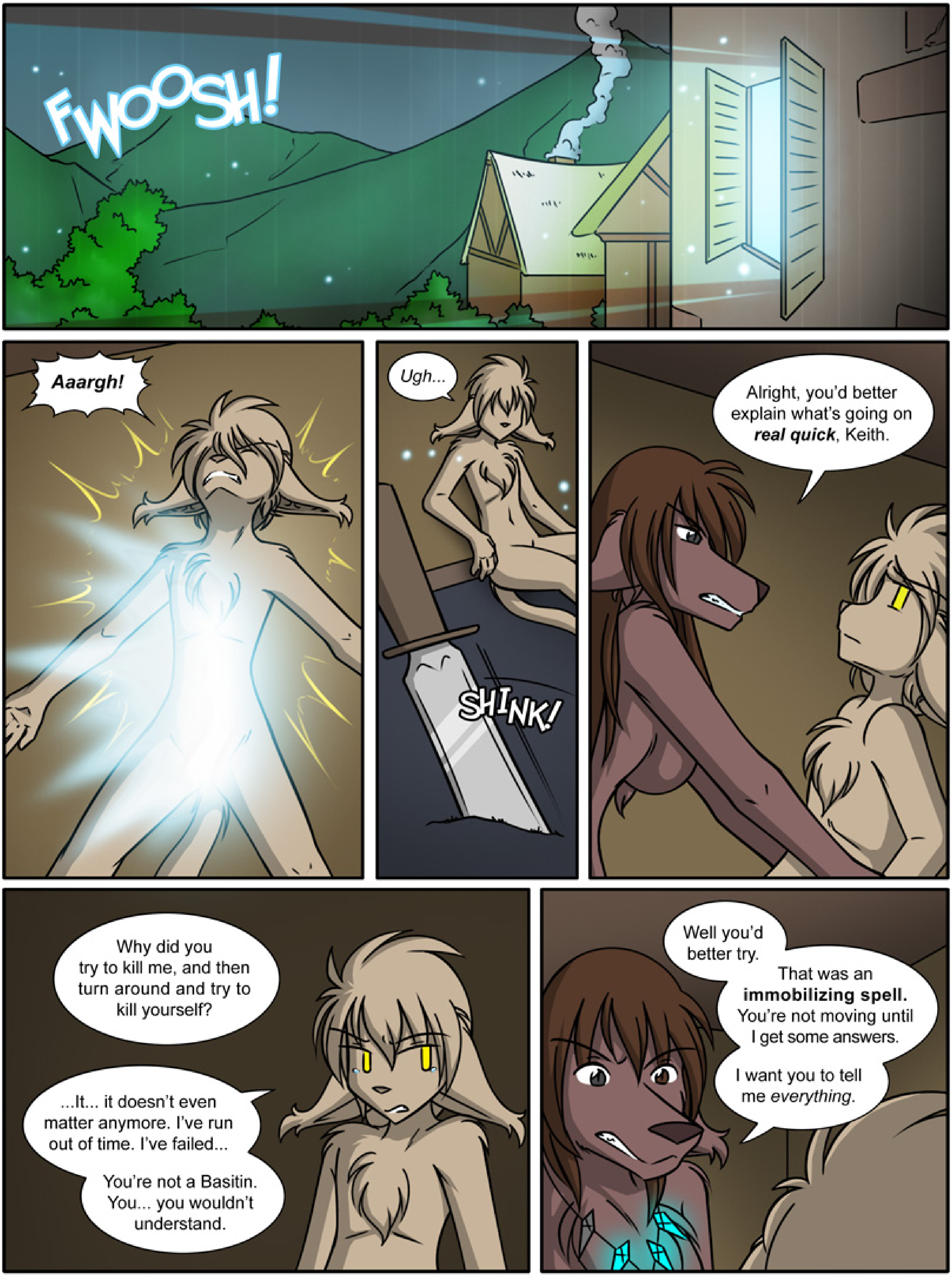

What took you so long, Keith?
Oh, it was... nothing...
Here...
Oh, thanks...
What's wrong? Your ears are all... droopy.
I... I'm fine.
. . . . .
...So, Keith.
That girl you came in with... she was your ex-fiancée, right?
Huh? Oh yeah, a long time ago...
I see...
Do... do you still have feelings for her?
...I don't know...
Why is she asking me this? And why am I just sitting here?
I'm running out of time...

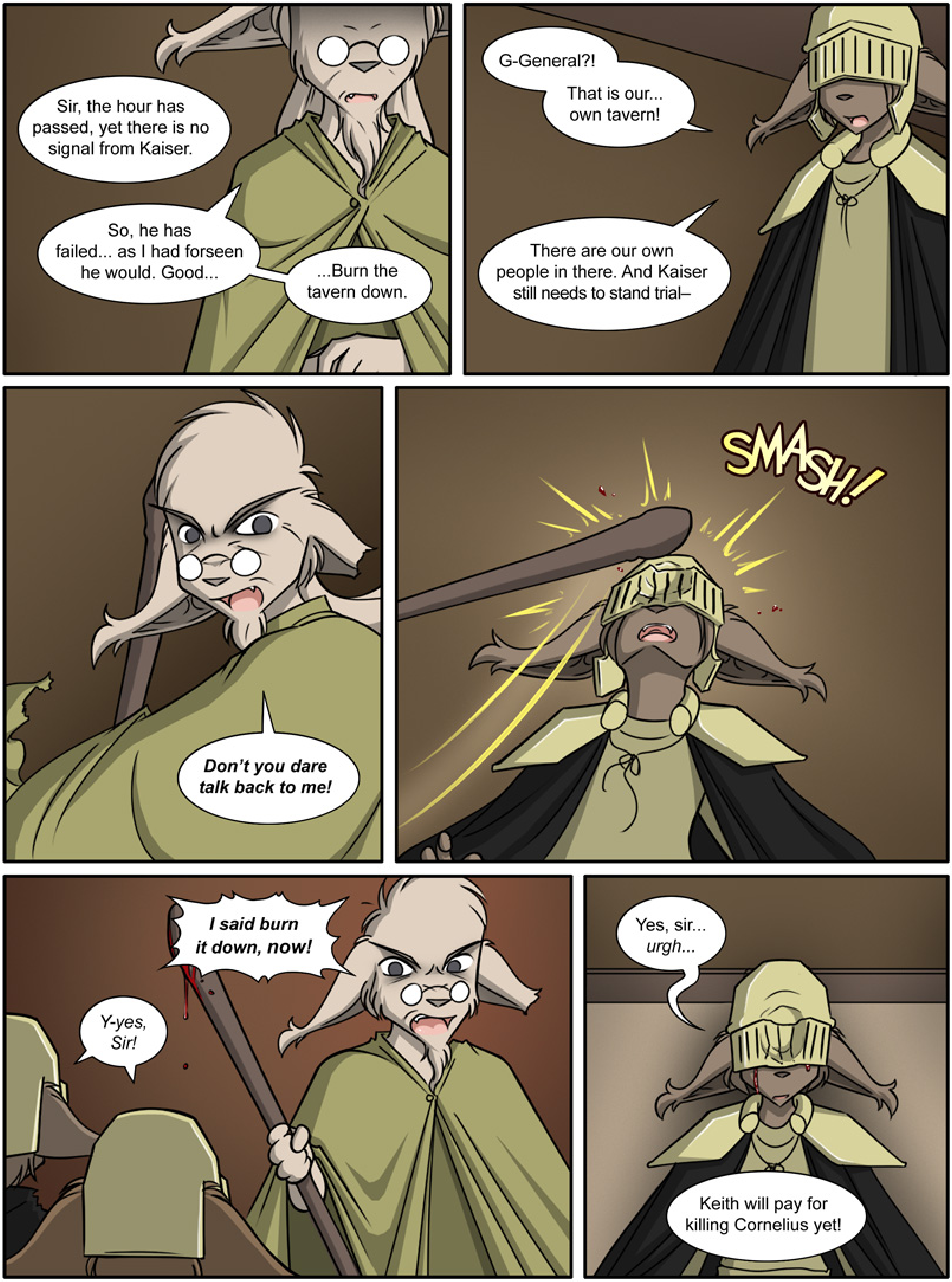

Come on, Natani...
Just tell him you have feelings for him, before it's too late.
No! I can't, because I don't!
And even if I did have any so called "feelings," it wouldn't matter! I. Am. A. ***Male!***
But... I can at least admit I like him... as a friend.
That would be okay, right?
Keith... I want to tell you that...
...that I appreciate you putting up with me.
I know my personality is kind of... complicated.
Because of it, I haven't really had many friends.
Hardly any, actually.
And I suppose you're the best I'd had...
So... what I'm trying to say is... er, thanks, I guess.
Eeerrgh!
Eh?

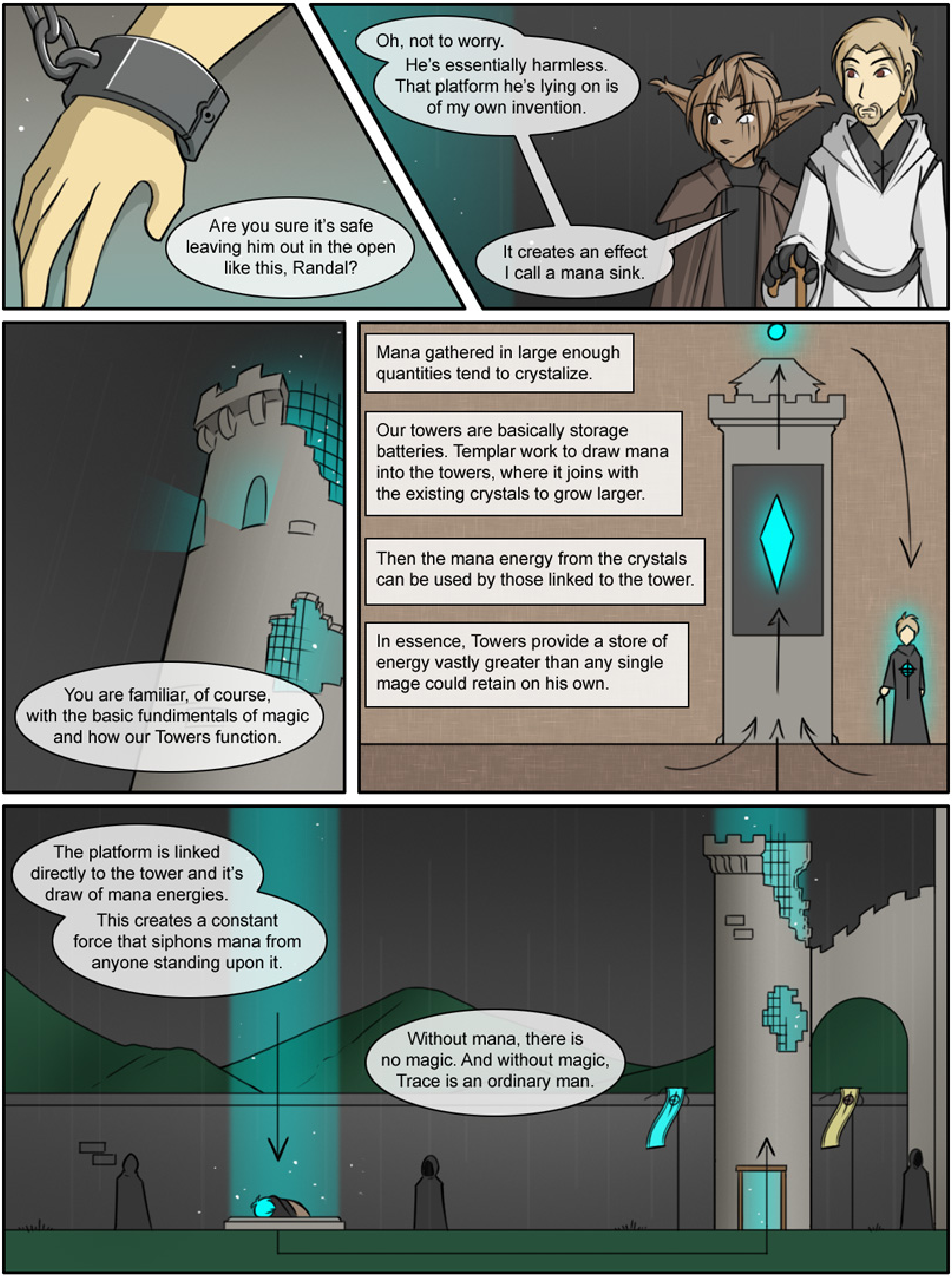

Graaaah!
Ah?!
K-Keith, what are you d - ack!
G-get... off of me!
Ah!
What's wrong with you?!
I trusted you, Keith!
I was fooling myself thinking I could care about anyone!
...fooling myself thinking anyone could care about me...

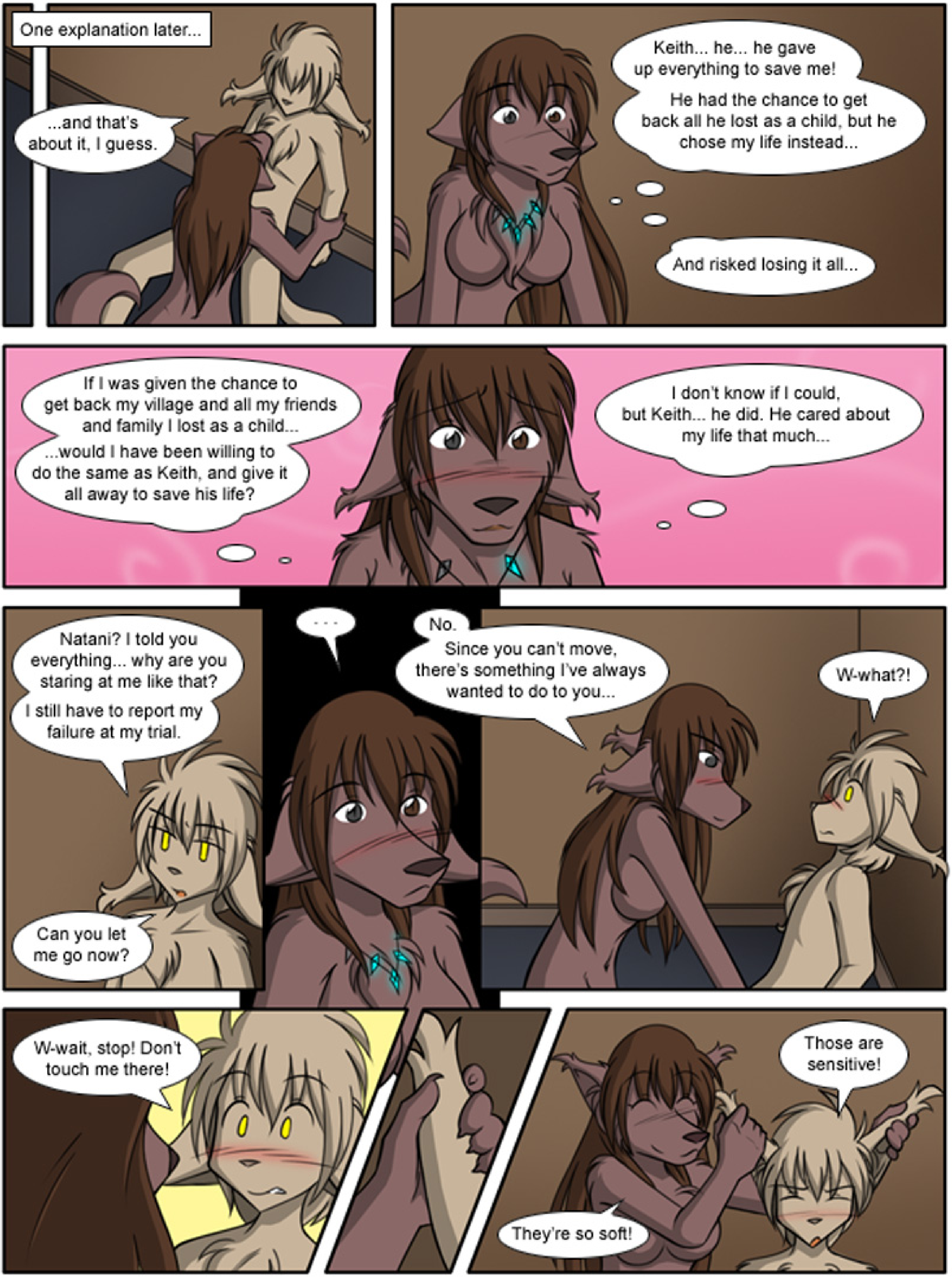

!
This is your fault.

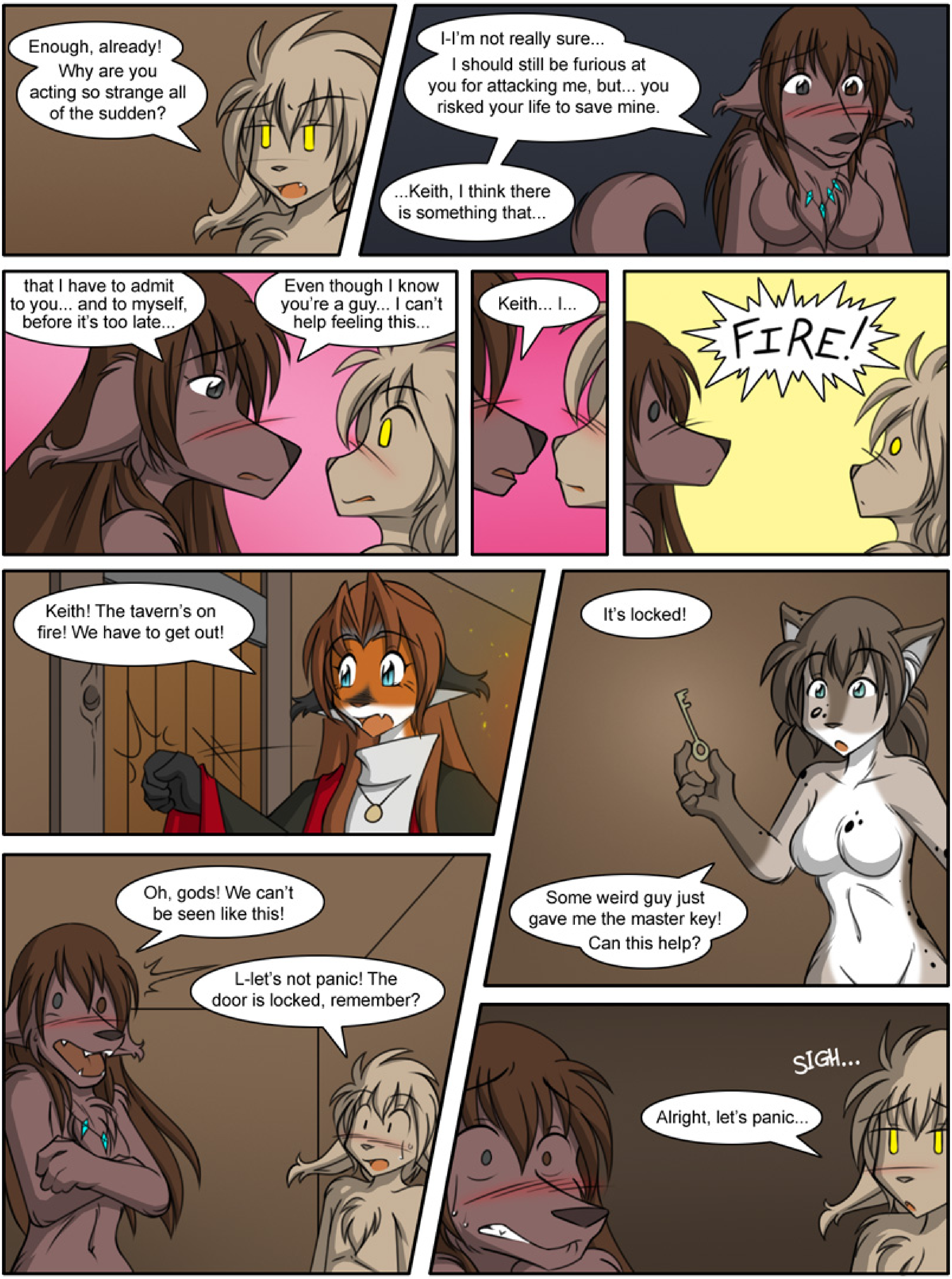

All my life, all I've ever wanted was to come home.
I wanted to be with my people... my friends... and I came so close...
But now... I'm going to lose it all... *because of you!*
What?!
I thought I could just let myself do it...
We Basitins are biologically predispositioned to follow orders. The urge is... overpowering.
What are you talking about?
It would have been the easy way... but I can't...
I can't...
I won't!

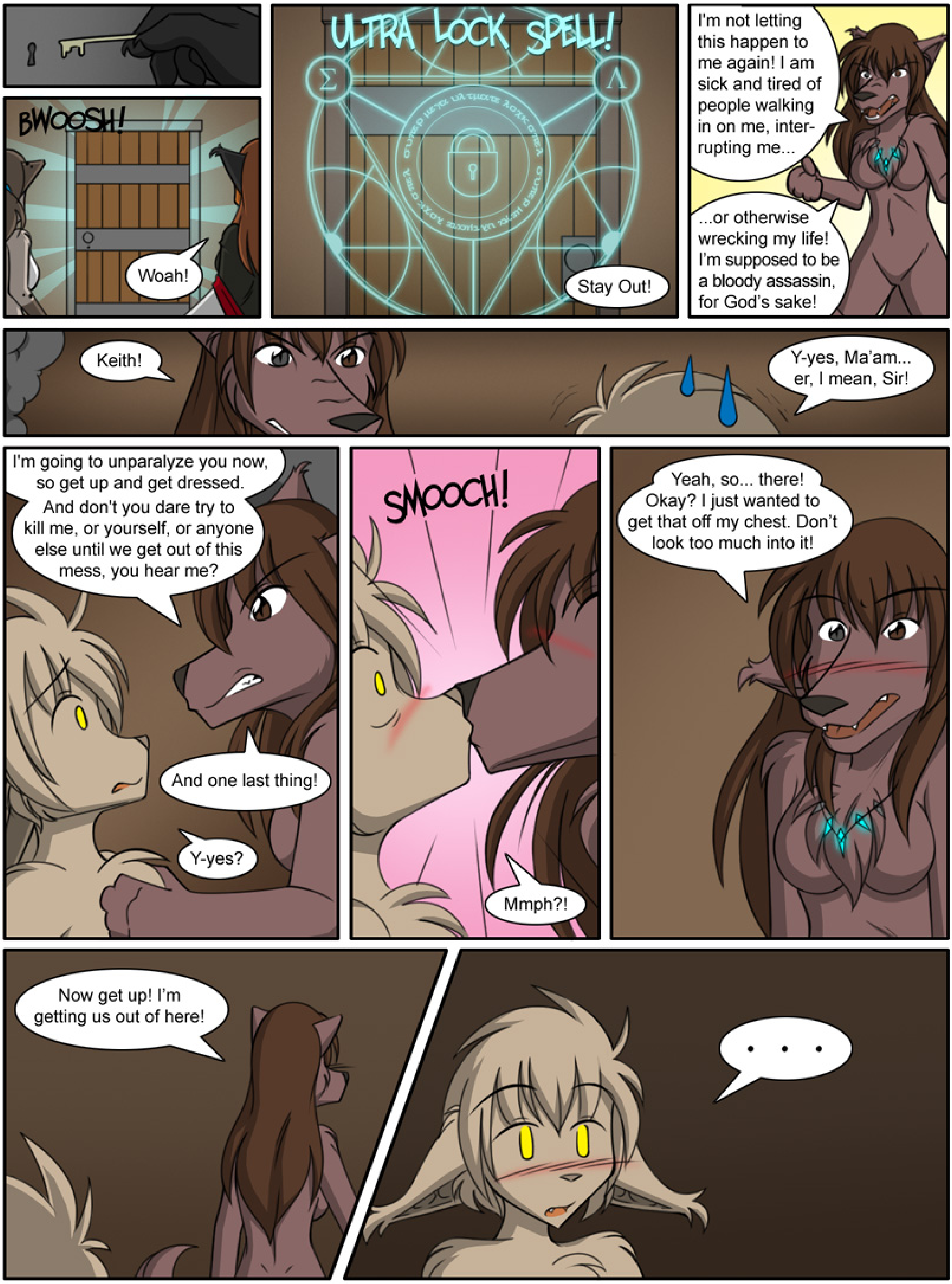

FWOOSH!
Aaargh!
Ugh...
SHINK!
Alright, you'd better explain what's going on **real quick**, Keith.
Why did you try to kill me, and then turn around and try to kill yourself?
...It... it doesn't even matter anymore. I've run out of time. I've failed...
You're not a Basitin. You... you wouldn't understand.
Well you'd better try.
That was an **immobilizing spell.** You're not moving until I get some answers.
I want you to tell me *everything*.

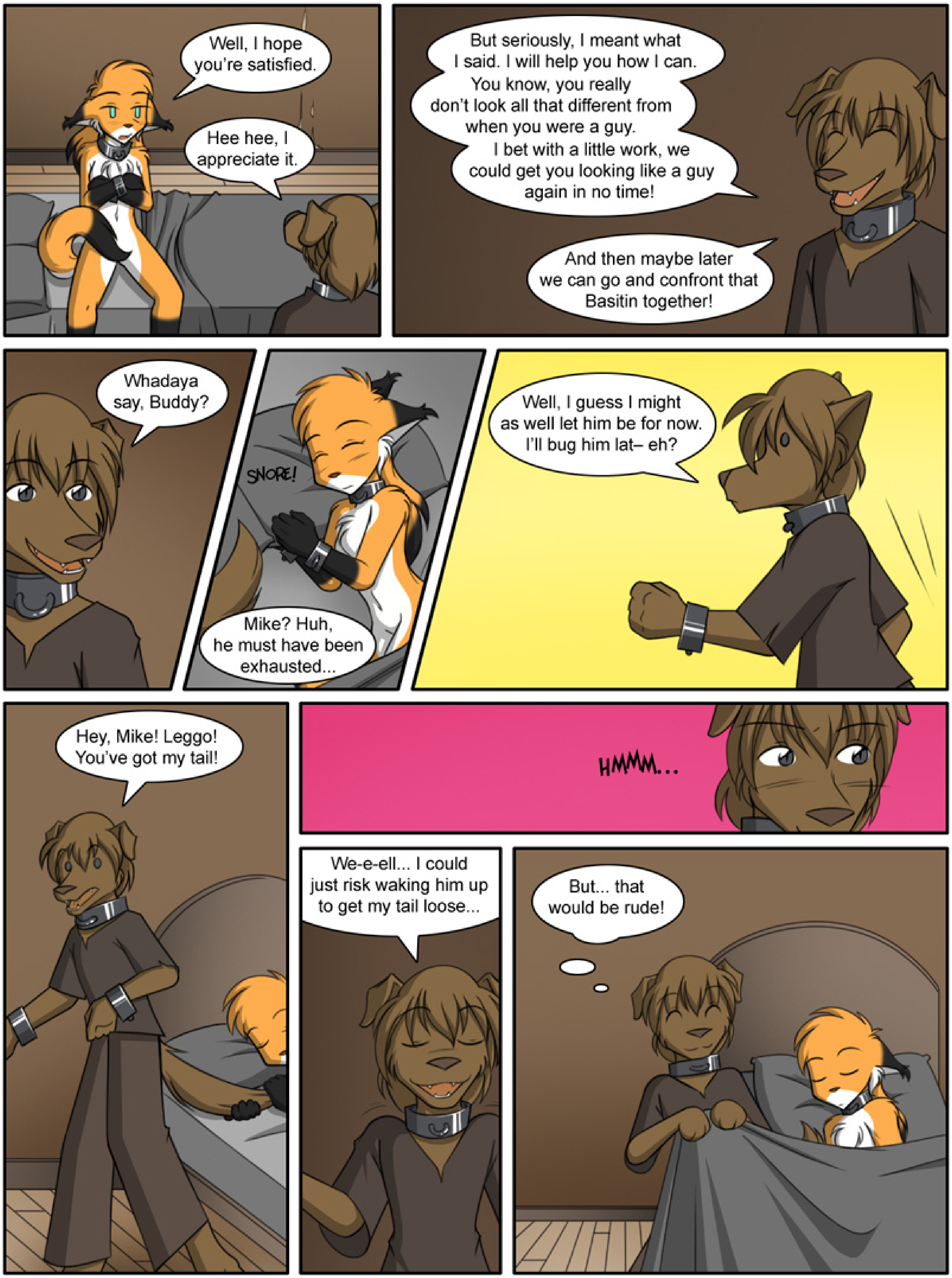

Sir, the hour has passed, yet there is no signal from Kaiser.
So, he has failed... as I had forseen he would. Good...
...Burn the tavern down.
G-General?!
That is our... own tavern!
There are our own people in there. And Kaiser still needs to stand trial–
Don't you dare talk back to me!
SMASH!
I said burn it down, now!
Y-yes, Sir!
Yes, sir... *urgh...*
Keith will pay for killing Cornelius yet!

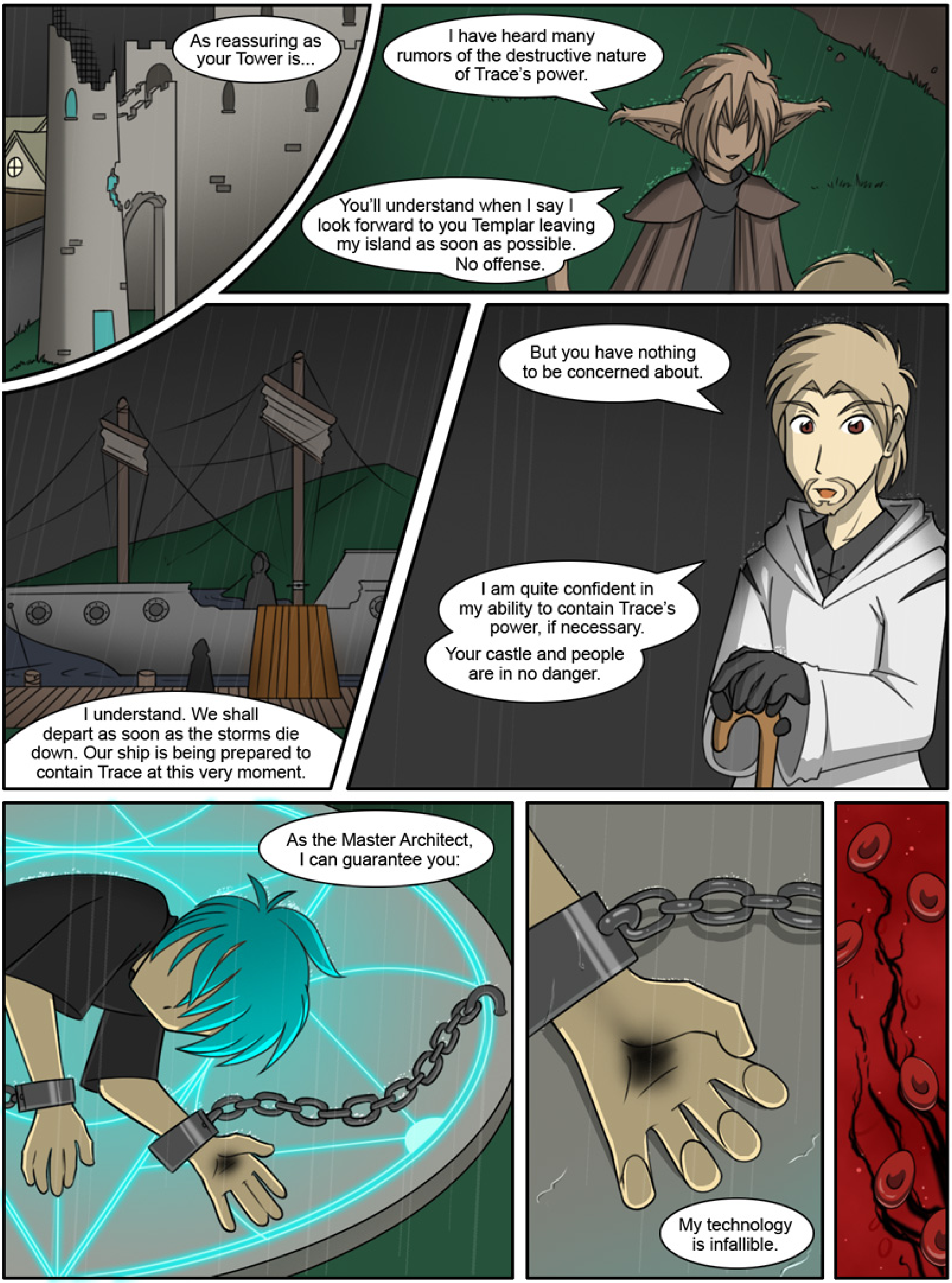

Are you sure it's safe leaving him out in the open like this, Randal?
Oh, not to worry. He's essentially harmless. That platform he's lying on is of my own invention.
It creates an effect I call a mana sink.
You are familiar, of course, with the basic fundimentals of magic and how our Towers function.
Mana gathered in large enough quantities tend to crystalize.
Our towers are basically storage batteries. Templar work to draw mana into the towers, where it joins with the existing crystals to grow larger.
Then the mana energy from the crystals can be used by those linked to the tower.
In essence, Towers provide a store of energy vastly greater than any single mage could retain on his own.
The platform is linked directly to the tower and it's draw of mana energies.
This creates a constant force that siphons mana from anyone standing upon it.
Without mana, there is no magic. And without magic, Trace is an ordinary man.

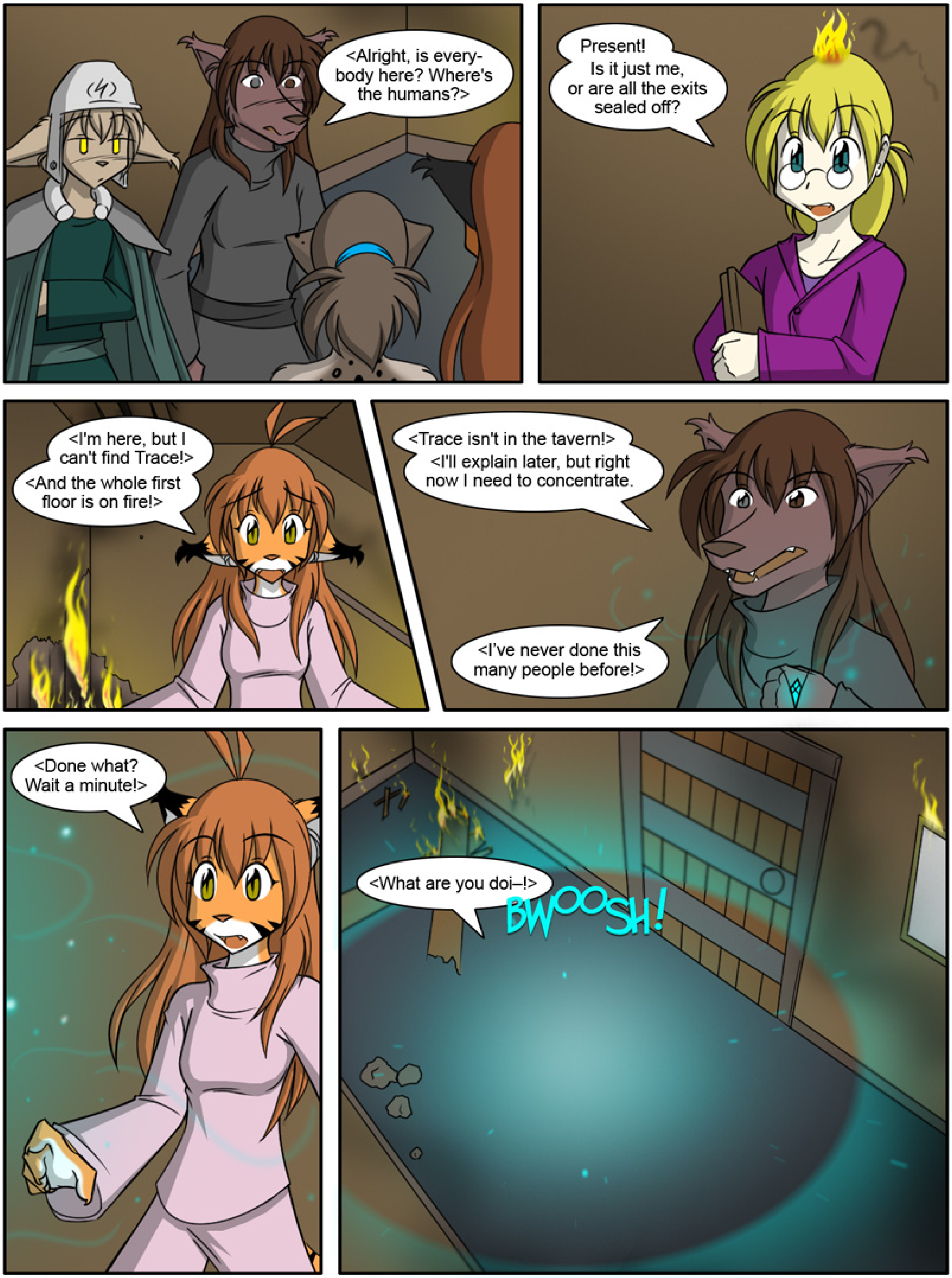

One explanation later...
...and that's about it, I guess.
Keith... he... he gave up everything to save me!
He had the chance to get back all he lost as a child, but he chose my life instead...
And risked losing it all...
If I was given the chance to get back my village and all my friends and family I lost as a child...
...would I have been willing to do the same as Keith, and give it all away to save his life?
I don't know if I could, but Keith... he did. He cared about my life that much...
Natani? I told you everything... why are you staring at me like that?
I still have to report my failure at my trial.
Can you let me go now?
. . .
No.
Since you can't move, there's something I've always wanted to do to you...
W-what?!
W-wait, stop! Don't touch me there!
Those are sensitive!
They're so soft!

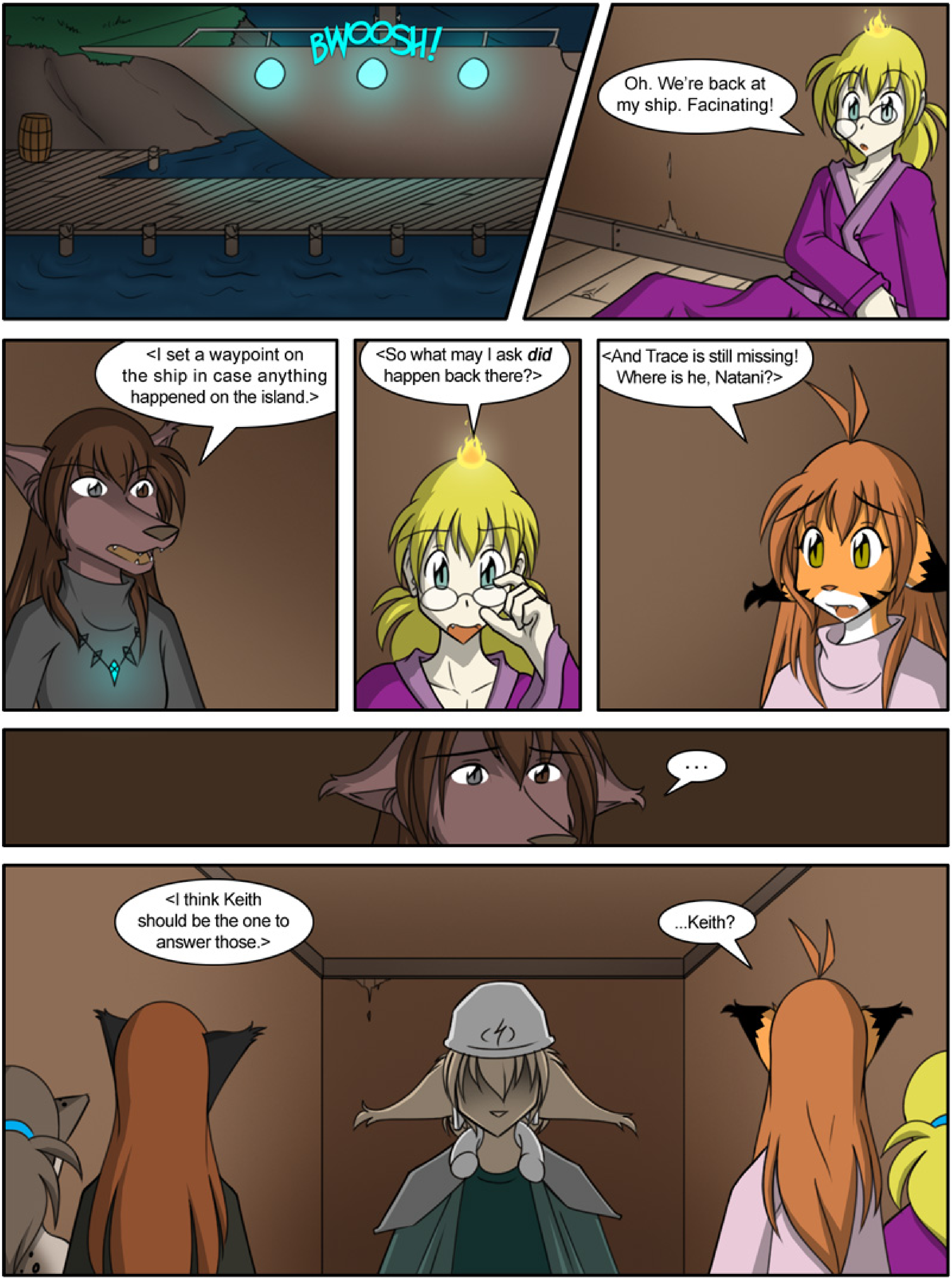

Enough, already! Why are you acting so strange all of the sudden?
I-I'm not really sure...
I should still be furious at you for attacking me, but... you risked your life to save mine.
...Keith, I think there is something that...
that I have to admit to you... and to myself, before it's too late...
Even though I know you're a guy... I can't help feeling this...
Keith... I...
FIRE!
Keith! The tavern's on fire! We have to get out!
It's locked!
Some weird guy just gave me the master key! Can this help?
Oh, gods! We can't be seen like this!
L-let's not panic! The door is locked, remember?
SIGH...
Alright, let's panic...

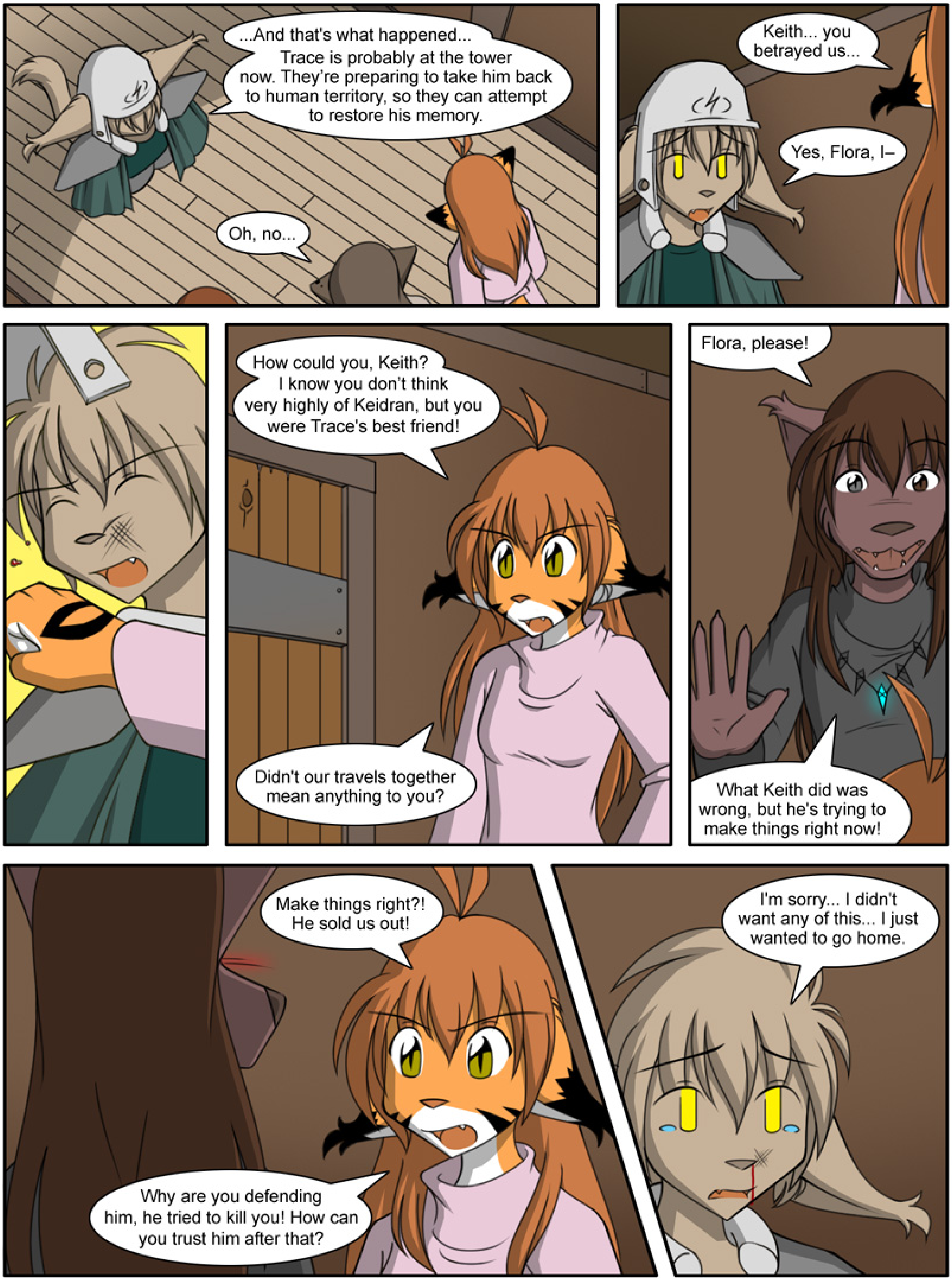

BWOOSH!
Woah!
ULTRA LOCK SPELL!
Stay Out!
I'm not letting this happen to me again! I am sick and tired of people walking in on me, interrupting me...
...or otherwise wrecking my life! I'm supposed to be a bloody assassin, for God's sake!
Keith!
Y-yes, Ma'am... er, I mean, Sir!
I'm going to unparalyze you now, so get up and get dressed.
And don't you dare try to kill me, or yourself, or anyone else until we get out of this mess, you hear me?
And one last thing!
Y-yes?
SMOOCH!
Mmph?!
Yeah, so... there! Okay? I just wanted to get that off my chest. Don't look too much into it!
Now get up! I'm getting us out of here!
. . .

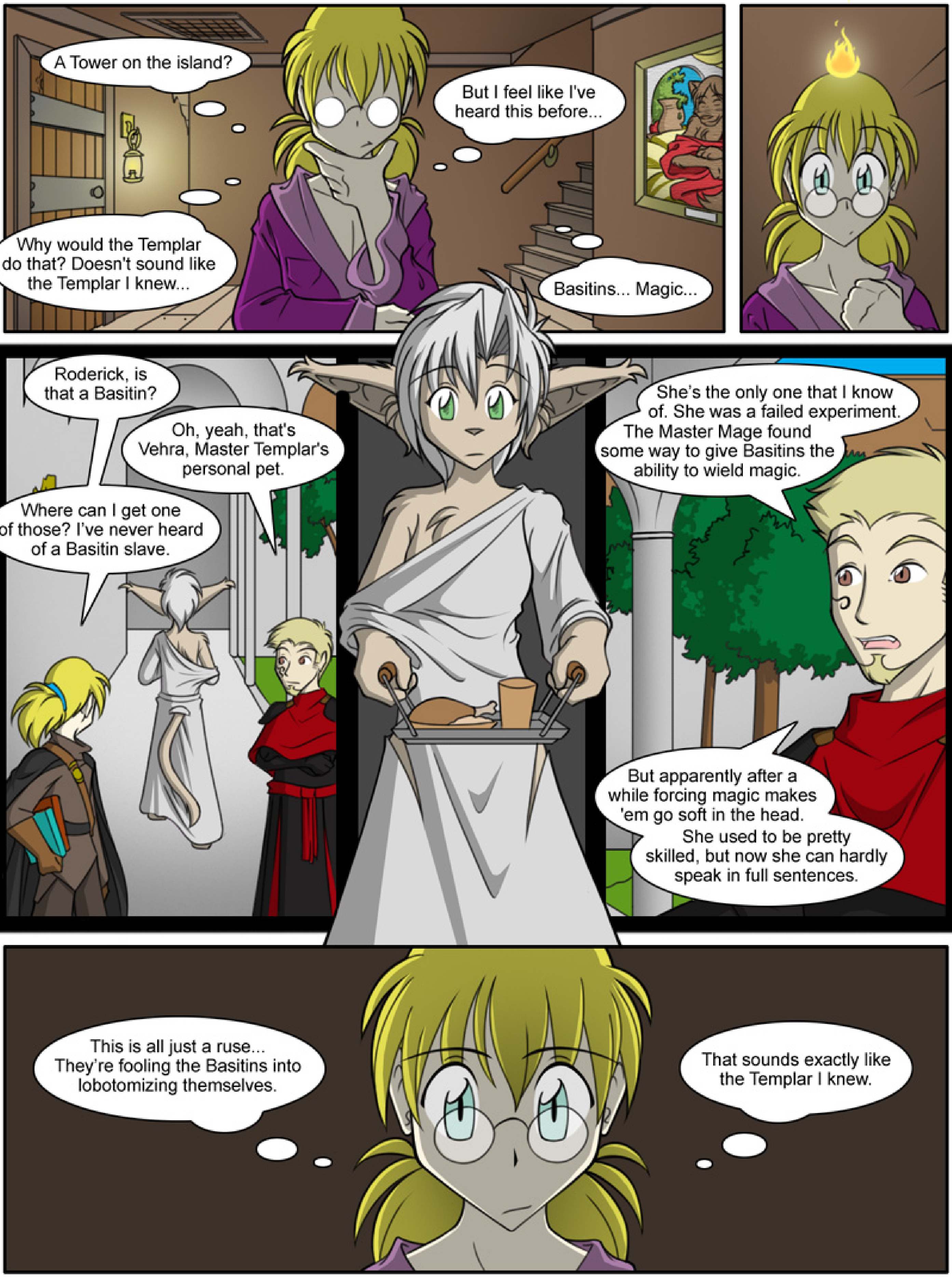

Well, I hope you're satisfied.
Hee hee, I appreciate it.
But seriously, I meant what I said. I will help you how I can.
You know, you really don't look all that different from when you were a guy.
I bet with a little work, we could get you looking like a guy again in no time!
And then maybe later we can go and confront that Basitin together!
Whadaya say, Buddy?
SNORE!
Mike? Huh, he must have been exhausted...
Well, I guess I might as well let him be for now. I'll bug him lat– eh?
Hey, Mike! Leggo! You've got my tail!
HMMM...
We-e-ell... I could just risk waking him up to get my tail loose...
But... that would be rude!

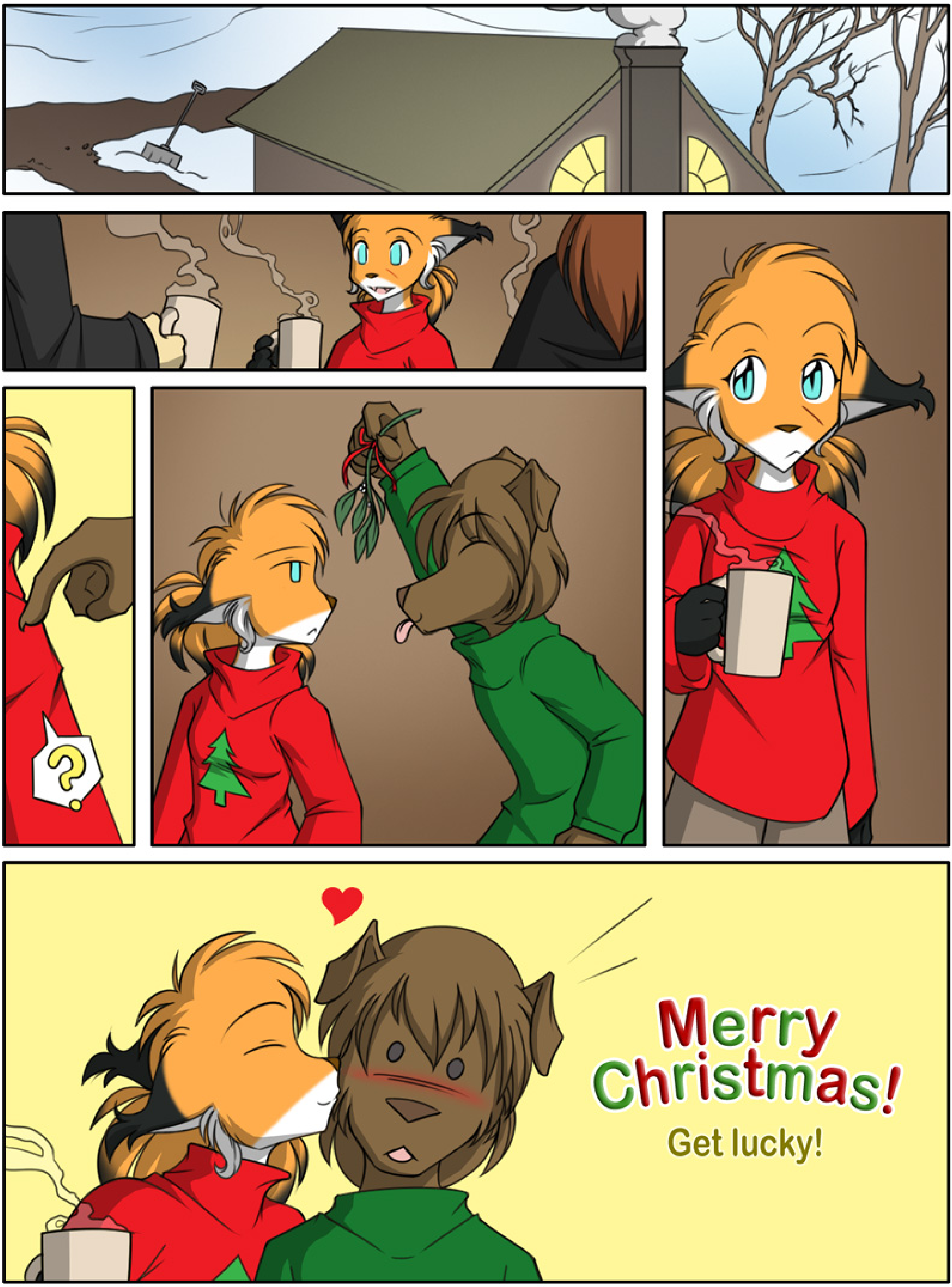

As reassuring as your Tower is...
I have heard many rumors of the destructive nature of Trace's power.
You'll understand when I say I look forward to you Templar leaving my island as soon as possible. No offense.
I understand. We shall depart as soon as the storms die down. Our ship is being prepared to contain Trace at this very moment.
But you have nothing to be concerned about.
I am quite confident in my ability to contain Trace's power, if necessary.
Your castle and people are in no danger.
As the Master Architect, I can guarantee you:
My technology is infallible.

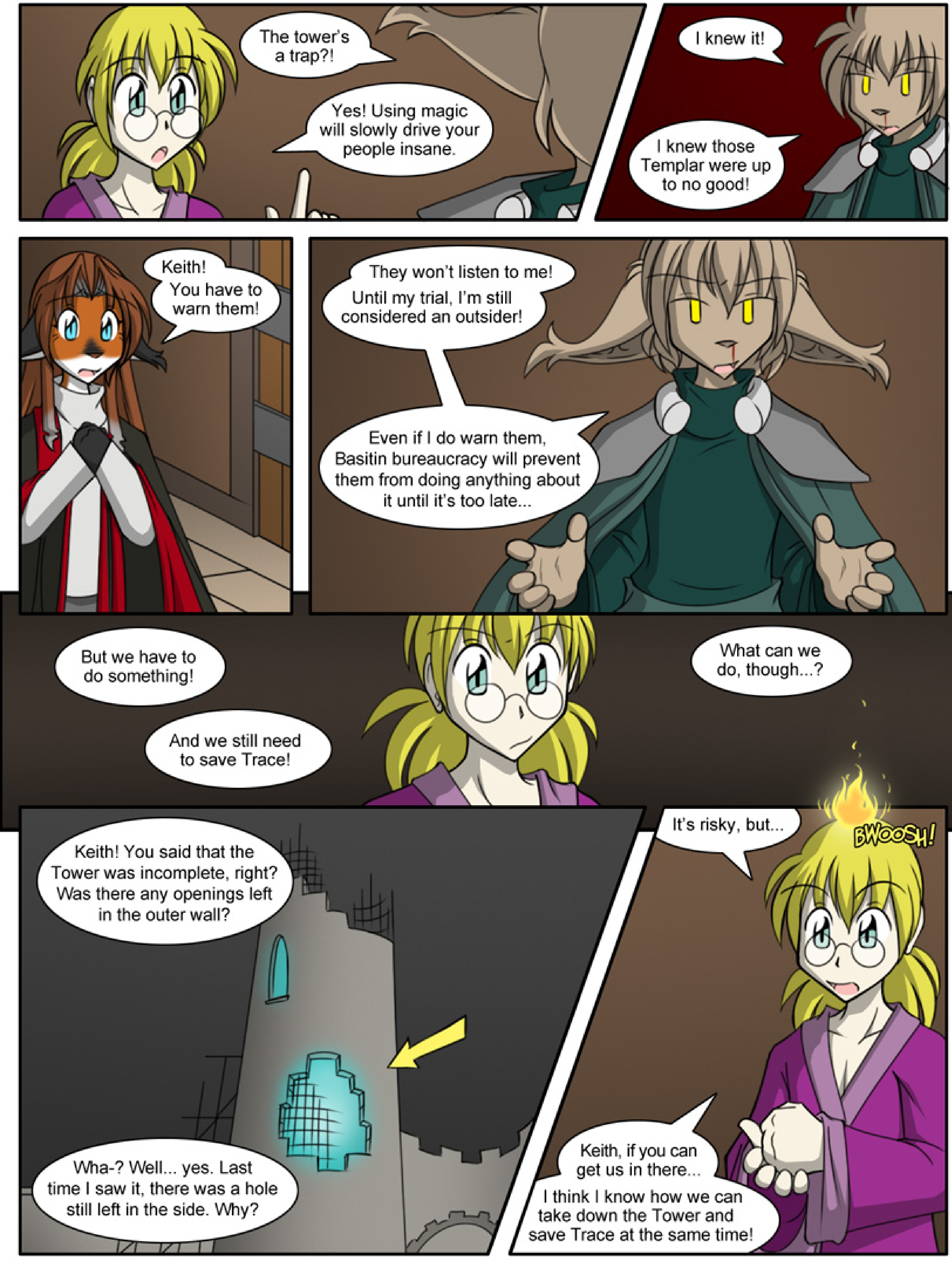

<Alright, is every-body here? Where's the humans?>
Present! Is it just me, or are all the exits sealed off?
<I'm here, but I can't find Trace!>
<And the whole first floor is on fire!>
<Trace isn't in the tavern!>
<I'll explain later, but right now I need to concentrate.
<I've never done this many people before!>
<Done what? Wait a minute!>
<What are you doi–!>
BWOOSH!

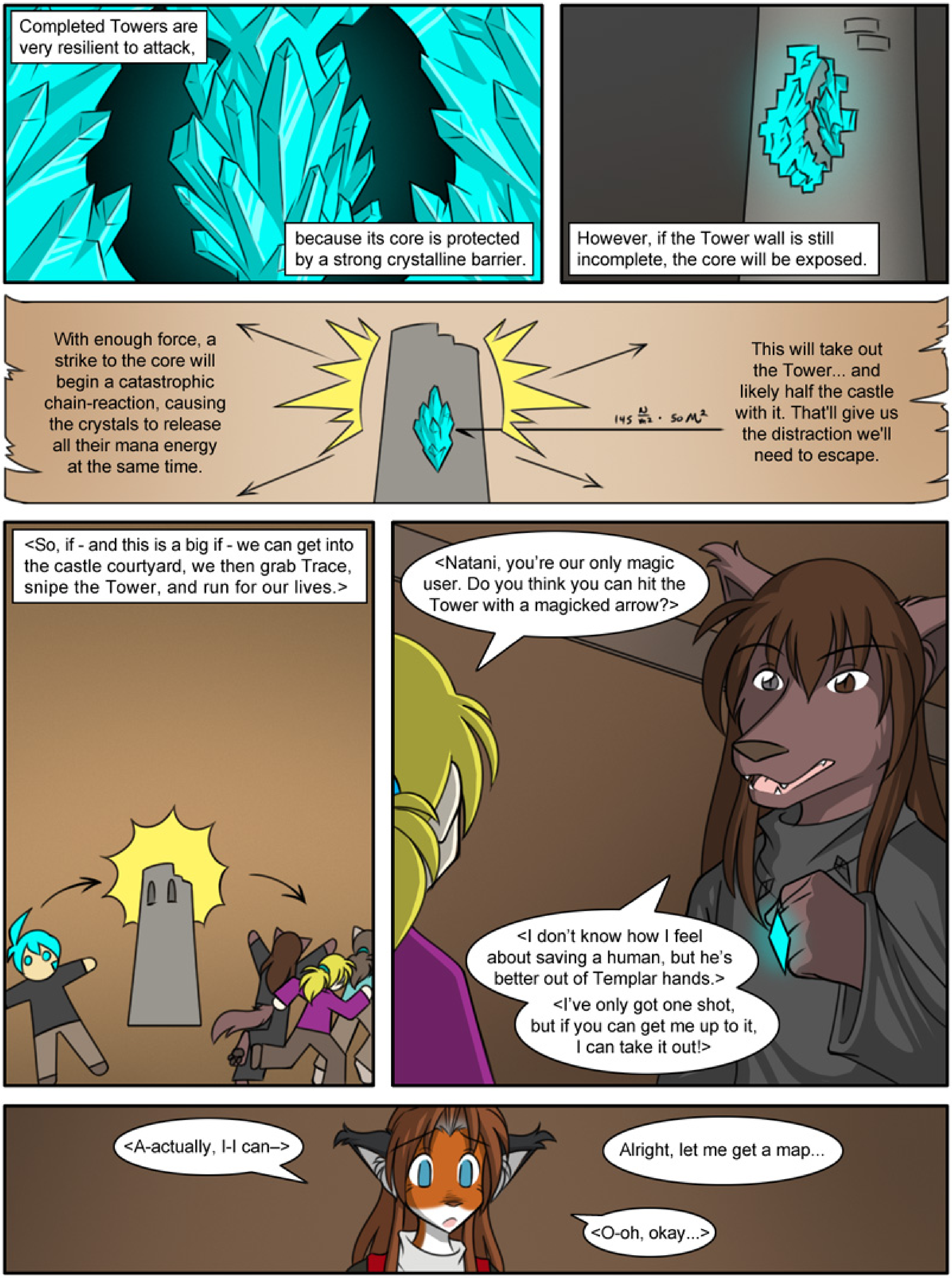

BWOOSH!
Oh. We're back at my ship. Facinating!
<I set a waypoint on the ship in case anything happened on the island.>
<So what may I ask *did* happen back there?>
<And Trace is still missing! Where is he, Natani?>
...
<I think Keith should be the one to answer those.>
...Keith?

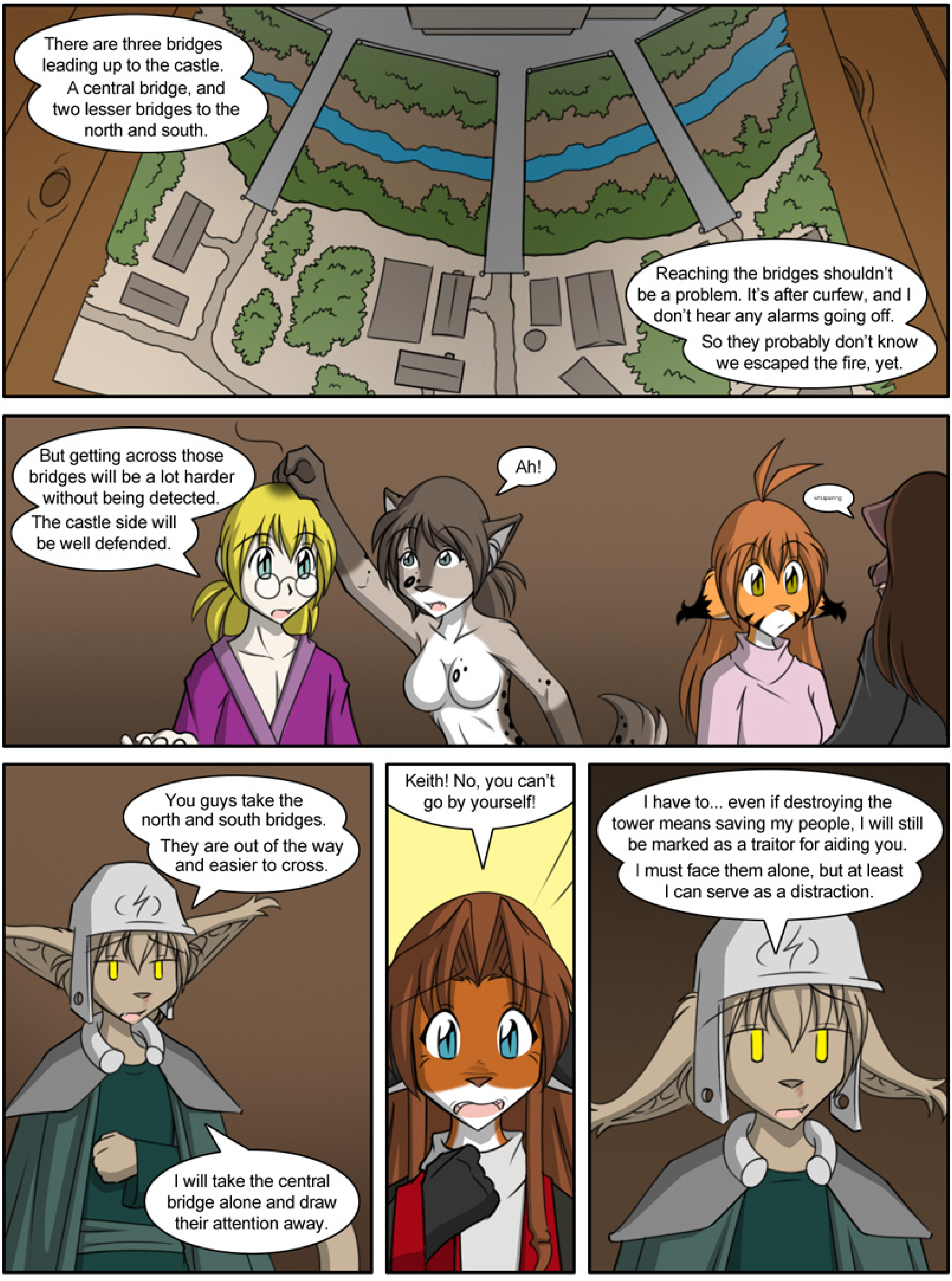

...And that's what happened... Trace is probably at the tower now. They're preparing to take him back to human territory, so they can attempt to restore his memory.
Oh, no...
Keith... you betrayed us...
Yes, Flora, I–
How could you, Keith? I know you don't think very highly of Keidran, but you were Trace's best friend!
Didn't our travels together mean anything to you?
Flora, please!
What Keith did was wrong, but he's trying to make things right now!
Make things right?! He sold us out!
Why are you defending him, he tried to kill you! How can you trust him after that?
I'm sorry... I didn't want any of this... I just wanted to go home.

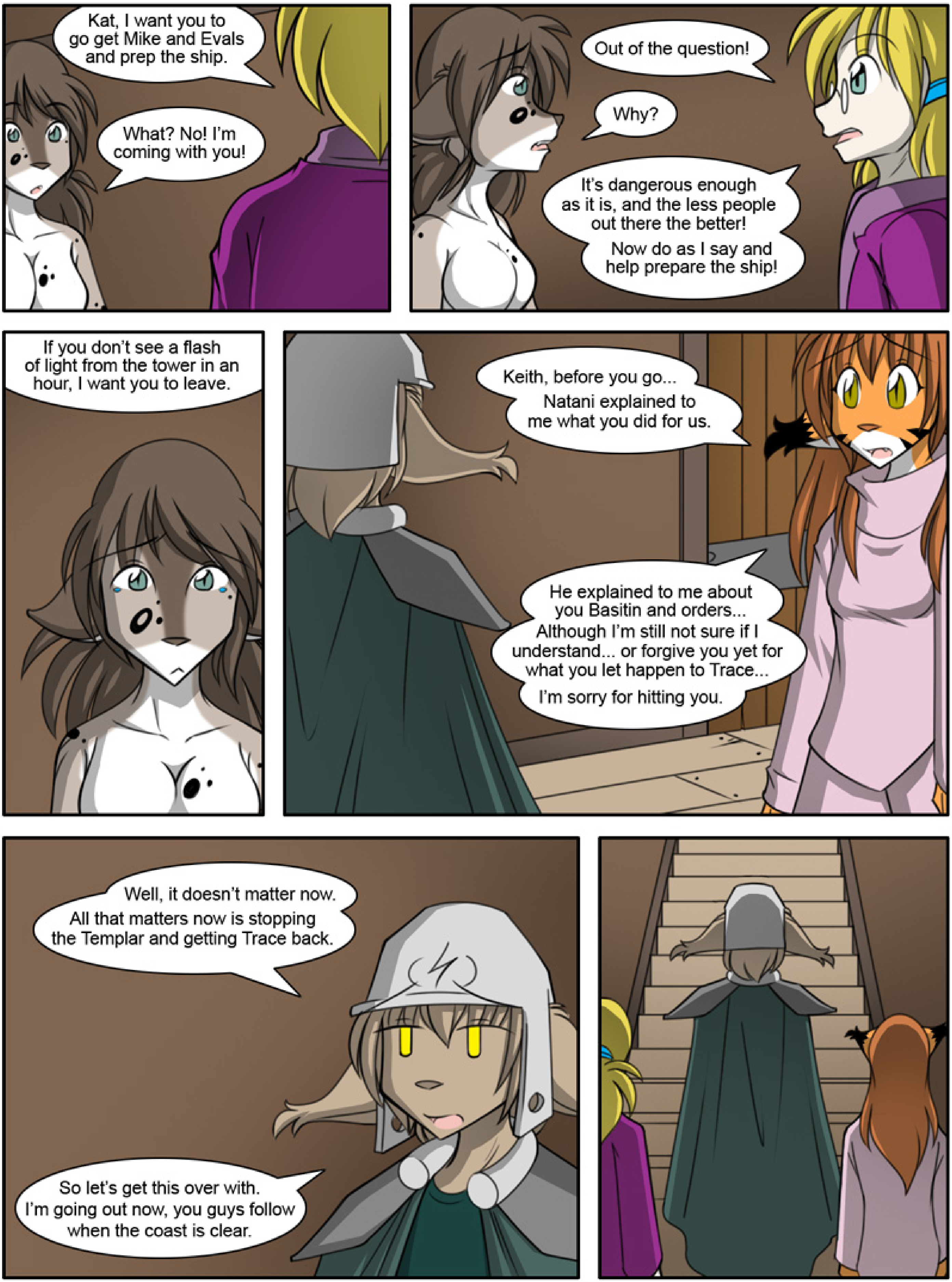

A Tower on the island?
But I feel like I've heard this before...
Why would the Templar do that? Doesn't sound like the Templar I knew...
Basitins... Magic...
Roderick, is that a Basitin?
Oh, yeah, that's Vehra, Master Templar's personal pet.
Where can I get one of those? I've never heard of a Basitin slave.
She's the only one that I know of. She was a failed experiment.
The Master Mage found some way to give Basitins the ability to wield magic.
But apparently after a while forcing magic makes 'em go soft in the head.
She used to be pretty skilled, but now she can hardly speak in full sentences.
This is all just a ruse... They're fooling the Basitins into lobotomizing themselves.
That sounds exactly like the Templar I knew.

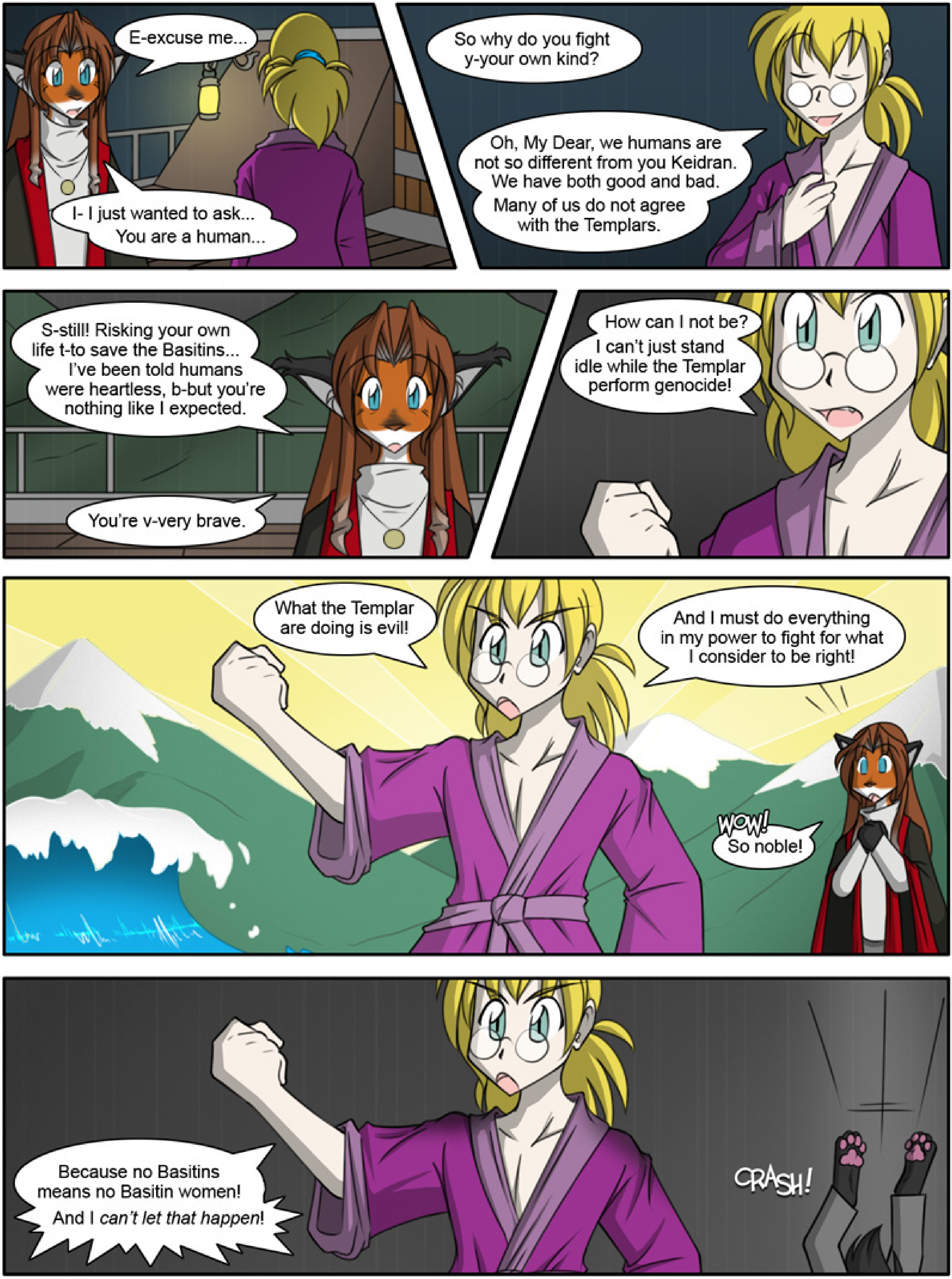

?
Merry Christmas!
Get lucky!

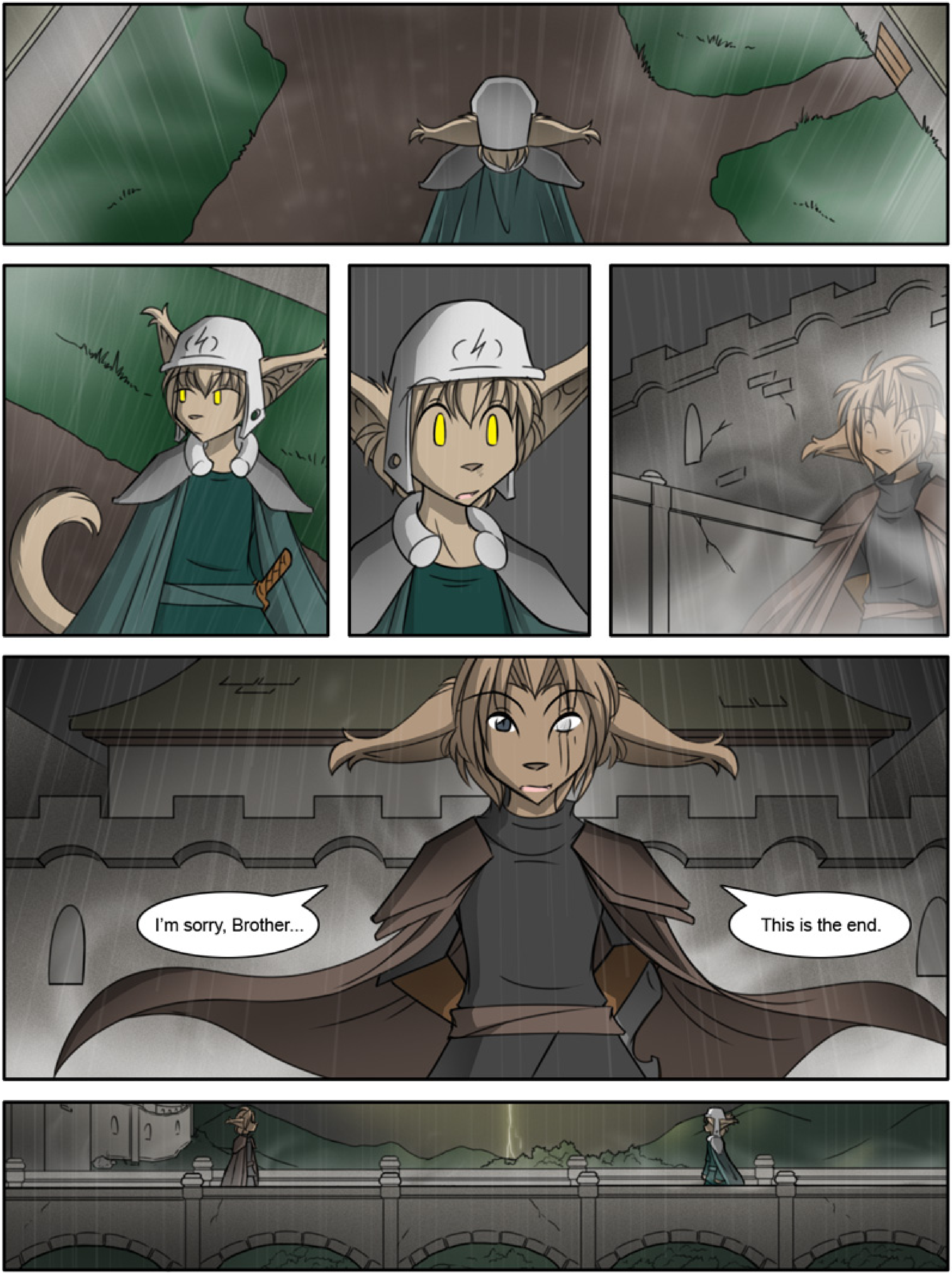

The tower's a trap?!
Yes! Using magic will slowly drive your people insane.
I knew it!
I knew those Templar were up to no good!
Keith! You have to warn them!
They won't listen to me!
Until my trial, I'm still considered an outsider!
Even if I do warn them, Basitin bureaucracy will prevent them from doing anything about it until it's too late...
But we have to do something!
And we still need to save Trace!
What can we do, though...?
Keith! You said that the Tower was incomplete, right? Was there any openings left in the outer wall?
Wha-? Well... yes. Last time I saw it, there was a hole still left in the side. Why?
It's risky, but...
BWOOSH!
Keith, if you can get us in there...
I think I know how we can take down the Tower and save Trace at the same time!

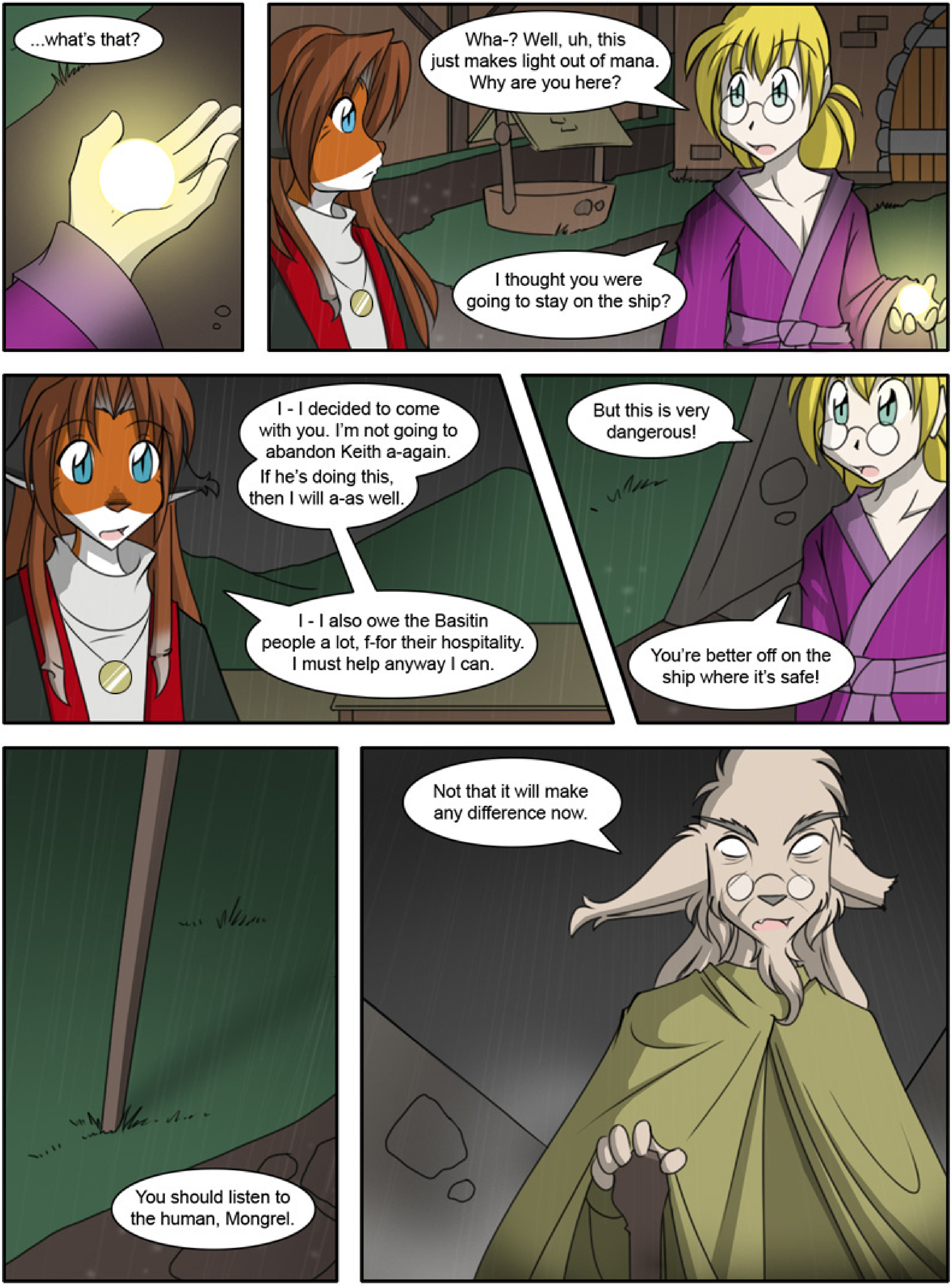

Completed Towers are very resilient to attack,
because its core is protected by a strong crystalline barrier.
However, if the Tower wall is still incomplete, the core will be exposed.
With enough force, a strike to the core will begin a catastrophic chain-reaction, causing the crystals to release all their mana energy at the same time.
$145 \frac{N}{m^2} \cdot 50 M^2$
This will take out the Tower... and likely half the castle with it. That'll give us the distraction we'll need to escape.
<So, if - and this is a big if - we can get into the castle courtyard, we then grab Trace, snipe the Tower, and run for our lives.>
<Natani, you're our only magic user. Do you think you can hit the Tower with a magicked arrow?>
<I don't know how I feel about saving a human, but he's better out of Templar hands.>
<I've only got one shot, but if you can get me up to it, I can take it out!>
<A-actually, I-I can–>
Alright, let me get a map...
<O-oh, okay...>

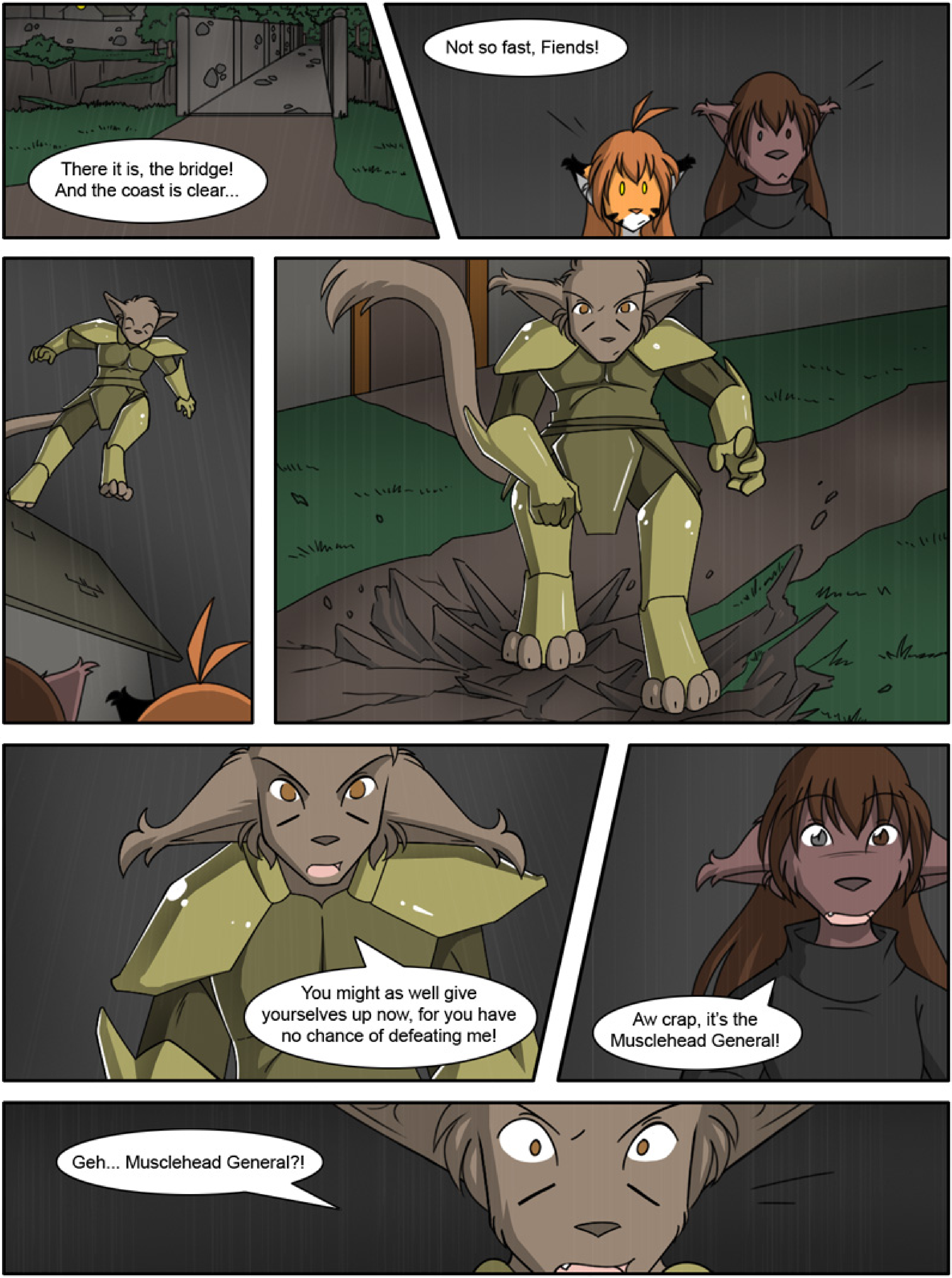

There are three bridges leading up to the castle.
A central bridge, and two lesser bridges to the north and south.
Reaching the bridges shouldn't be a problem. It's after curfew, and I don't hear any alarms going off.
So they probably don't know we escaped the fire, yet.
But getting across those bridges will be a lot harder without being detected.
The castle side will be well defended.
Ah!
whispering
You guys take the north and south bridges.
They are out of the way and easier to cross.
I will take the central bridge alone and draw their attention away.
Keith! No, you can't go by yourself!
I have to... even if destroying the tower means saving my people, I will still be marked as a traitor for aiding you.
I must face them alone, but at least I can serve as a distraction.

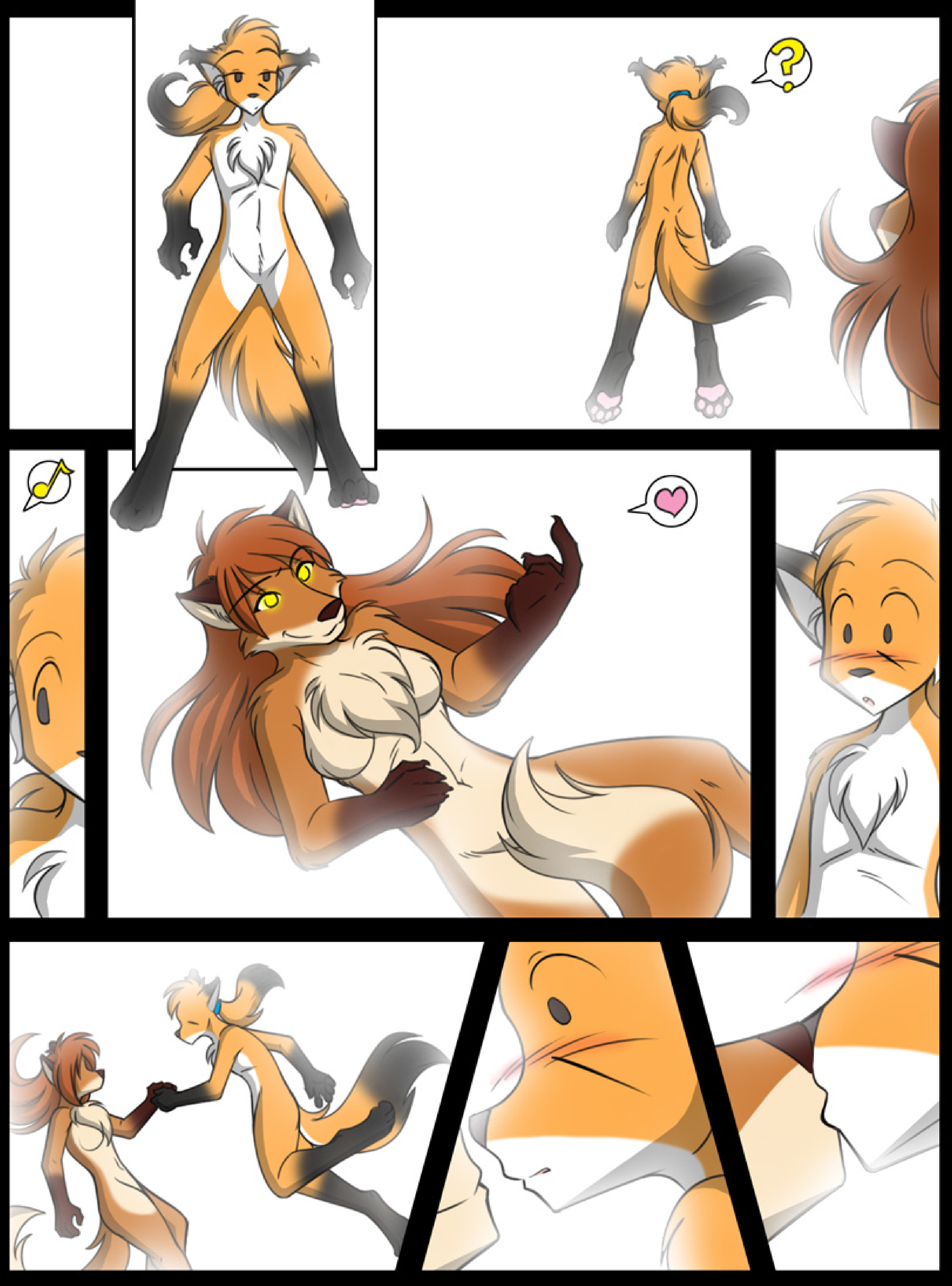

Kat, I want you to go get Mike and Evals and prep the ship.
What? No! I'm coming with you!
Out of the question!
Why?
It's dangerous enough as it is, and the less people out there the better!
Now do as I say and help prepare the ship!
If you don't see a flash of light from the tower in an hour, I want you to leave.
Keith, before you go...
Natani explained to me what you did for us.
He explained to me about you Basitin and orders...
Although I'm still not sure if I understand... or forgive you yet for what you let happen to Trace...
I'm sorry for hitting you.
Well, it doesn't matter now.
All that matters now is stopping the Templar and getting Trace back.
So let's get this over with.
I'm going out now, you guys follow when the coast is clear.

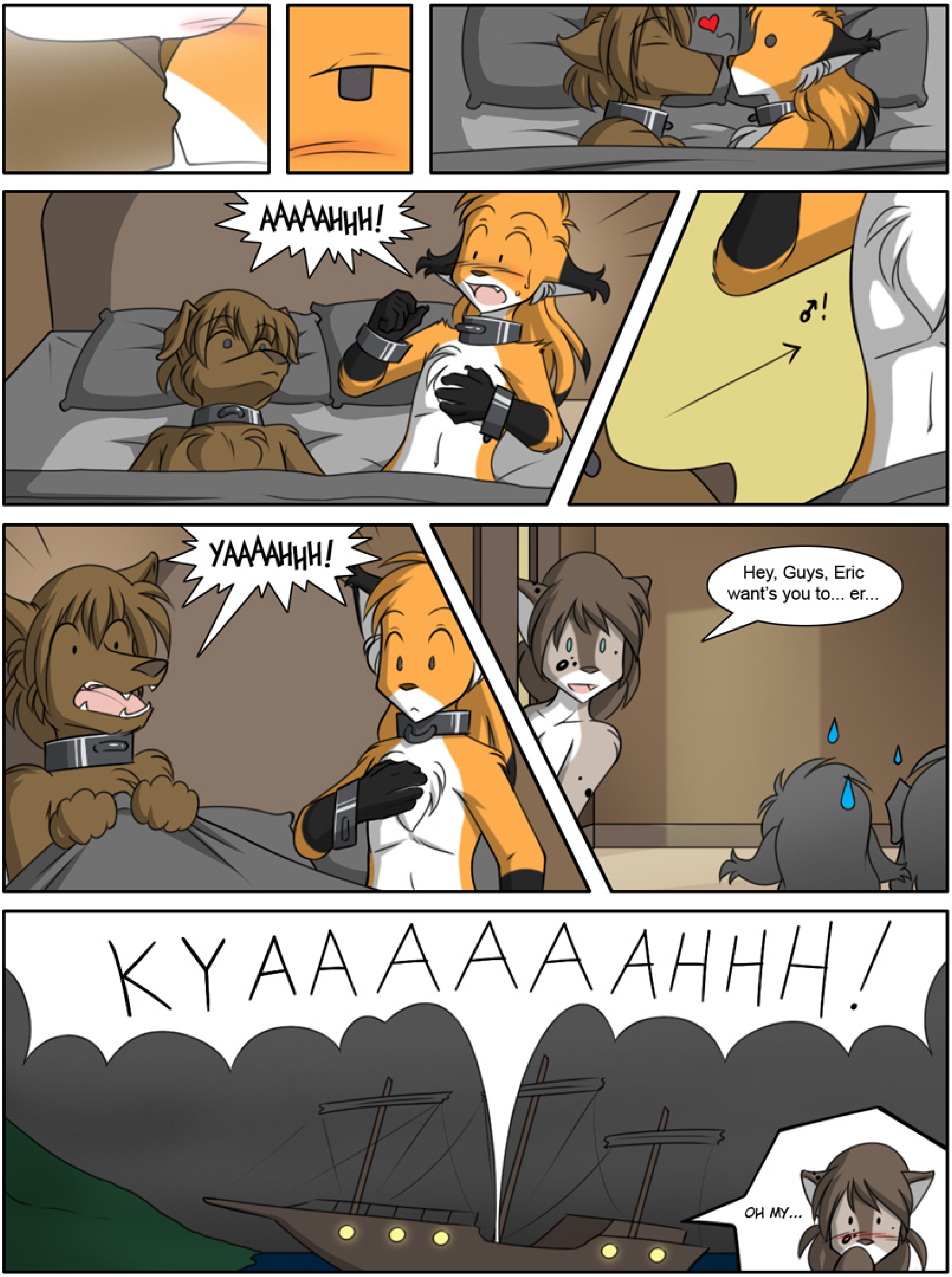

E-excuse me...
I- I just wanted to ask... You are a human...
So why do you fight y-your own kind?
Oh, My Dear, we humans are not so different from you Keidran. We have both good and bad.
Many of us do not agree with the Templars.
S-still! Risking your own life t-to save the Basitins... I've been told humans were heartless, b-but you're nothing like I expected.
You're v-very brave.
How can I not be? I can't just stand idle while the Templar perform genocide!
What the Templar are doing is evil!
And I must do everything in my power to fight for what I consider to be right!
WOW! So noble!
Because no Basitins means no Basitin women! And I *can't let that happen*!
CRASH!

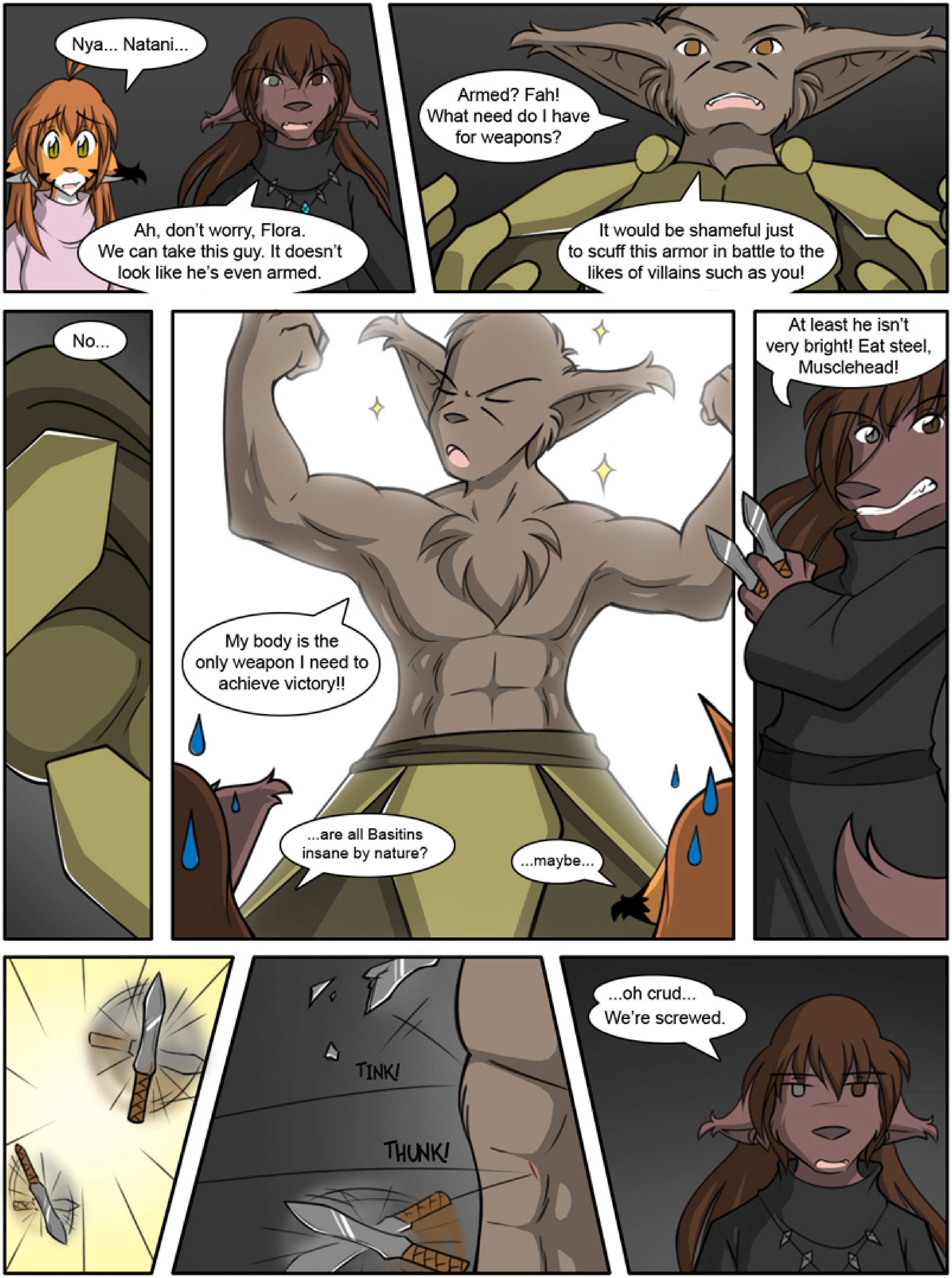

I'm sorry, Brother...
This is the end.

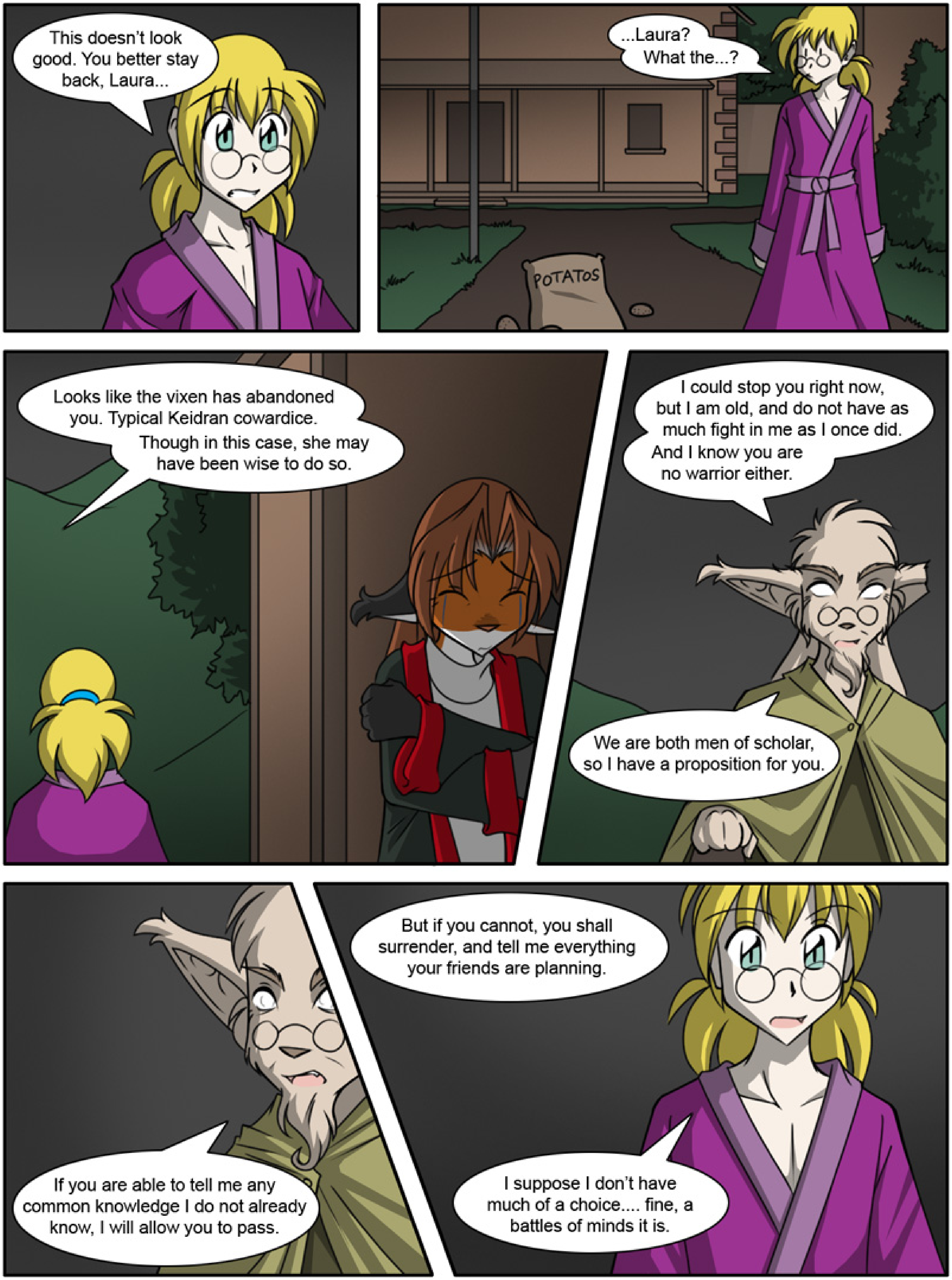

...what's that?
Wha-? Well, uh, this just makes light out of mana. Why are you here?
I thought you were going to stay on the ship?
I - I decided to come with you. I'm not going to abandon Keith a-again.
If he's doing this, then I will a-as well.
I - I also owe the Basitin people a lot, f-for their hospitality. I must help anyway I can.
But this is very dangerous!
You're better off on the ship where it's safe!
You should listen to the human, Mongrel.
Not that it will make any difference now.

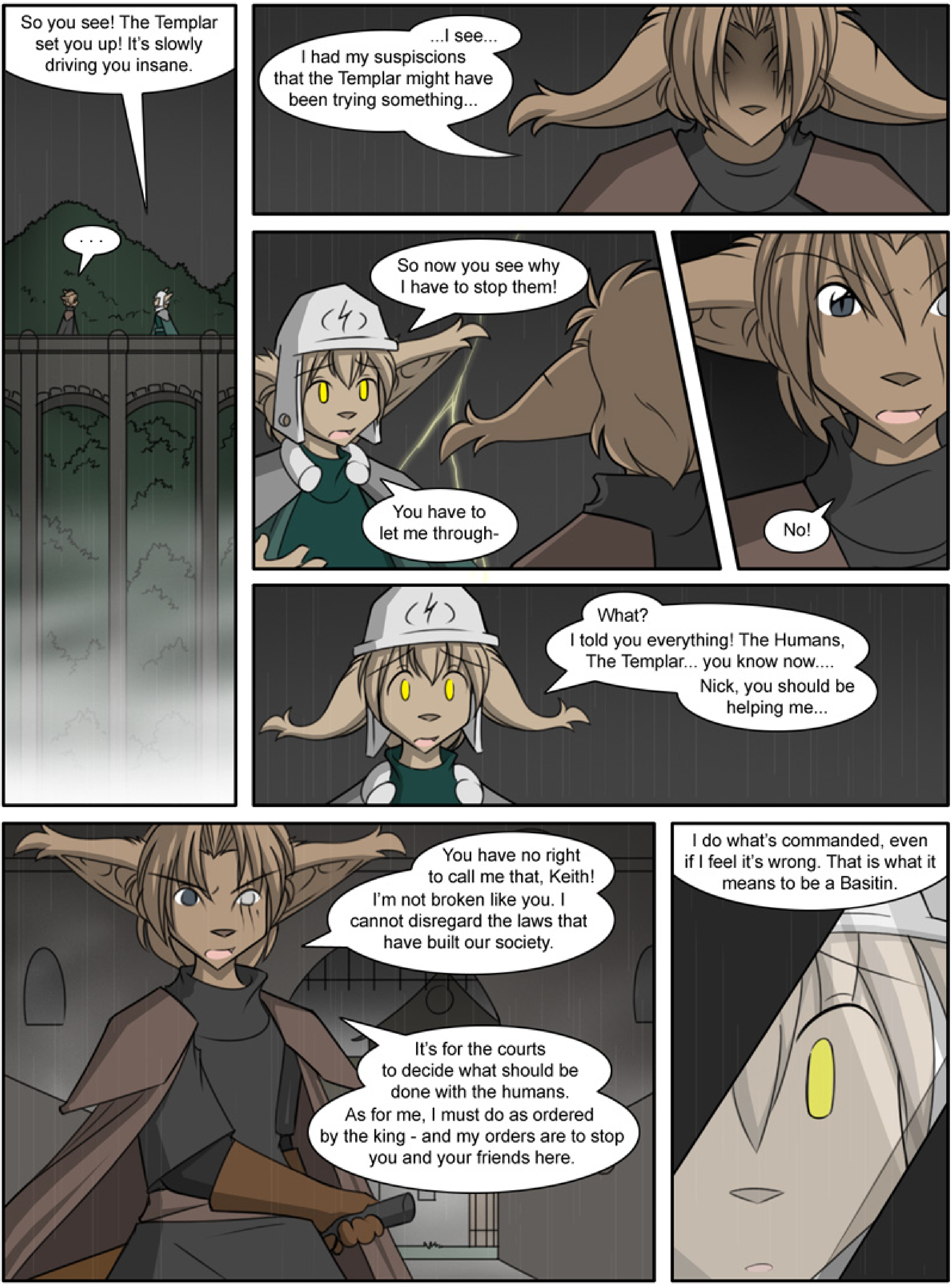

There it is, the bridge!
And the coast is clear...
Not so fast, Fiends!
You might as well give yourselves up now, for you have no chance of defeating me!
Aw crap, it's the Musclehead General!
Geh... Musclehead General?!

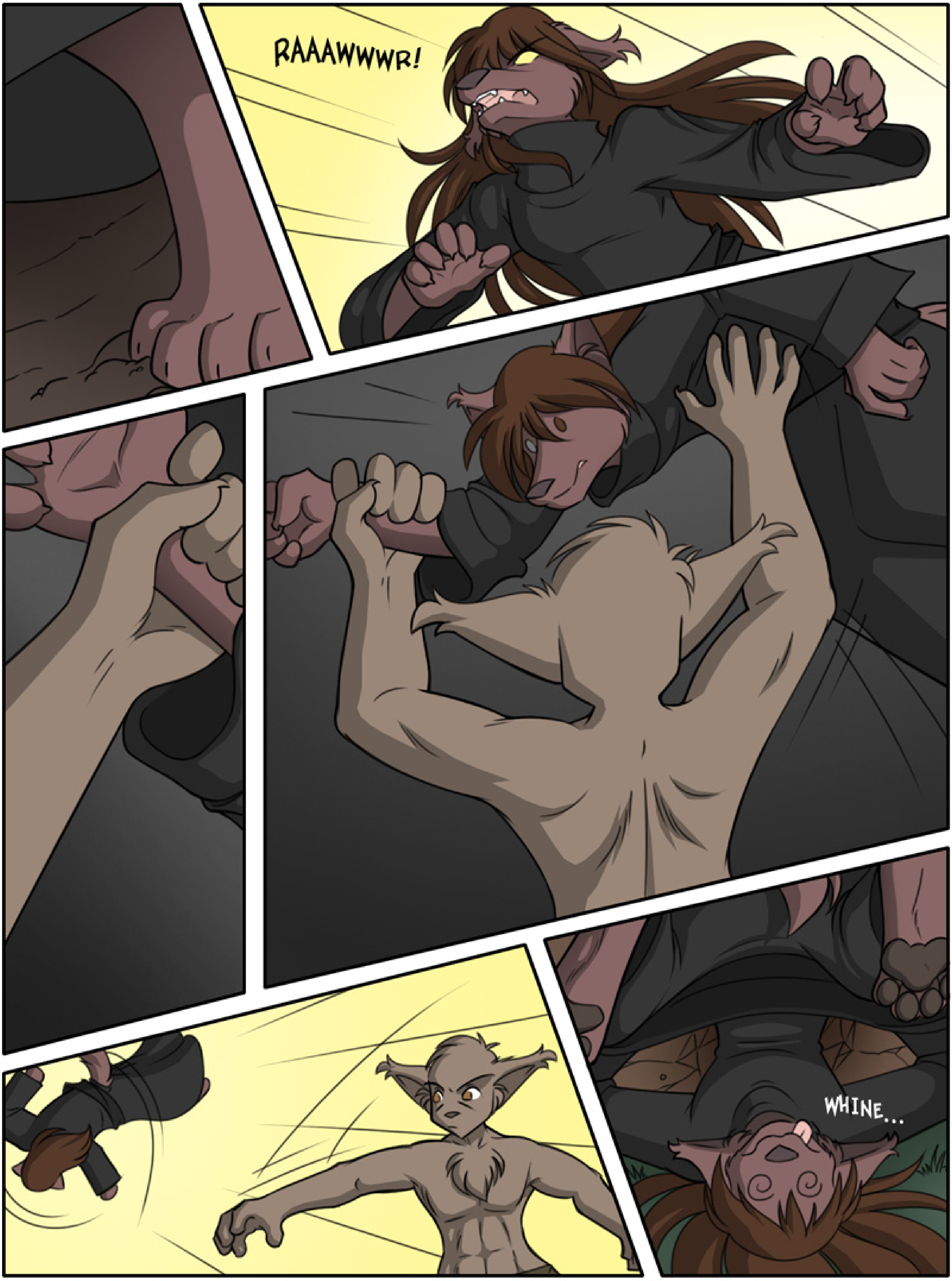


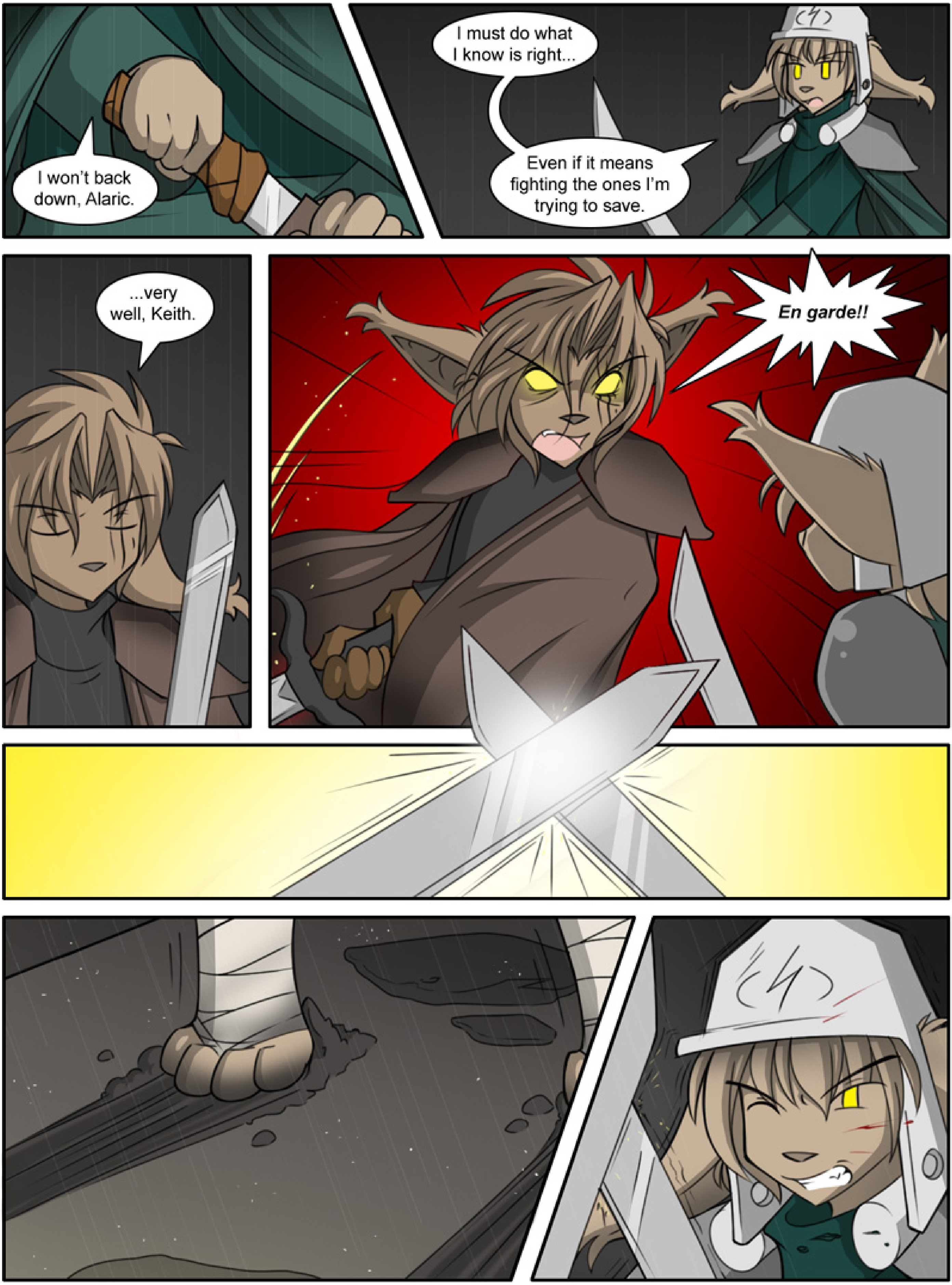

AAAAHHH!
♂!
YAAAAHHH!
Hey, Guys, Eric want's you to... er...
KYAAAAAAAHHH!
OH MY...

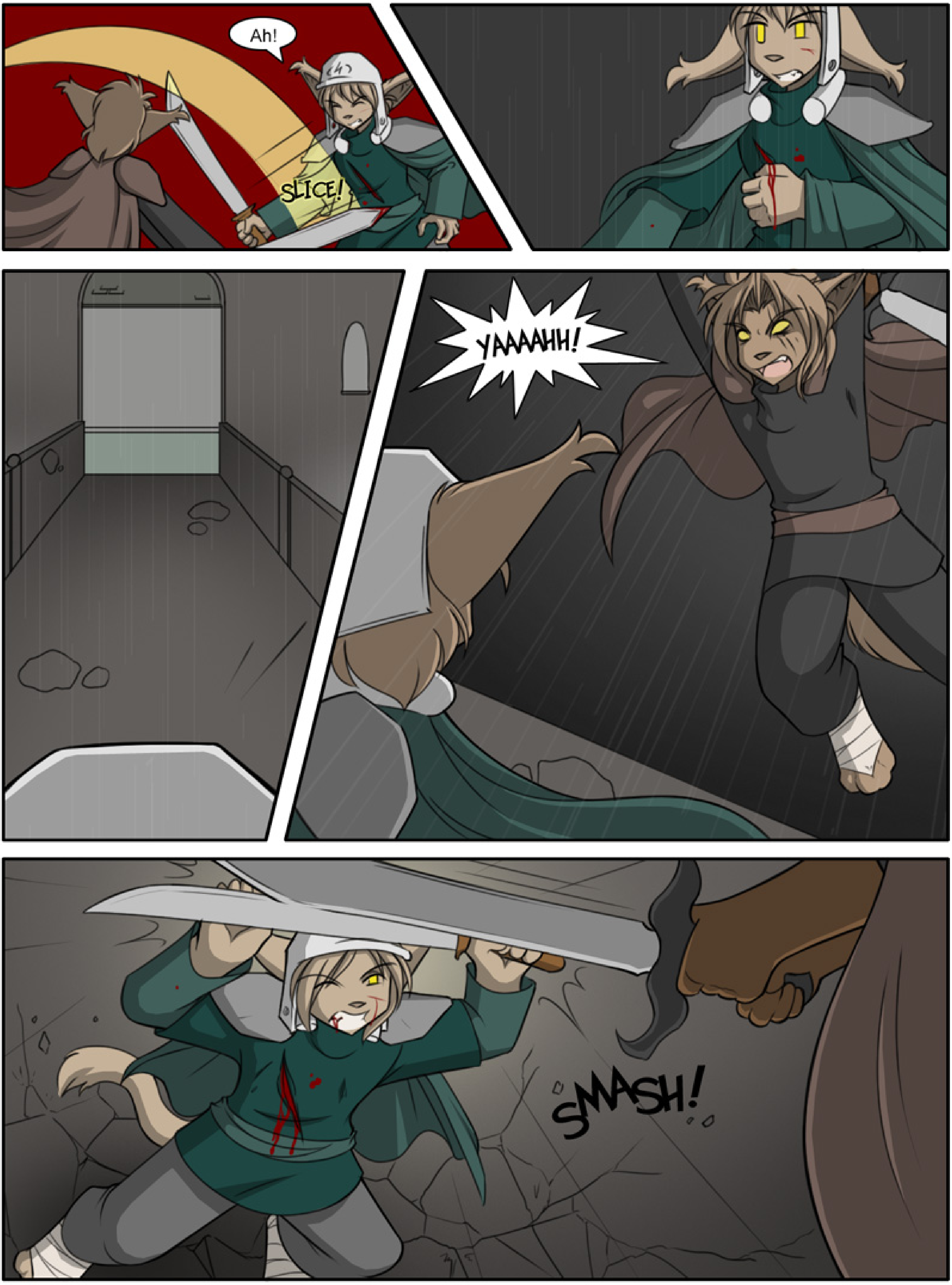

Nya... Natani...
Ah, don't worry, Flora. We can take this guy. It doesn't look like he's even armed.
Armed? Fah! What need do I have for weapons?
It would be shameful just to scuff this armor in battle to the likes of villains such as you!
No...
My body is the only weapon I need to achieve victory!!
...are all Basitins insane by nature?
...maybe...
At least he isn't very bright! Eat steel, Musclehead!
TINK!
THUNK!
...oh crud... We're screwed.

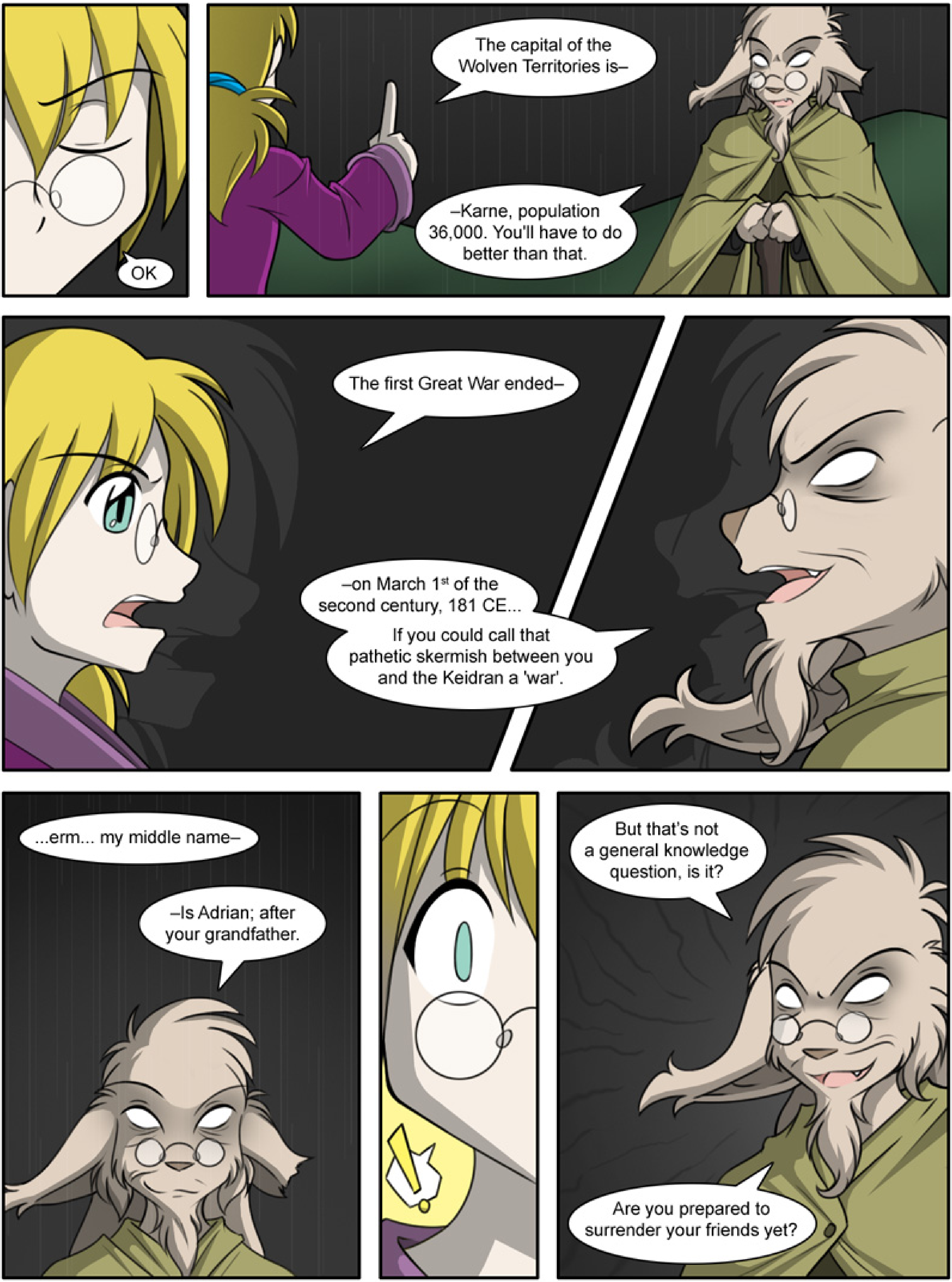

This doesn't look good. You better stay back, Laura...
...Laura? What the...?
POTATOS
Looks like the vixen has abandoned you. Typical Keidran cowardice.
Though in this case, she may have been wise to do so.
I could stop you right now, but I am old, and do not have as much fight in me as I once did. And I know you are no warrior either.
We are both men of scholar, so I have a proposition for you.
If you are able to tell me any common knowledge I do not already know, I will allow you to pass.
But if you cannot, you shall surrender, and tell me everything your friends are planning.
I suppose I don't have much of a choice.... fine, a battles of minds it is.


So you see! The Templar set you up! It's slowly driving you insane.
. . .
...I see...
I had my suspiscions that the Templar might have been trying something...
So now you see why I have to stop them!
You have to let me through-
No!
What?
I told you everything! The Humans, The Templar... you know now....
Nick, you should be helping me...
You have no right to call me that, Keith!
I'm not broken like you. I cannot disregard the laws that have built our society.
It's for the courts to decide what should be done with the humans.
As for me, I must do as ordered by the king - and my orders are to stop you and your friends here.
I do what's commanded, even if I feel it's wrong. That is what it means to be a Basitin.


RAAAWWWR!
WHINE...

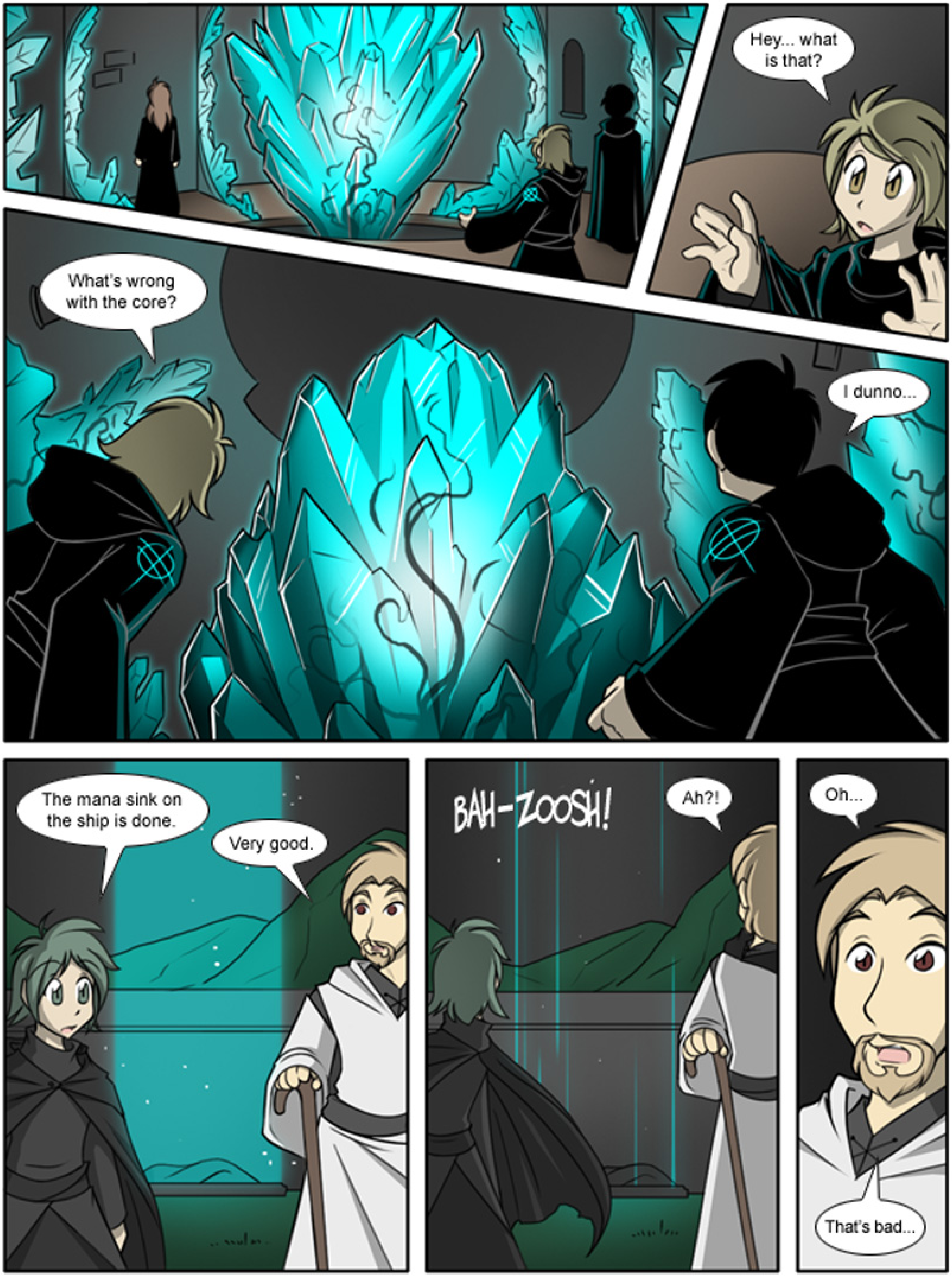

I won't back down, Alaric.
I must do what I know is right...
Even if it means fighting the ones I'm trying to save.
...very well, Keith.
En garde!!

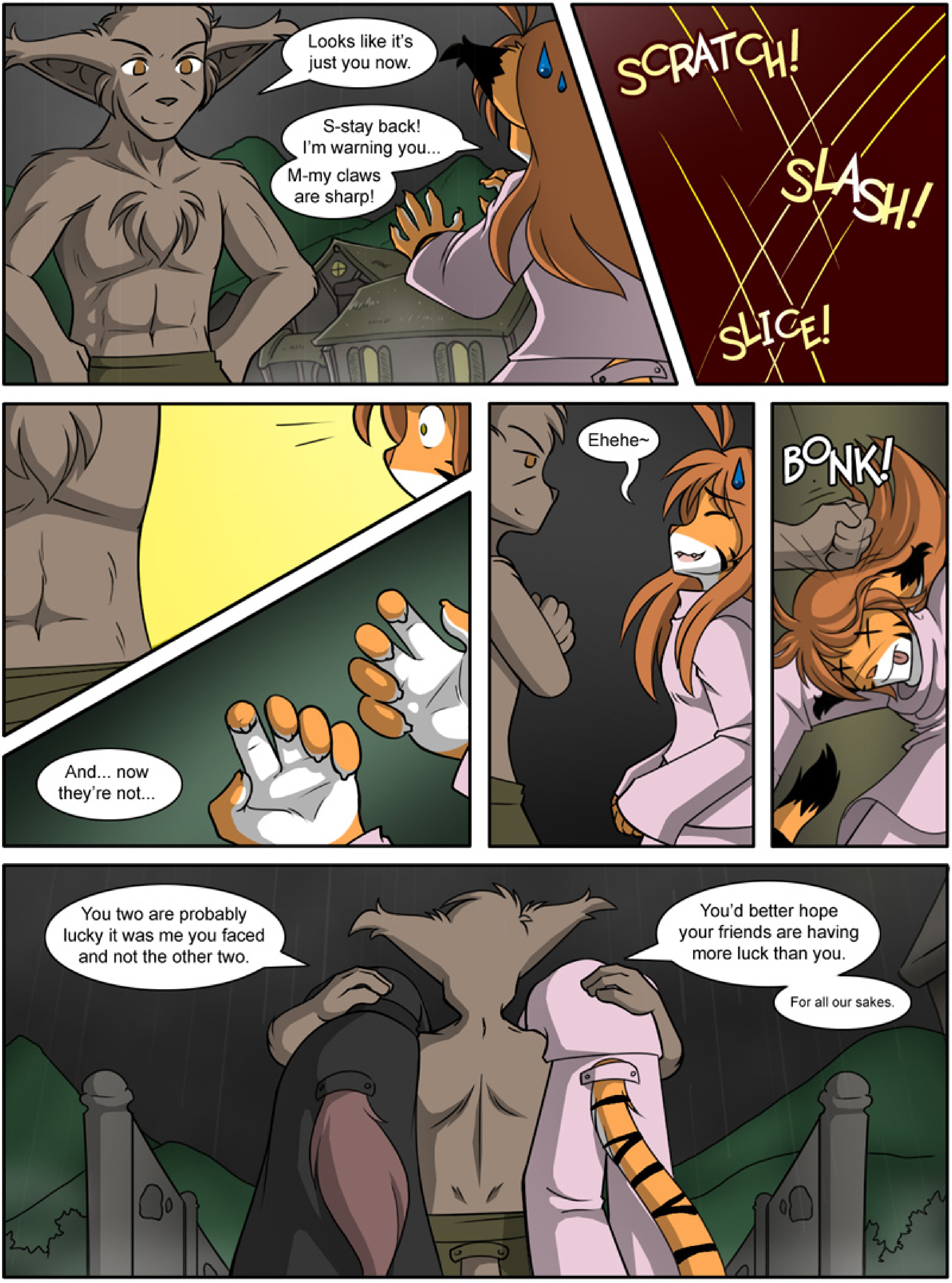

Ah!
SLICE!
YAAAAHH!
SMASH!

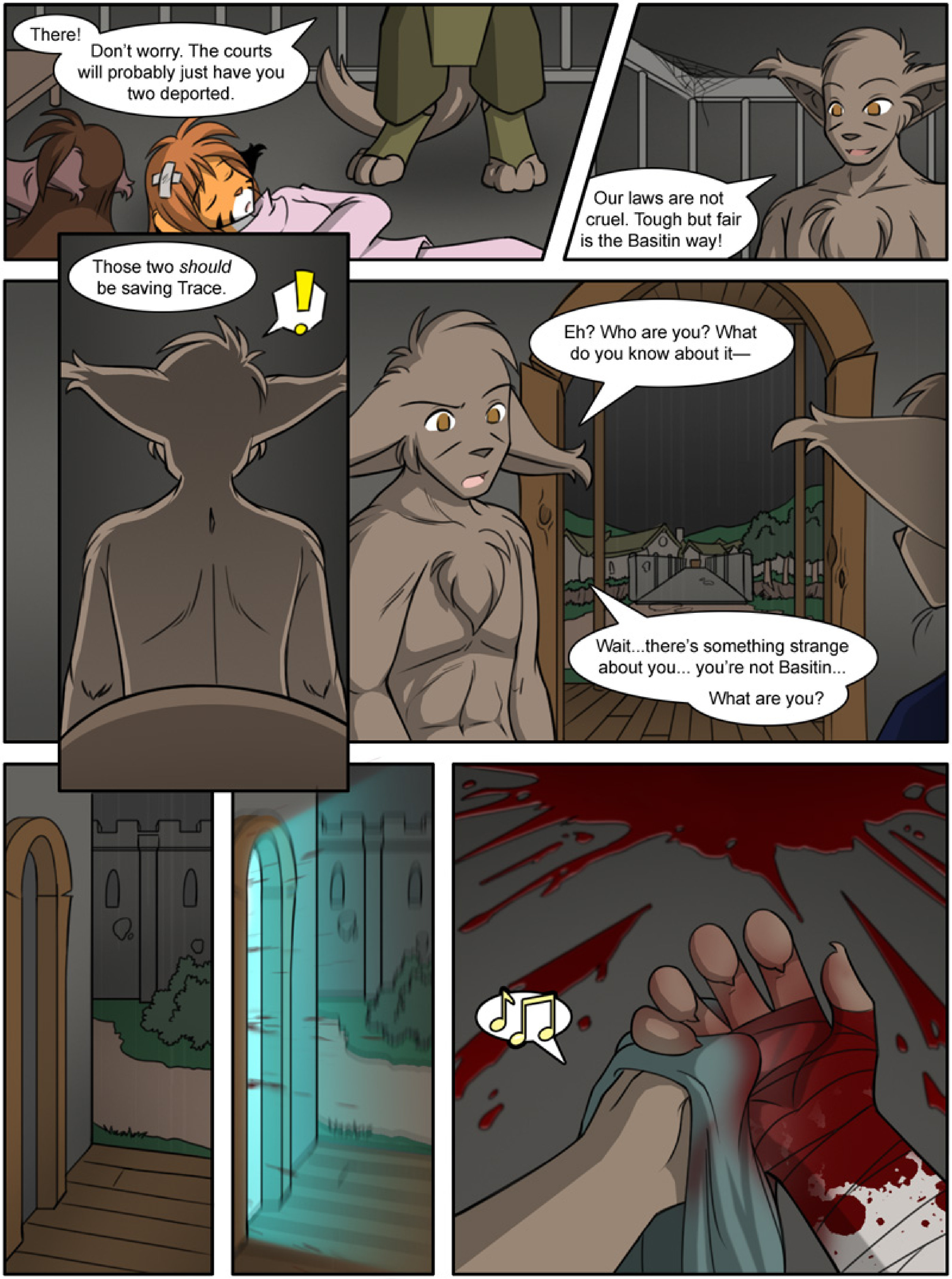

OK
The capital of the Wolven Territories is–
–Karne, population 36,000. You'll have to do better than that.
The first Great War ended–
–on March 1st of the second century, 181 CE...
If you could call that pathetic skermish between you and the Keidran a 'war'.
...erm... my middle name–
–Is Adrian; after your grandfather.
!
But that's not a general knowledge question, is it?
Are you prepared to surrender your friends yet?

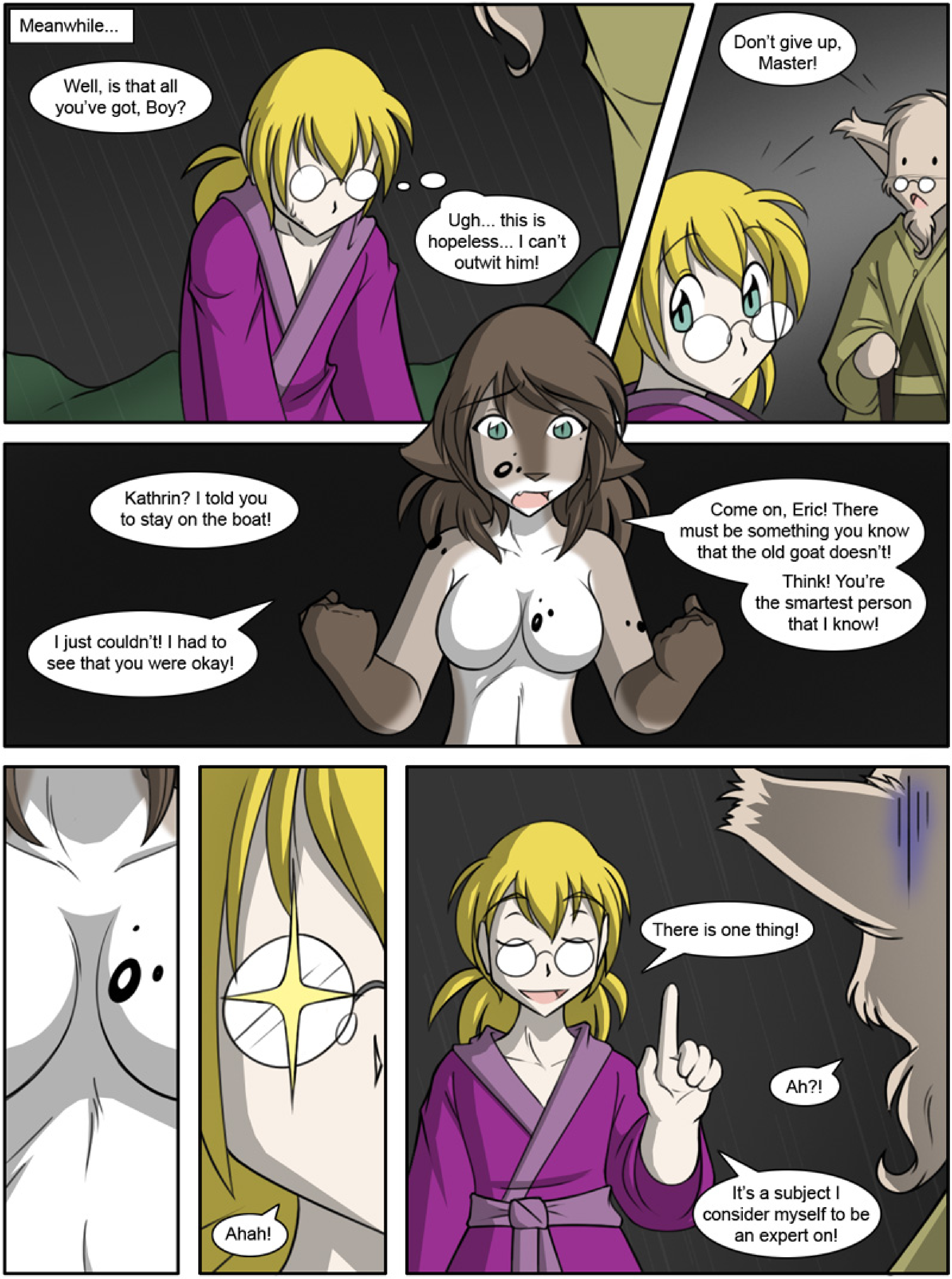
FINAL Exams

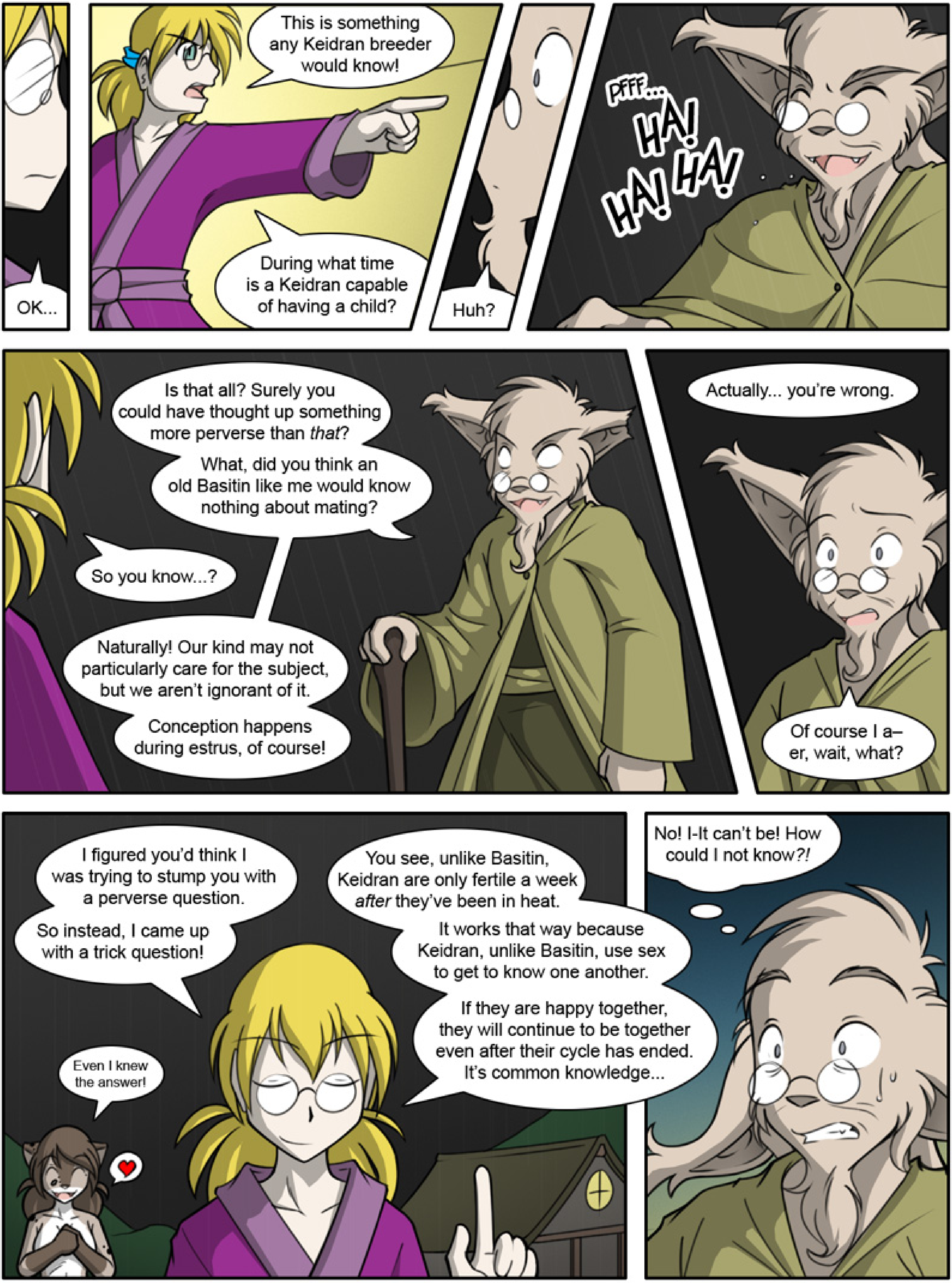
Comic will be postponed until next week.
Spring break filler soon, after exams.

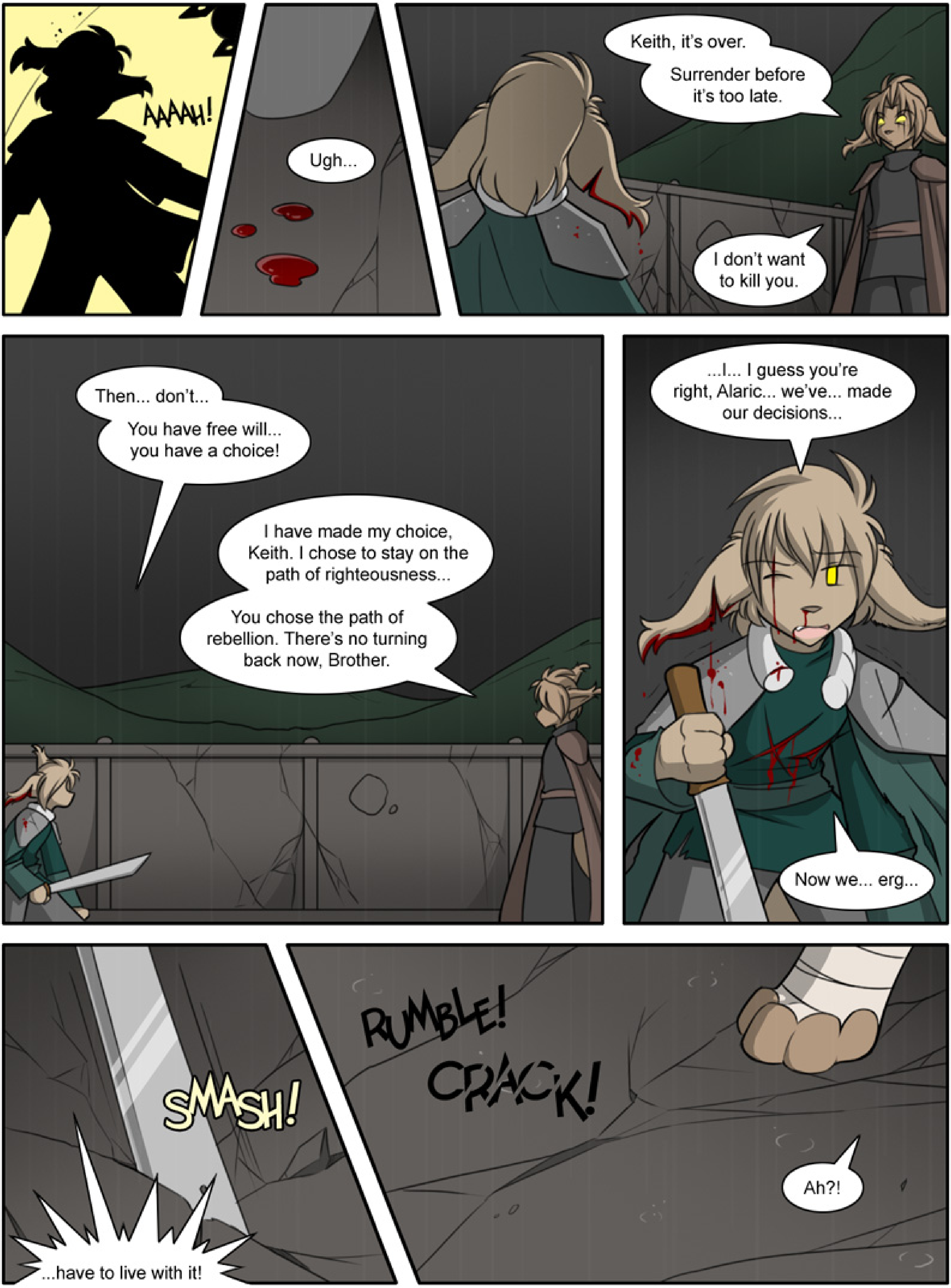

Hey... what is that?
What's wrong with the core?
I dunno...
The mana sink on the ship is done.
Very good.
BAH-ZOOSH!
Ah?!
Oh...
That's bad...

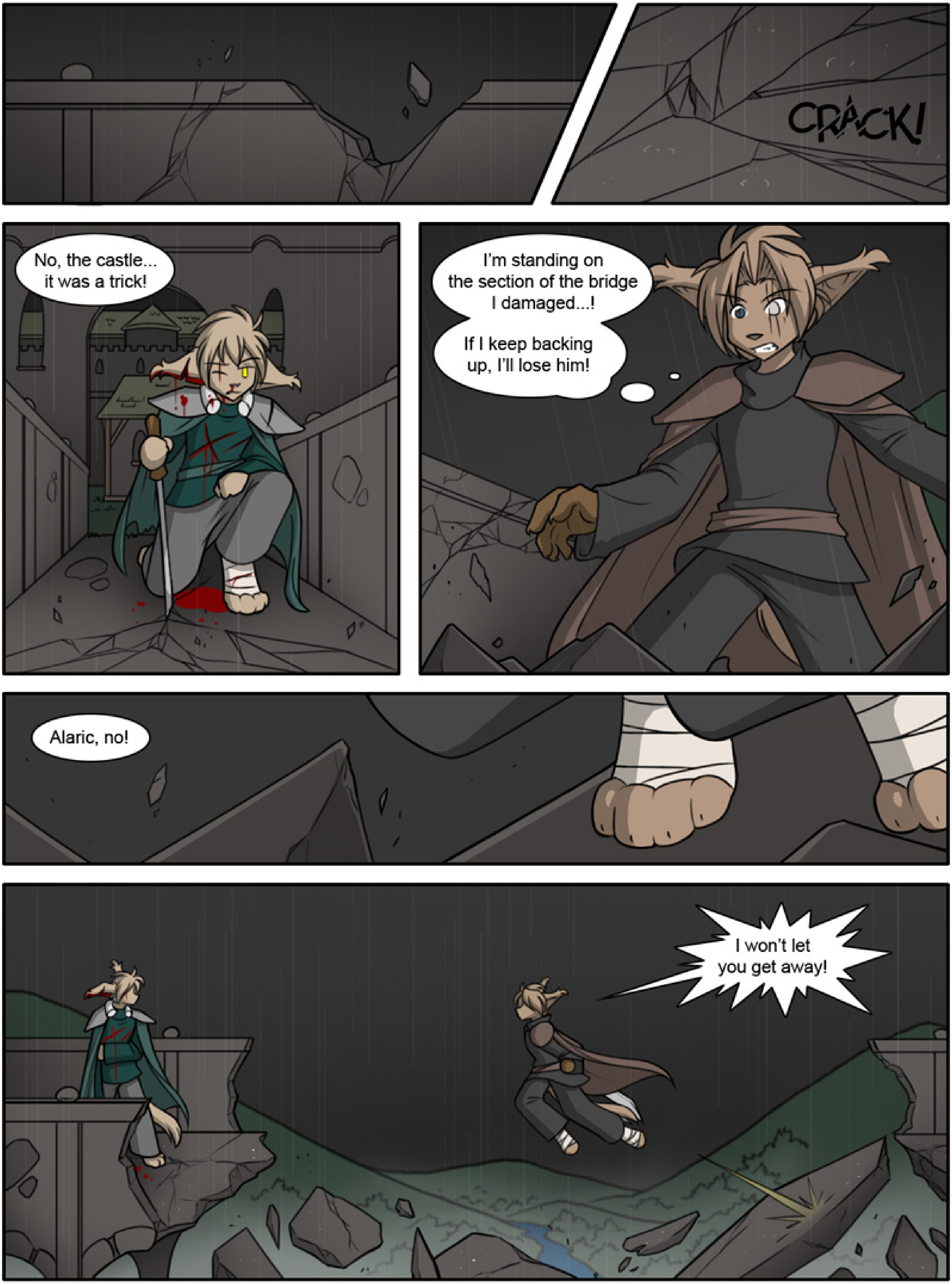

Looks like it's just you now.
S-stay back! I'm warning you...
M-my claws are sharp!
SCRATCH!
SLASH!
SLICE!
And... now they're not...
Ehehe~
BONK!
You two are probably lucky it was me you faced and not the other two.
You'd better hope your friends are having more luck than you.
For all our sakes.

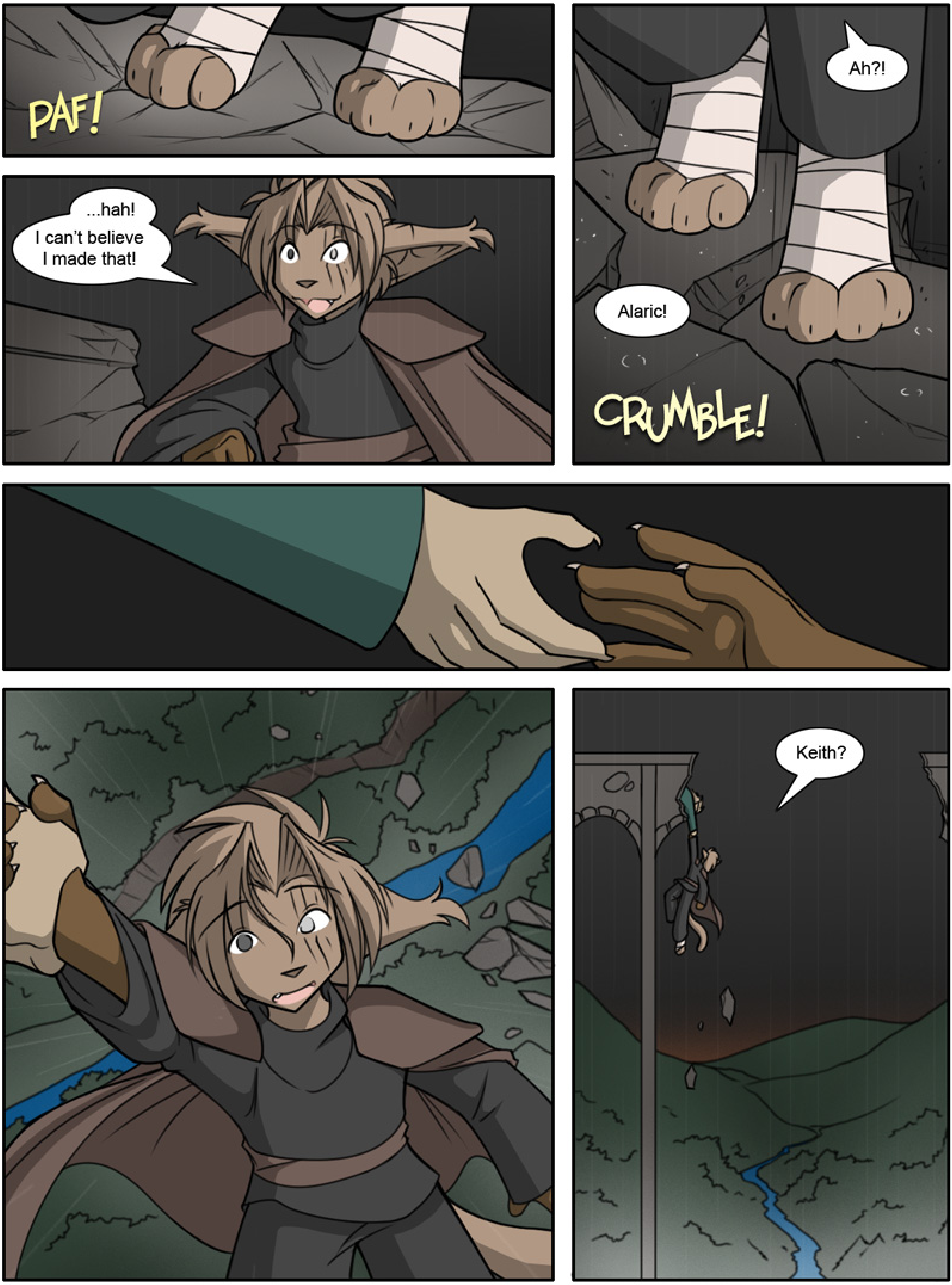

There!
Don't worry. The courts will probably just have you two deported.
Our laws are not cruel. Tough but fair is the Basitin way!
Those two *should* be saving Trace.
!
Eh? Who are you? What do you know about it—
Wait...there's something strange about you... you're not Basitin... What are you?
♫

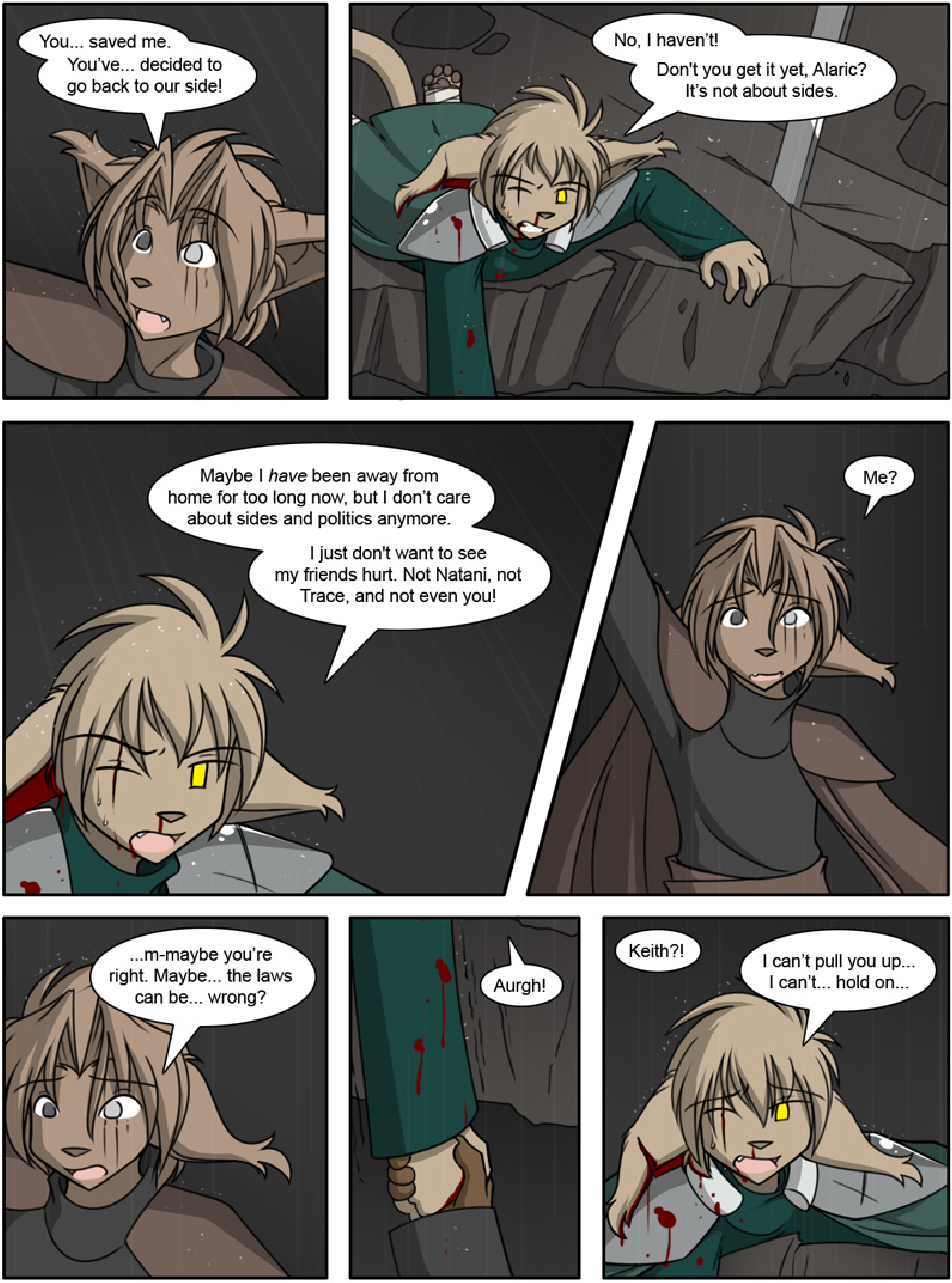

Meanwhile...
Well, is that all you've got, Boy?
Ugh... this is hopeless... I can't outwit him!
Don't give up, Master!
Kathrin? I told you to stay on the boat!
I just couldn't! I had to see that you were okay!
Come on, Eric! There must be something you know that the old goat doesn't!
Think! You're the smartest person that I know!
Ahah!
There is one thing!
Ah?!
It's a subject I consider myself to be an expert on!

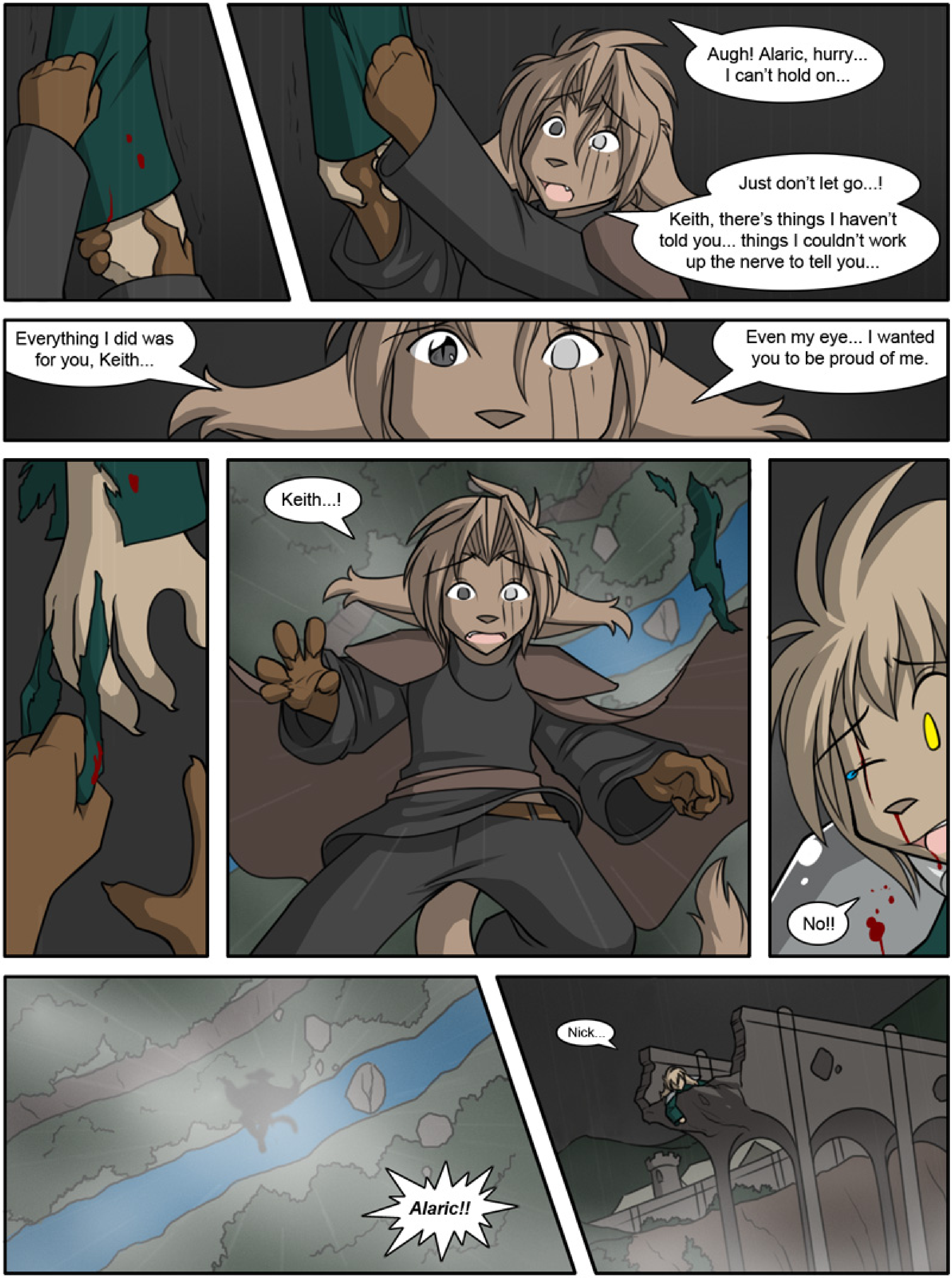

OK...
This is something any Keidran breeder would know!
During what time is a Keidran capable of having a child?
Huh?
PFFF... HA! HA! HA!
Is that all? Surely you could have thought up something more perverse than *that*?
What, did you think an old Basitin like me would know nothing about mating?
So you know...?
Naturally! Our kind may not particularly care for the subject, but we aren't ignorant of it.
Conception happens during estrus, of course!
Actually... you're wrong.
Of course I a– er, wait, what?
I figured you'd think I was trying to stump you with a perverse question.
So instead, I came up with a trick question!
You see, unlike Basitin, Keidran are only fertile a week *after* they've been in heat.
It works that way because Keidran, unlike Basitin, use sex to get to know one another.
If they are happy together, they will continue to be together even after their cycle has ended. It's common knowledge...
Even I knew the answer!
No! I-It can't be! How could I not know?!

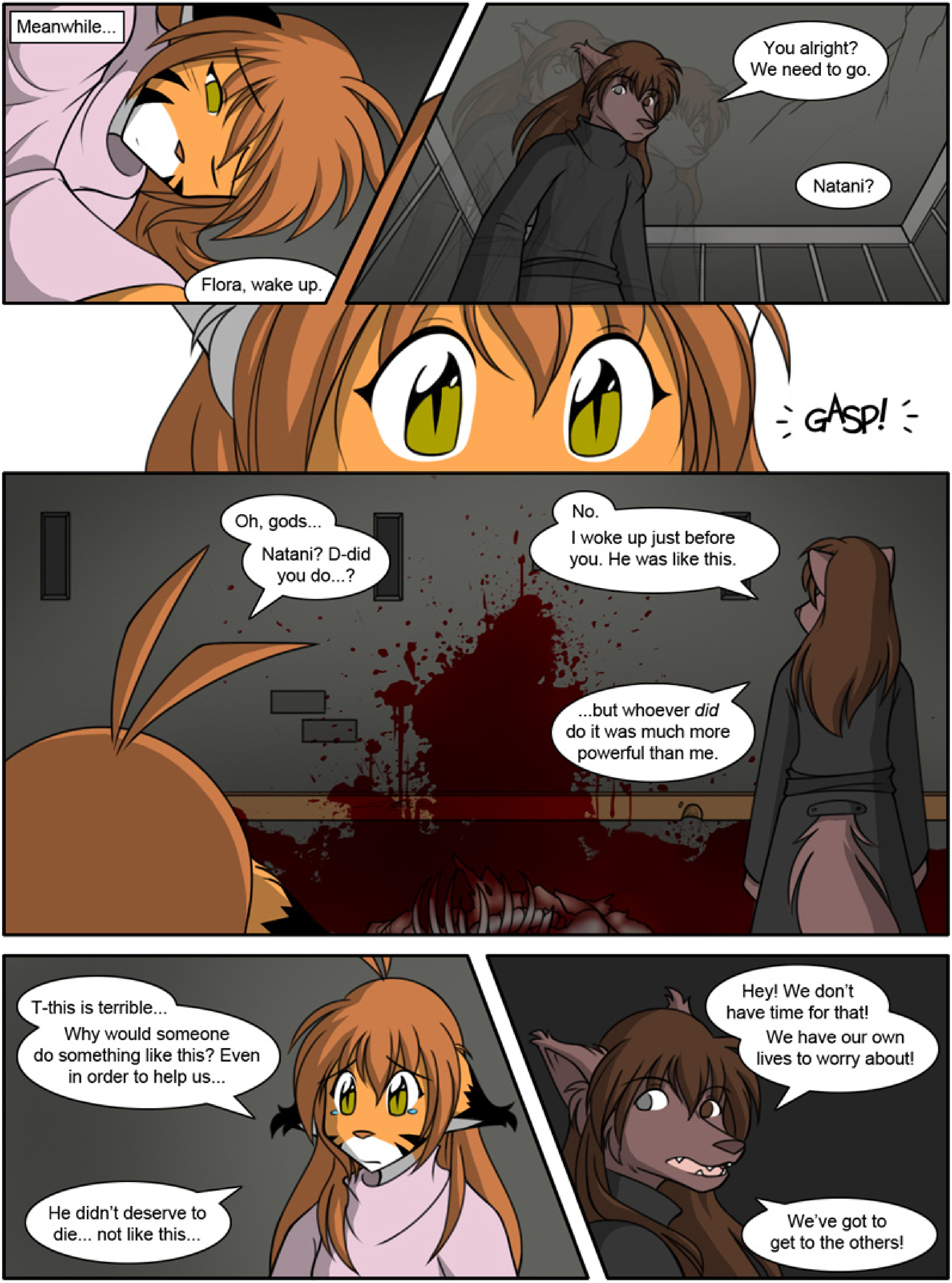

AAAAH!
Ugh...
Keith, it's over.
Surrender before it's too late.
I don't want to kill you.
Then... don't...
You have free will... you have a choice!
I have made my choice, Keith. I chose to stay on the path of righteousness...
You chose the path of rebellion. There's no turning back now, Brother.
...I... I guess you're right, Alaric... we've... made our decisions...
Now we... erg...
SMASH!
...have to live with it!
RUMBLE!
CRACK!
Ah?!

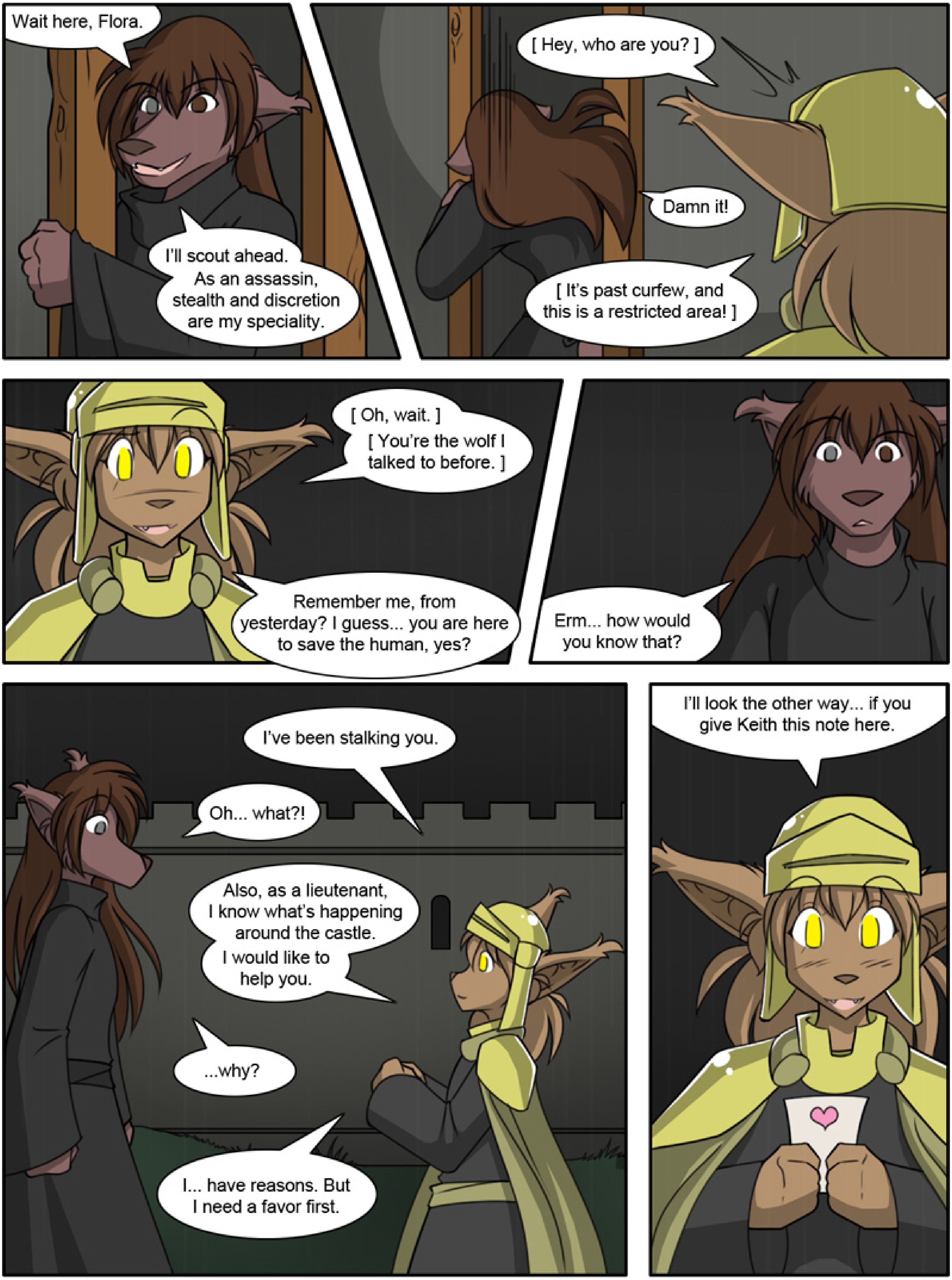

CRACK!
No, the castle... it was a trick!
I'm standing on the section of the bridge I damaged...!
If I keep backing up, I'll lose him!
Alaric, no!
I won't let you get away!

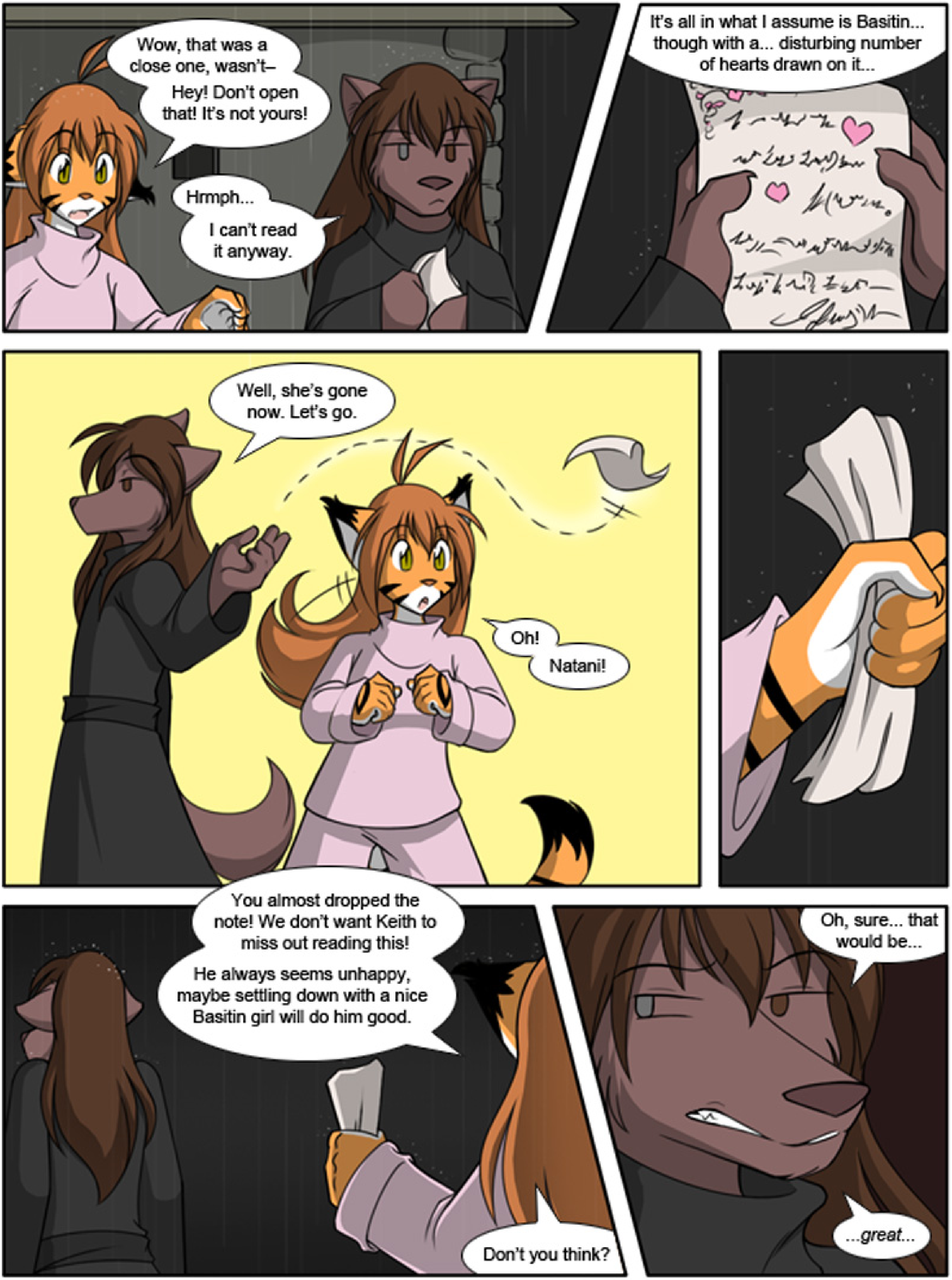

PAF!
...hah! I can't believe I made that!
Ah?!
Alaric!
CRUMBLE!
Keith?

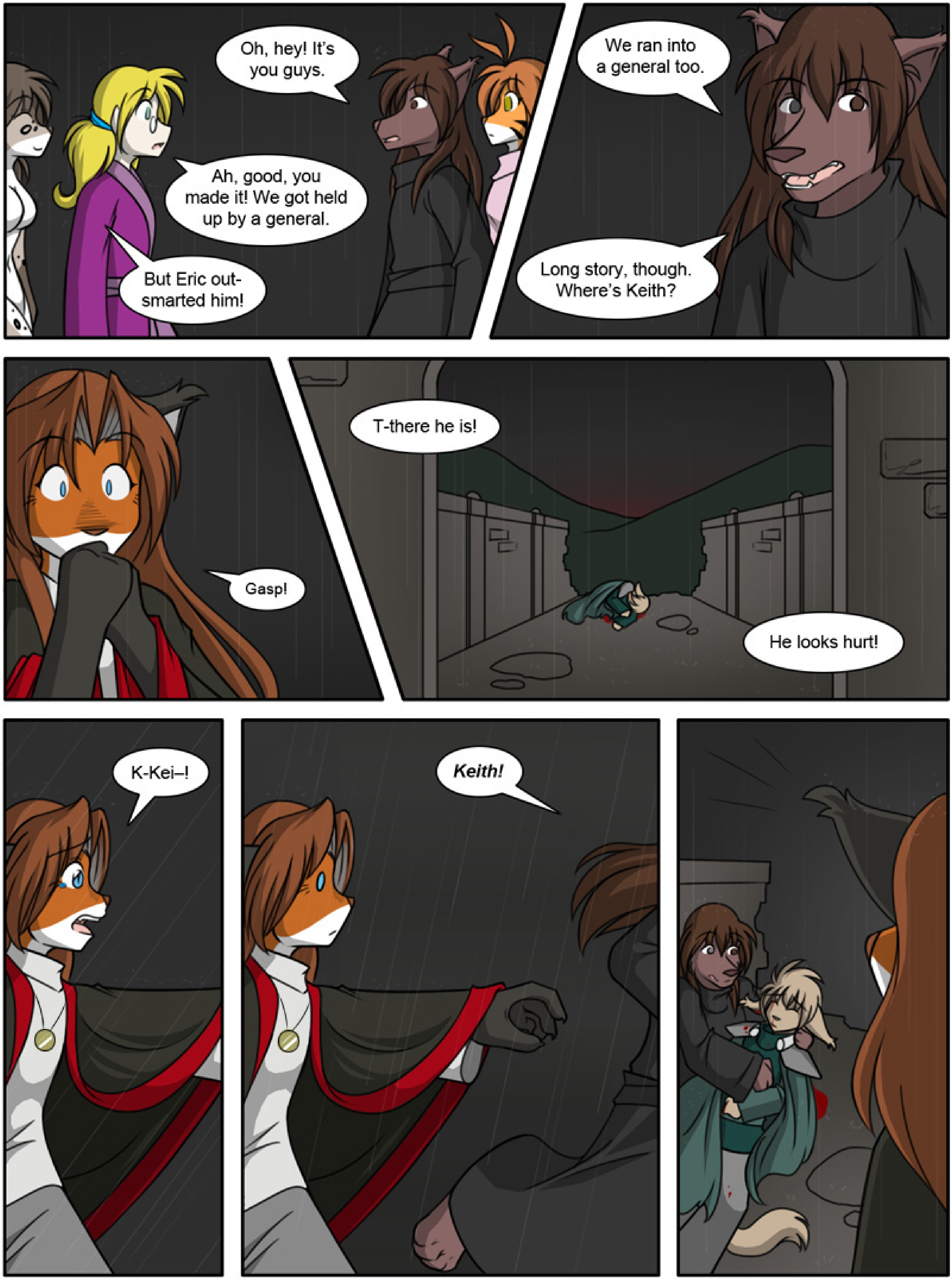

You... saved me.
You've... decided to go back to our side!
No, I haven't!
Don't you get it yet, Alaric? It's not about sides.
Maybe I *have* been away from home for too long now, but I don't care about sides and politics anymore.
I just don't want to see my friends hurt. Not Natani, not Trace, and not even you!
Me?
...m-maybe you're right. Maybe... the laws can be... wrong?
Aurgh!
Keith?!
I can't pull you up... I can't... hold on...

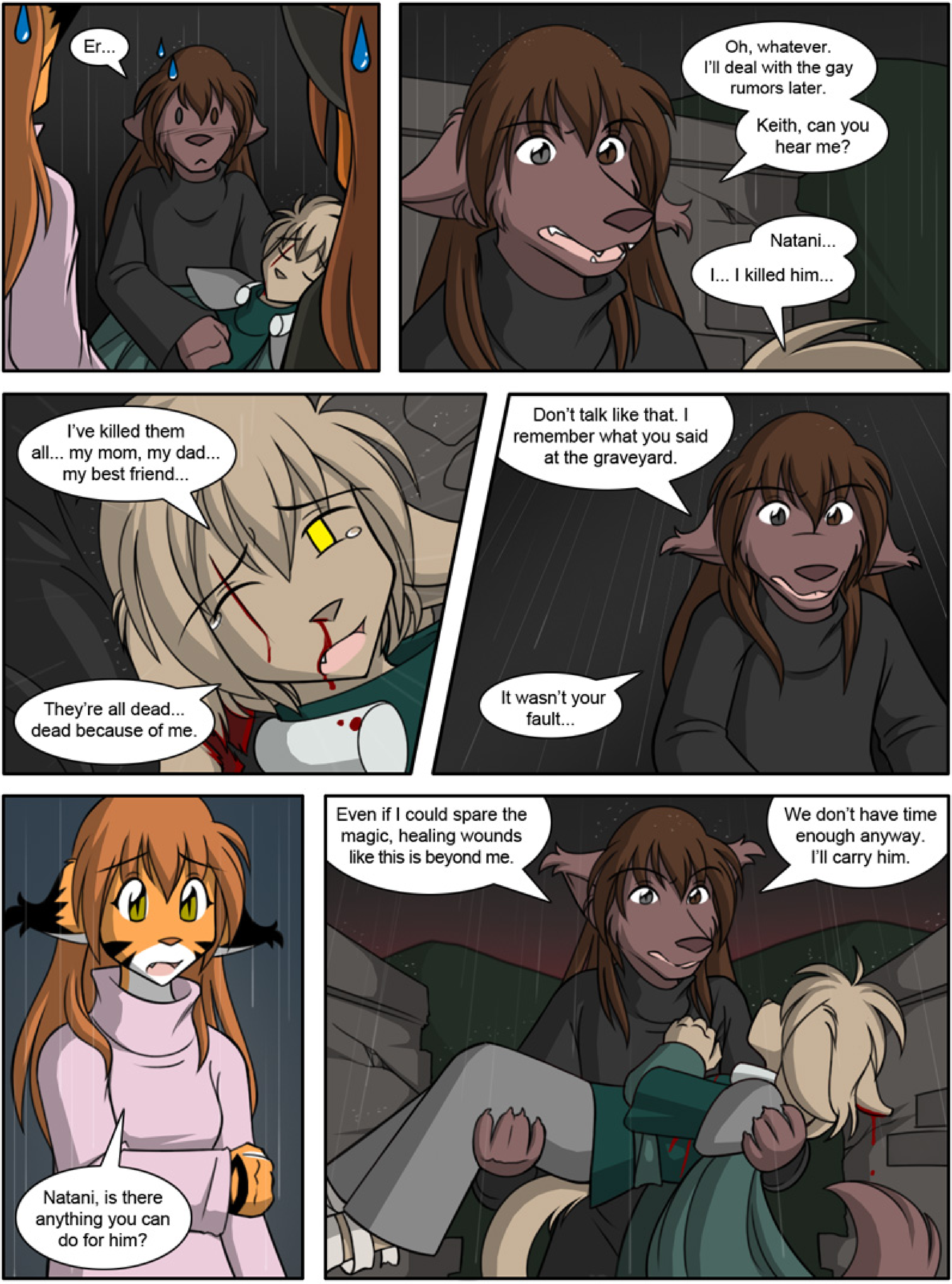

Augh! Alaric, hurry... I can't hold on...
Just don't let go...!
Keith, there's things I haven't told you... things I couldn't work up the nerve to tell you...
Everything I did was for you, Keith...
Even my eye... I wanted you to be proud of me.
Keith...!
No!!
Alaric!!
Nick...

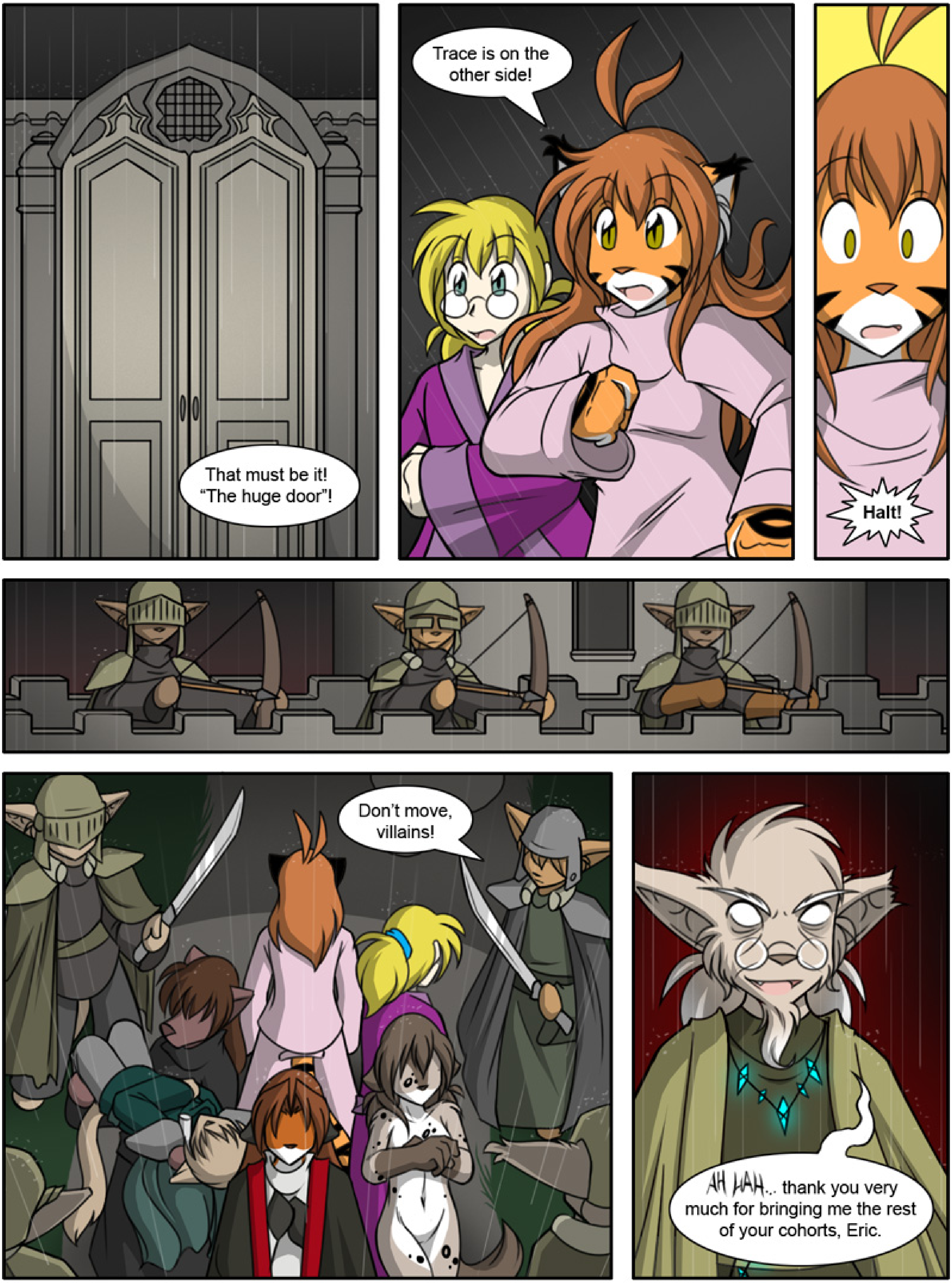

Meanwhile...
Flora, wake up.
You alright? We need to go.
Natani?
GASP!
Oh, gods...
Natani? D-did you do...?
No.
I woke up just before you. He was like this.
...but whoever *did* do it was much more powerful than me.
T-this is terrible...
Why would someone do something like this? Even in order to help us...
He didn't deserve to die... not like this...
Hey! We don't have time for that!
We have our own lives to worry about!
We've got to get to the others!

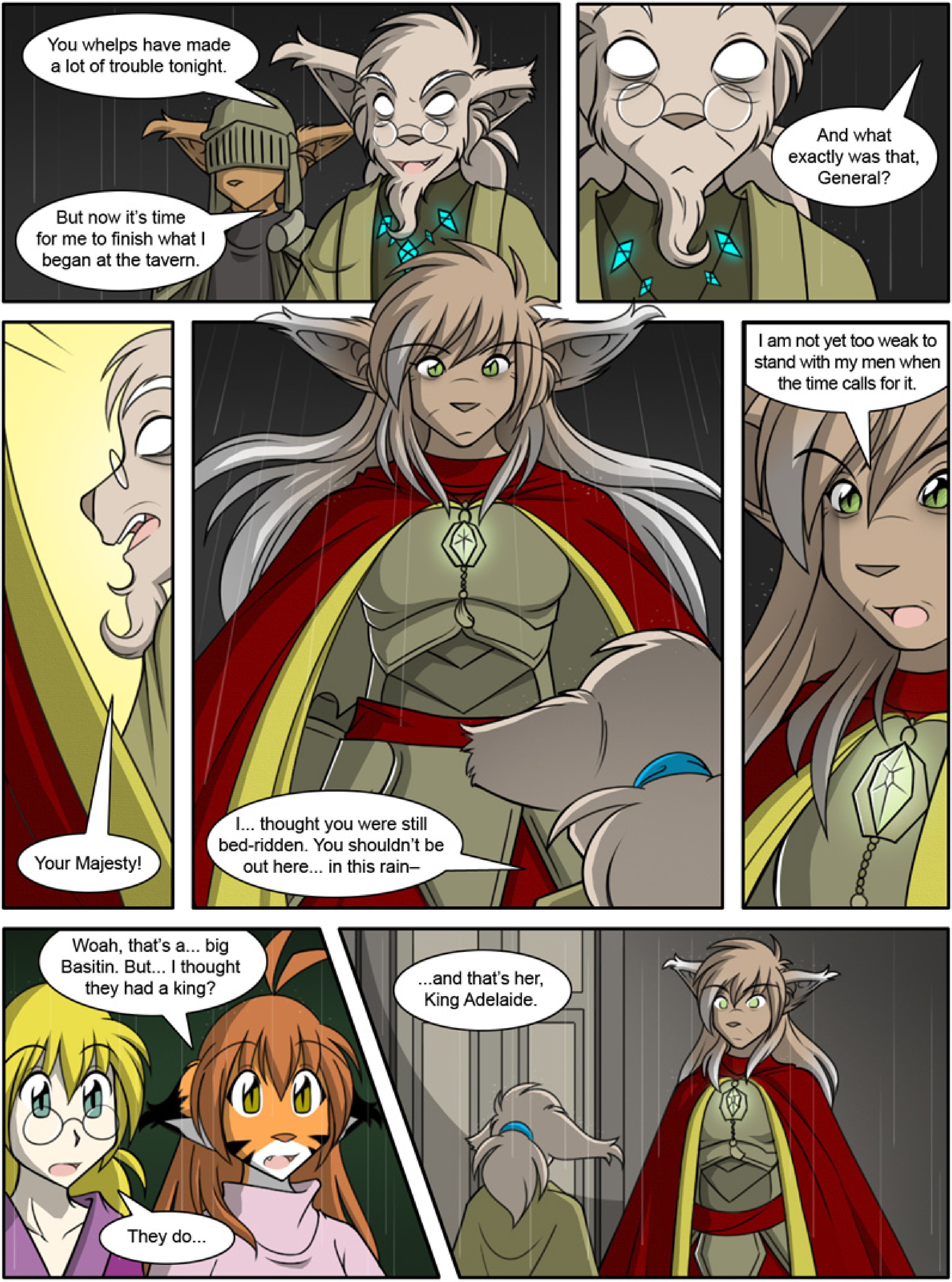

Wait here, Flora.
I'll scout ahead. As an assassin, stealth and discretion are my speciality.
[Hey, who are you?]
Damn it!
[It's past curfew, and this is a restricted area!]
[Oh, wait.] [You're the wolf I talked to before.]
Remember me, from yesterday? I guess... you are here to save the human, yes?
Erm... how would you know that?
I've been stalking you.
Oh... what?!
Also, as a lieutenant, I know what's happening around the castle. I would like to help you.
...why?
I... have reasons. But I need a favor first.
I'll look the other way... if you give Keith this note here.

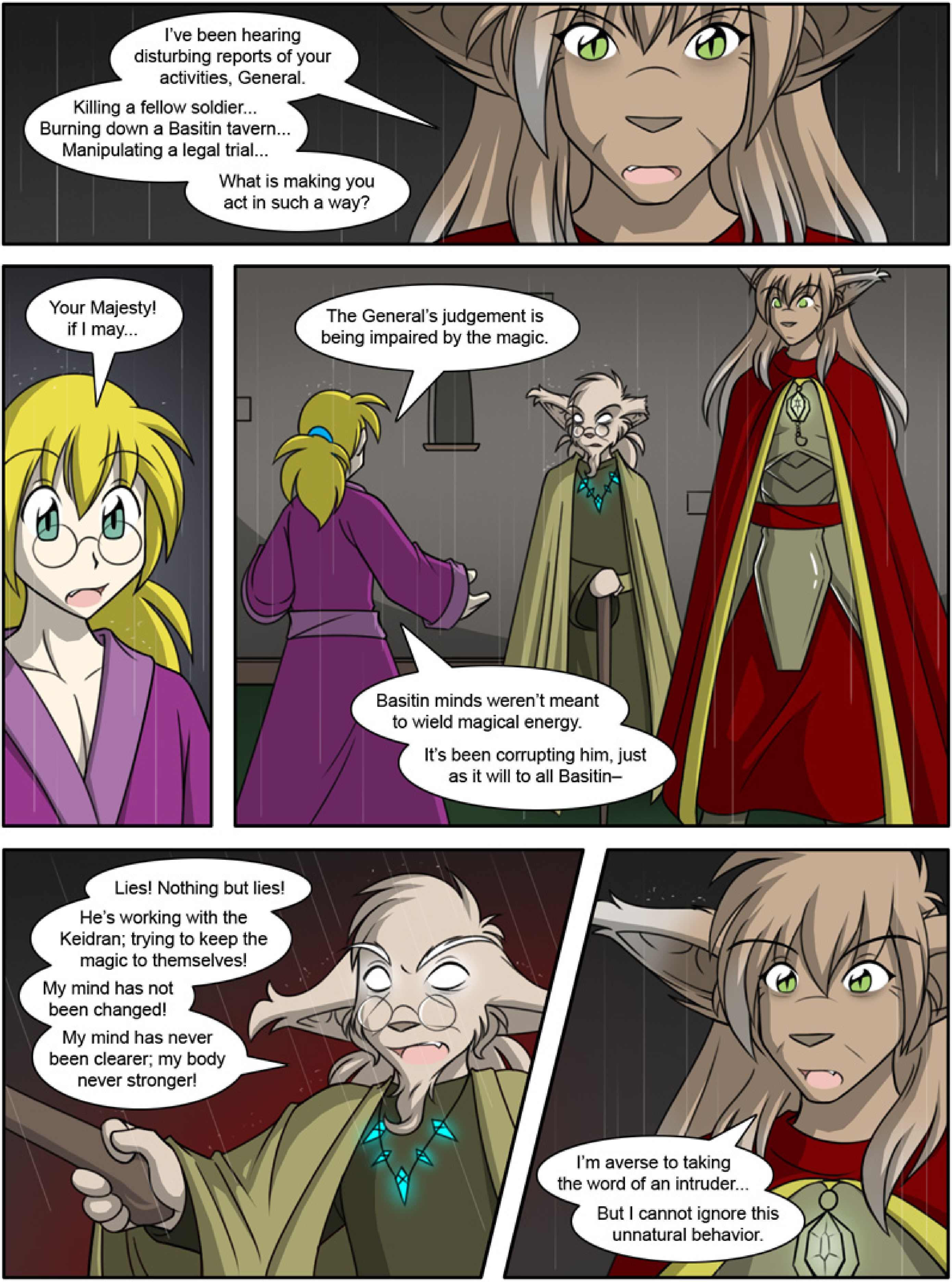

Wow, that was a close one, wasn't–
Hey! Don't open that! It's not yours!
Hrmph...
I can't read it anyway.
It's all in what I assume is Basitin... though with a... disturbing number of hearts drawn on it...
Well, she's gone now. Let's go.
Oh!
Natani!
You almost dropped the note! We don't want Keith to miss out reading this!
He always seems unhappy, maybe settling down with a nice Basitin girl will do him good.
Don't you think?
Oh, sure... that would be...
...great...


Oh, hey! It's you guys.
Ah, good, you made it! We got held up by a general.
But Eric out-smarted him!
We ran into a general too.
Long story, though. Where's Keith?
Gasp!
T-there he is!
He looks hurt!
K-Kei–!
Keith!


Er...
Oh, whatever. I'll deal with the gay rumors later.
Keith, can you hear me?
Natani...
I... I killed him...
I've killed them all... my mom, my dad... my best friend...
They're all dead... dead because of me.
Don't talk like that. I remember what you said at the graveyard.
It wasn't your fault...
Natani, is there anything you can do for him?
Even if I could spare the magic, healing wounds like this is beyond me.
We don't have time enough anyway. I'll carry him.

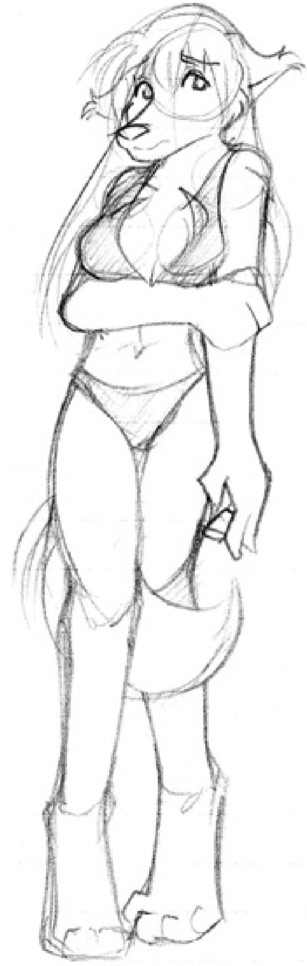

That must be it!
"The huge door"!
Trace is on the other side!
Halt!
Don't move, villains!
AH HAH.. thank you very much for bringing me the rest of your cohorts, Eric.


You whelps have made a lot of trouble tonight.
But now it's time for me to finish what I began at the tavern.
And what exactly was that, General?
Your Majesty!
I... thought you were still bed-ridden. You shouldn't be out here... in this rain–
I am not yet too weak to stand with my men when the time calls for it.
Woah, that's a... big Basitin. But... I thought they had a king?
They do...
...and that's her, King Adelaide.

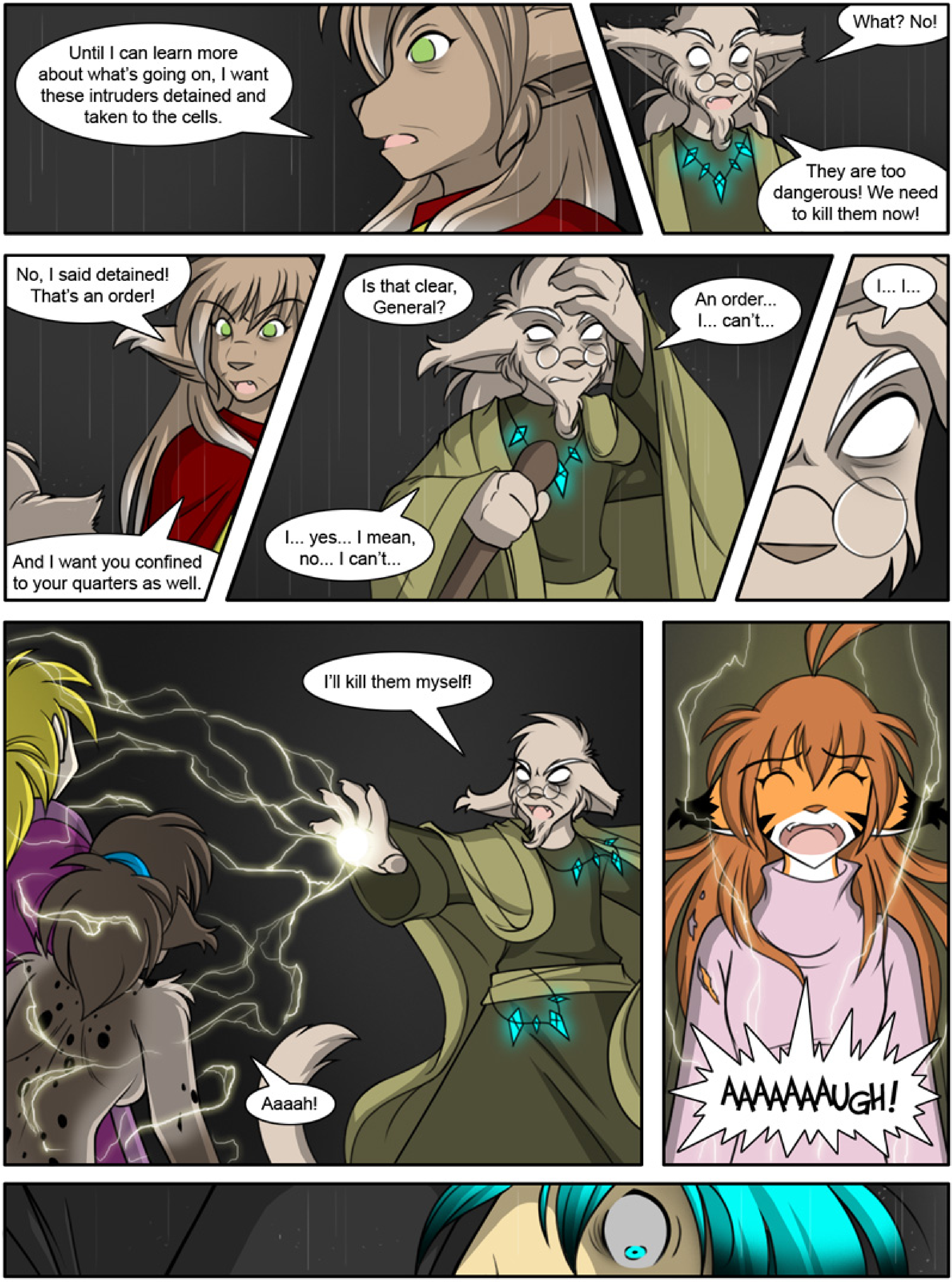

I've been hearing disturbing reports of your activities, General.
Killing a fellow soldier... Burning down a Basitin tavern... Manipulating a legal trial...
What is making you act in such a way?
Your Majesty! if I may...
The General's judgement is being impaired by the magic.
Basitin minds weren't meant to wield magical energy.
It's been corrupting him, just as it will to all Basitin–
Lies! Nothing but lies!
He's working with the Keidran; trying to keep the magic to themselves!
My mind has not been changed!
My mind has never been clearer; my body never stronger!
I'm averse to taking the word of an intruder...
But I cannot ignore this unnatural behavior.

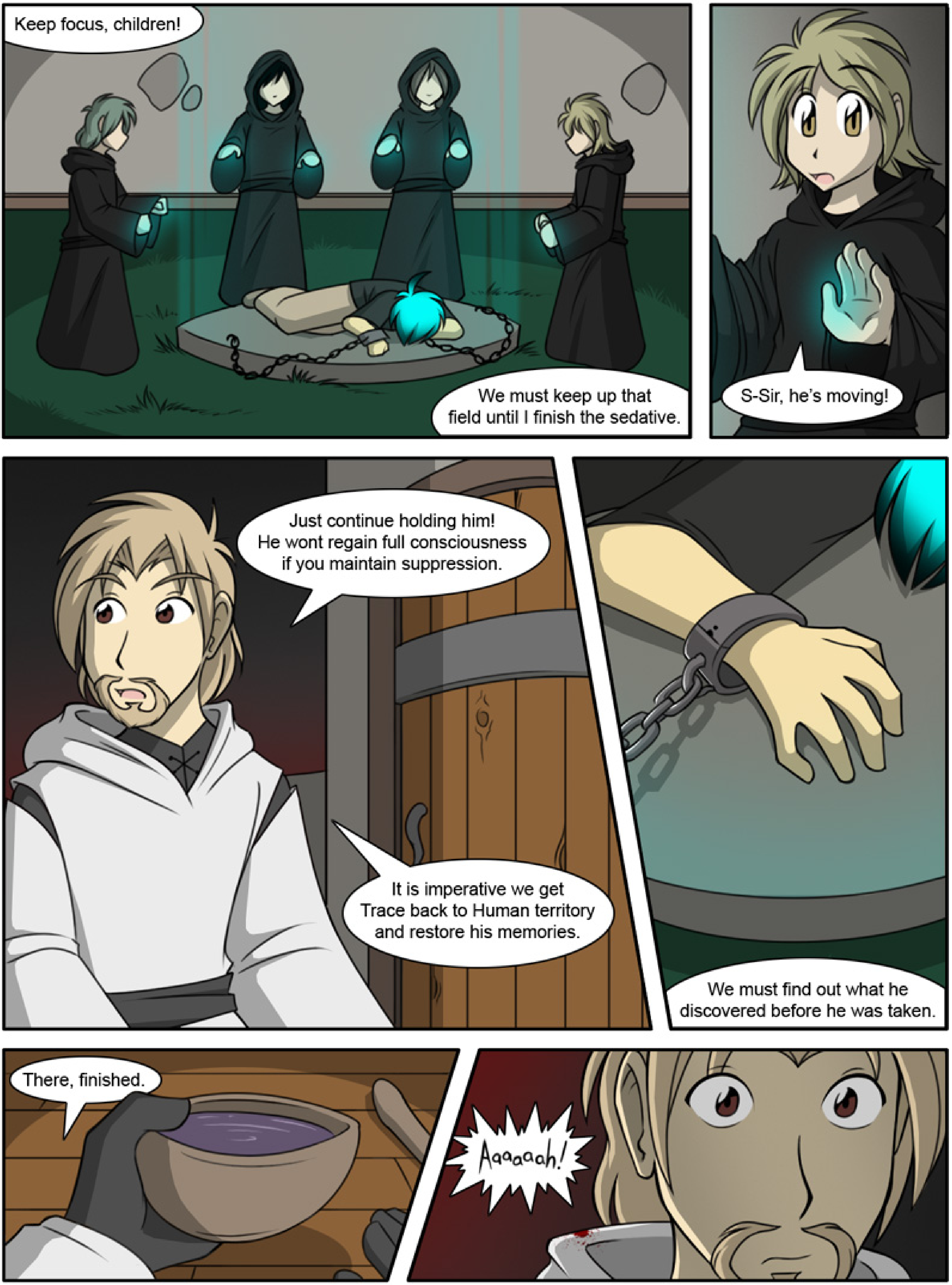
After an 11 hour drive, I finally returned home last night, around midnight, but I need more time to finish the next comic.

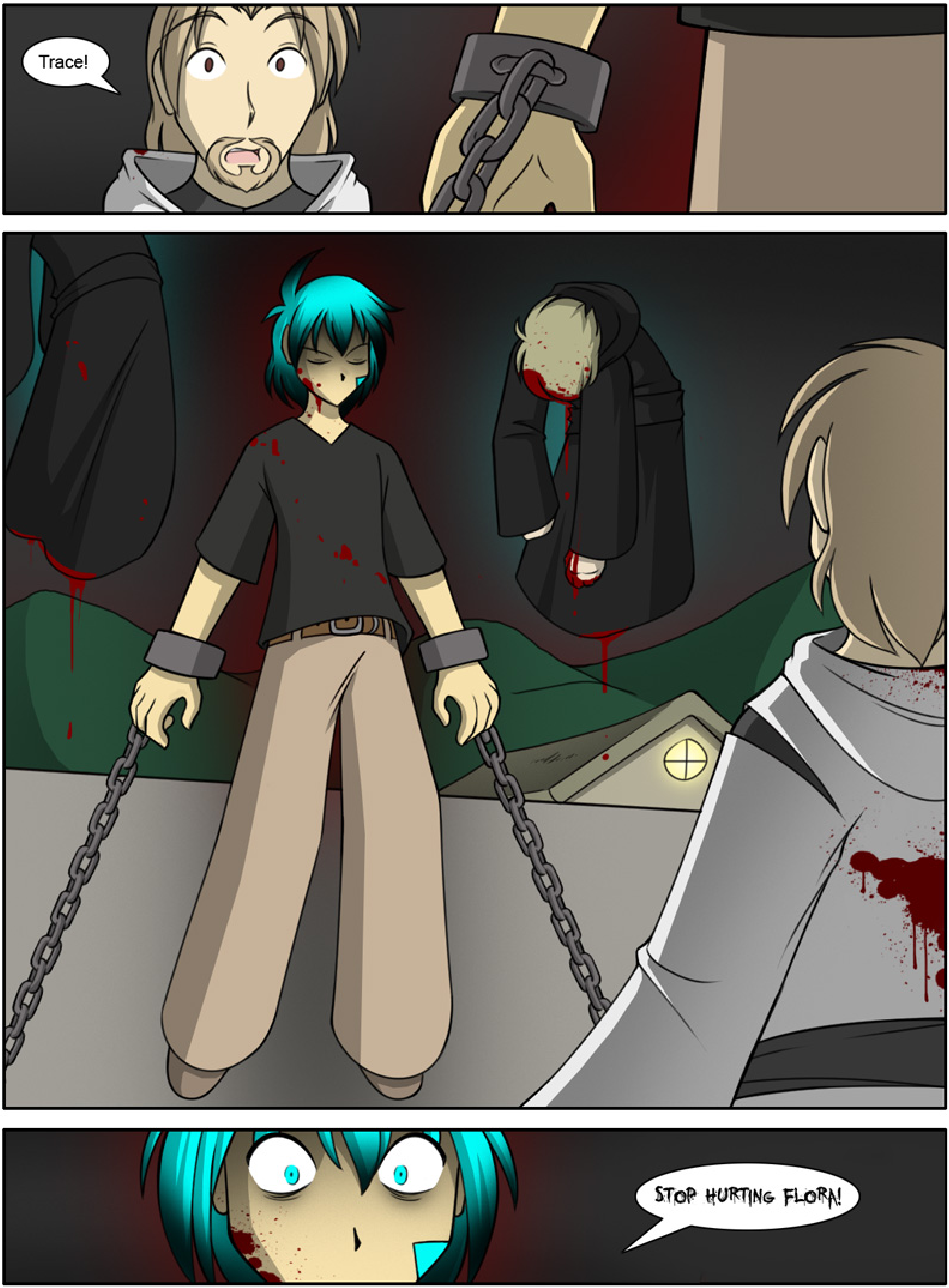
In the meantime...

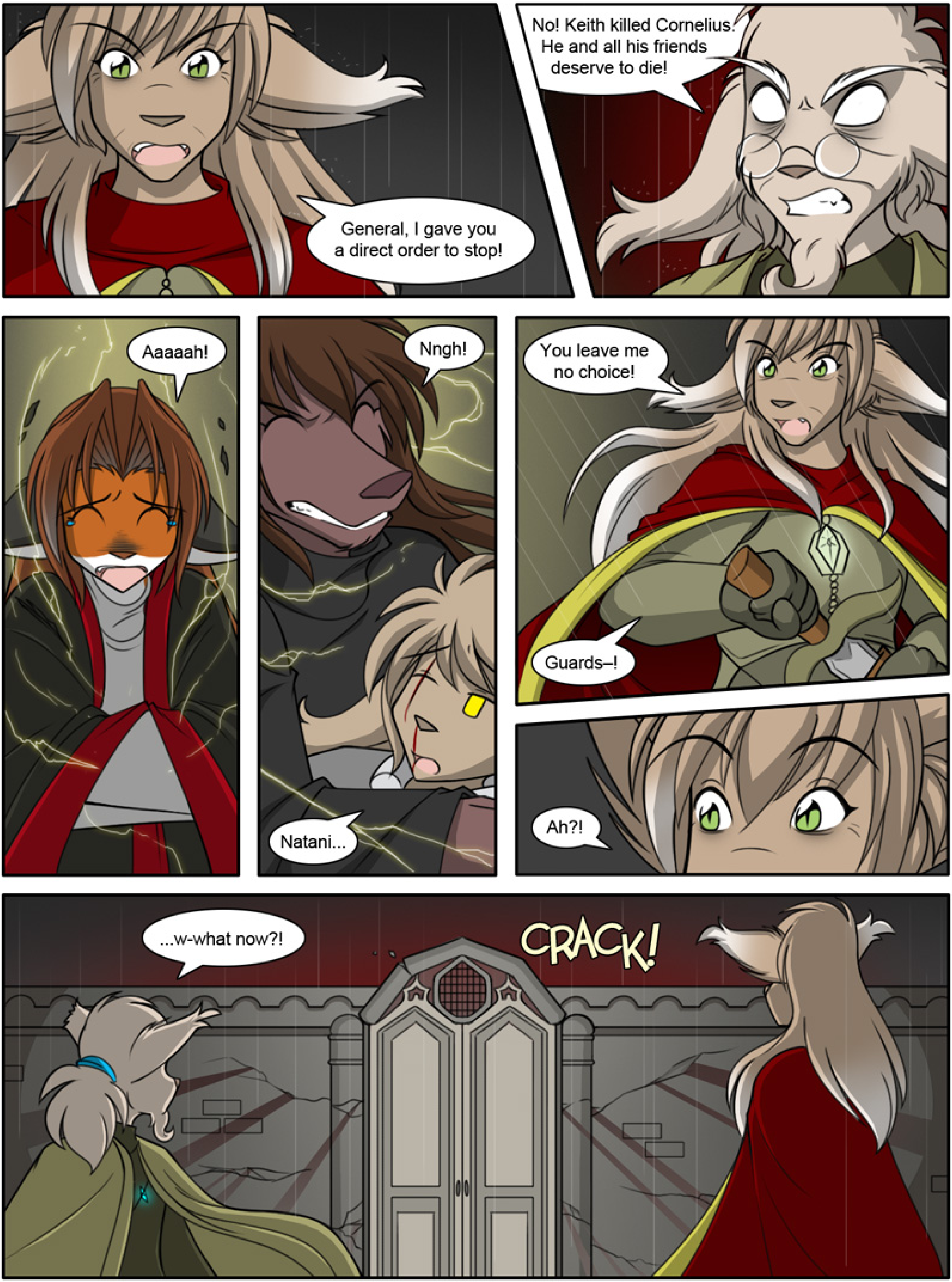


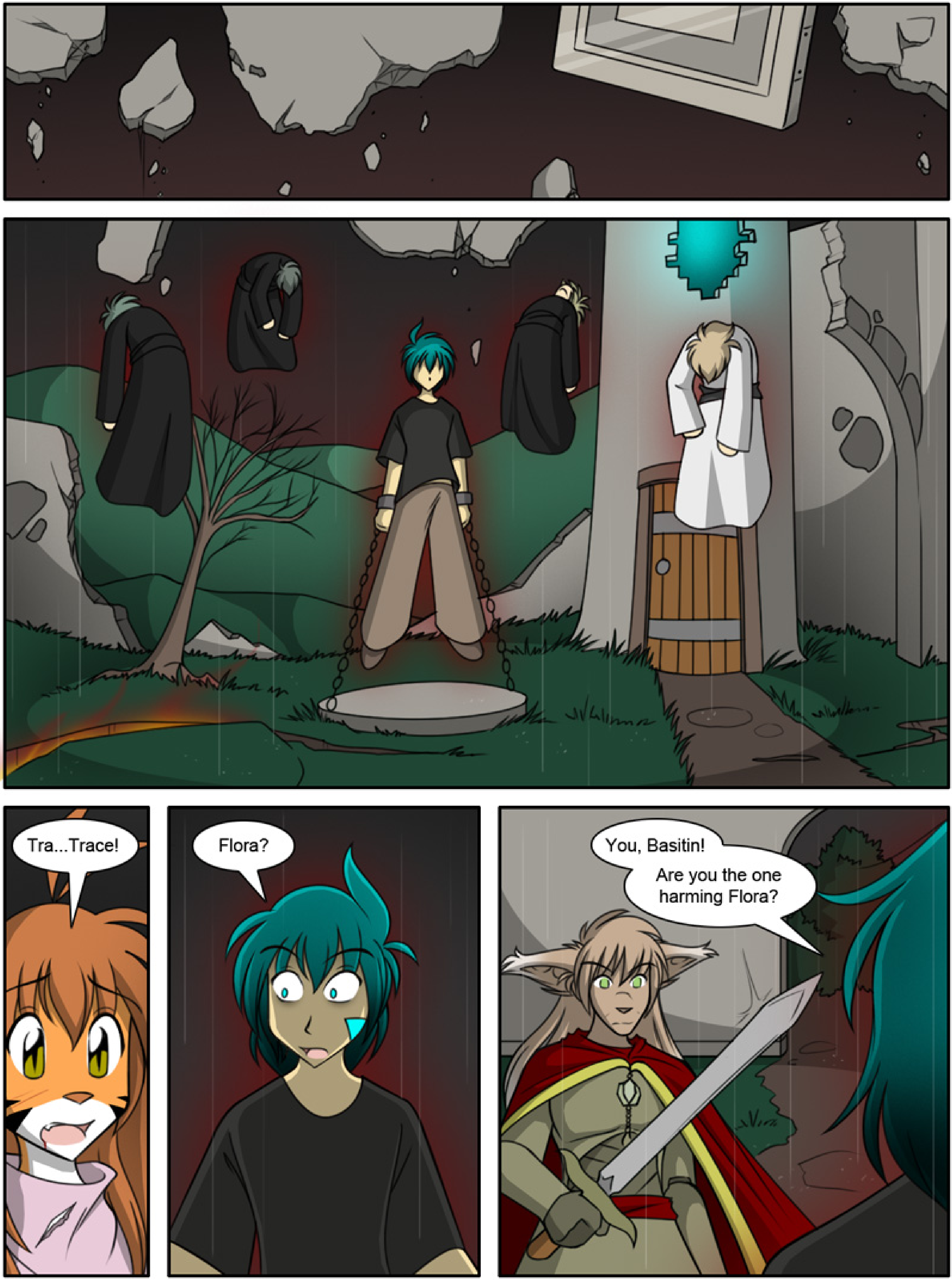
Here's Natani in a bikini.

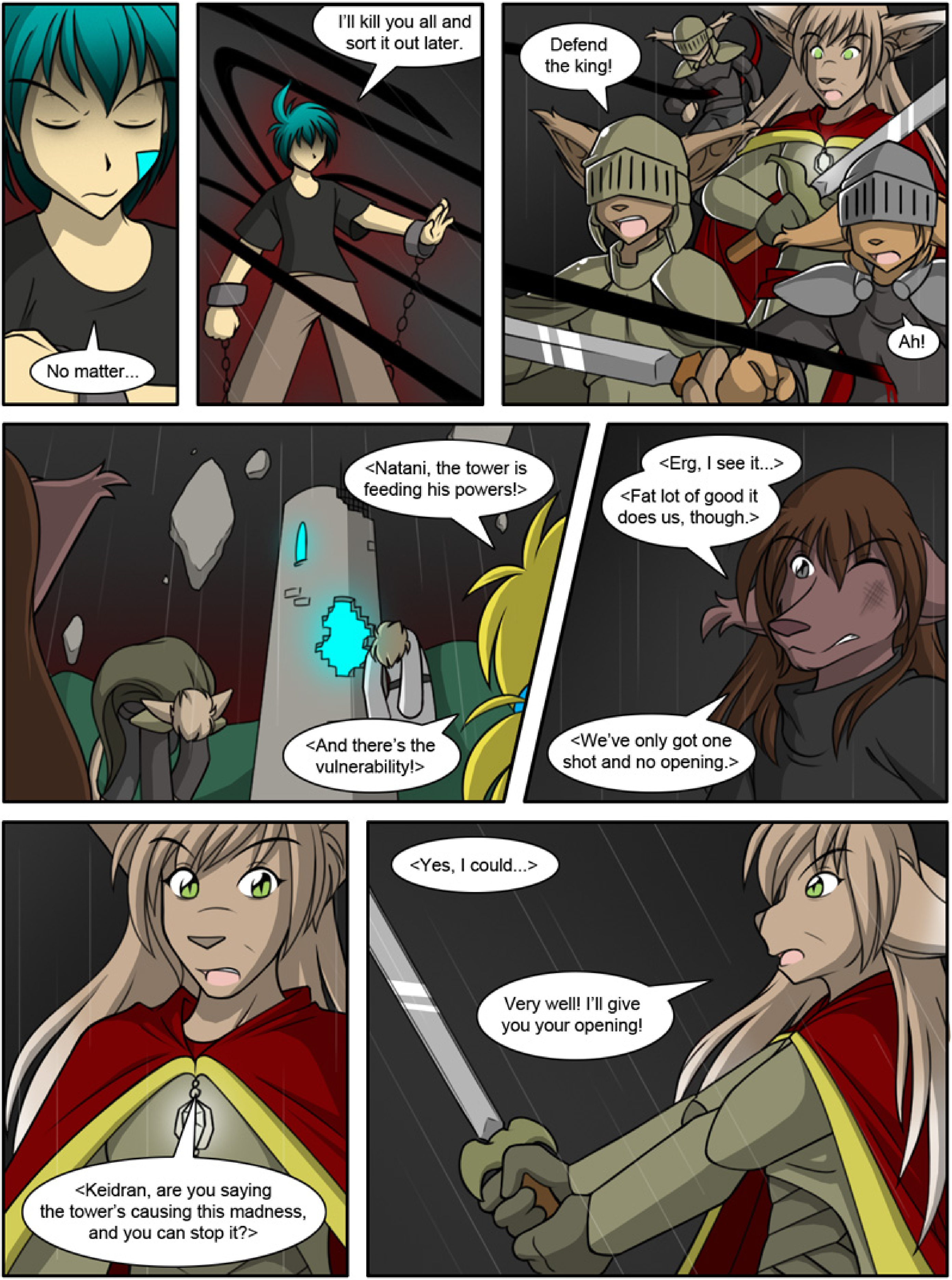

Until I can learn more about what's going on, I want these intruders detained and taken to the cells.
What? No!
They are too dangerous! We need to kill them now!
No, I said detained! That's an order!
And I want you confined to your quarters as well.
Is that clear, General?
An order... I... can't...
I... yes... I mean, no... I can't...
I... I...
I'll kill them myself!
Aaaah!
AAAAAAAUGH!

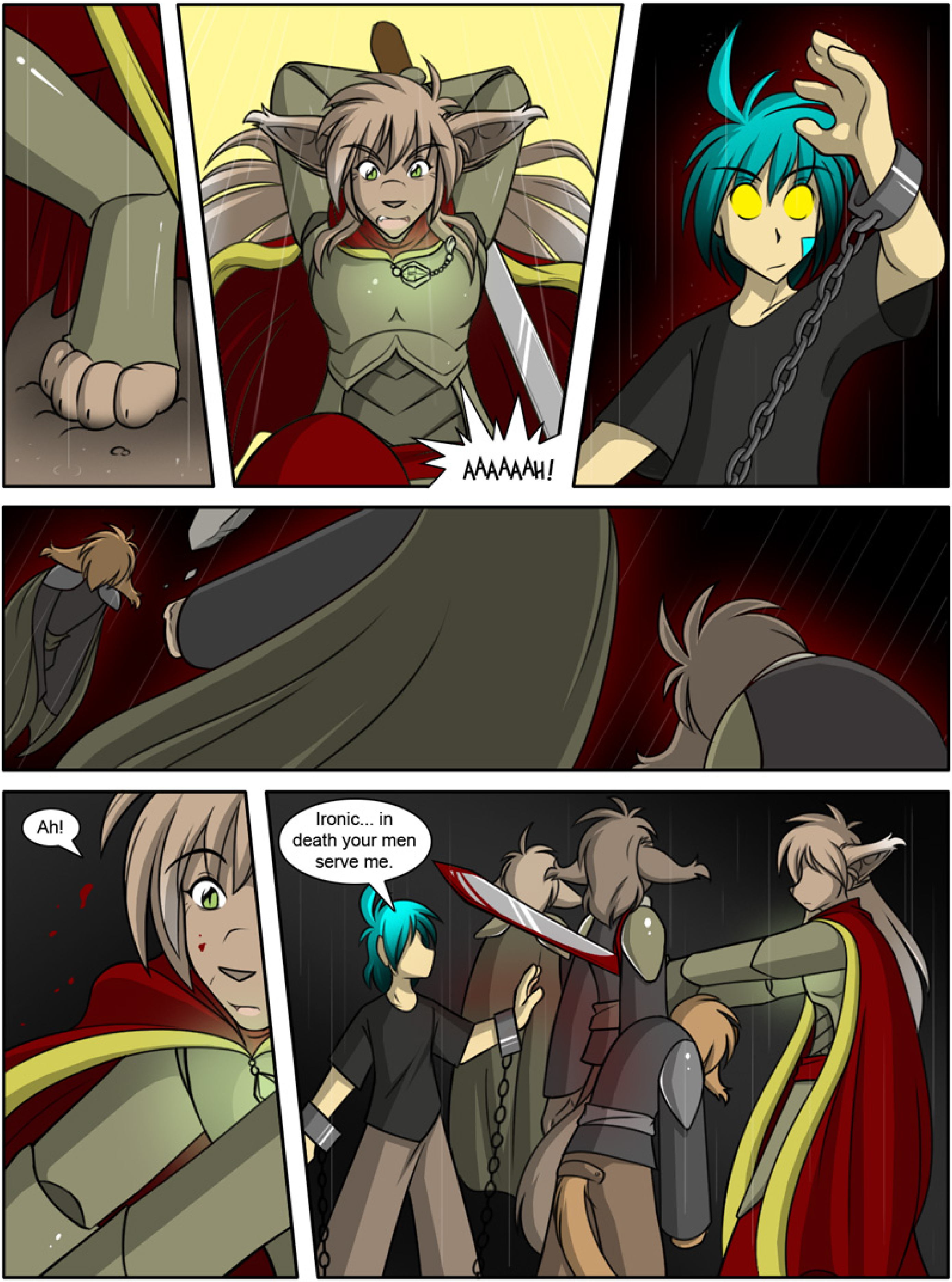

Keep focus, children!
We must keep up that field until I finish the sedative.
S-Sir, he's moving!
Just continue holding him! He wont regain full consciousness if you maintain suppression.
It is imperative we get Trace back to Human territory and restore his memories.
We must find out what he discovered before he was taken.
There, finished.
Aaaaaah!

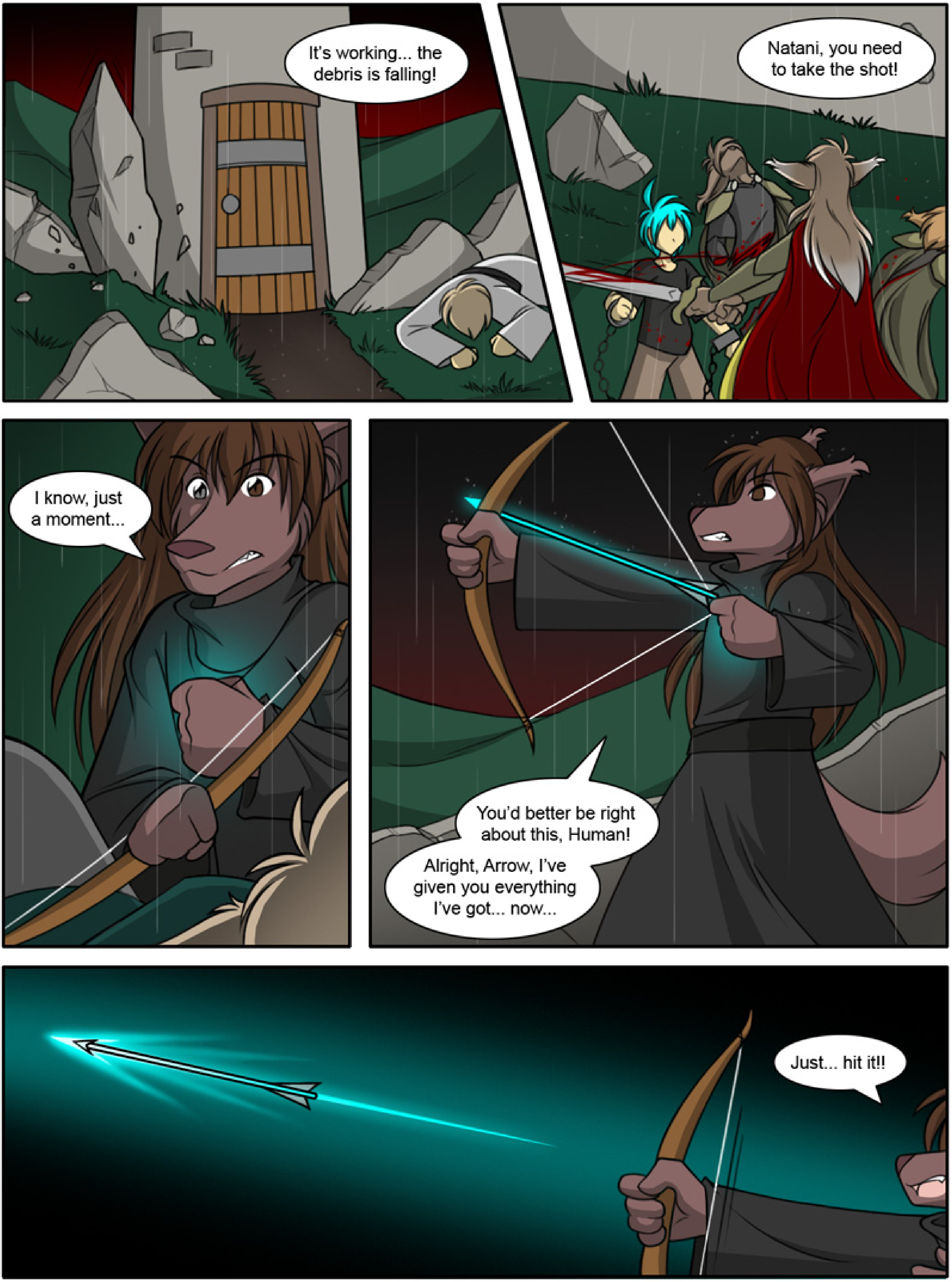

Trace!
STOP HURTING FLORA!

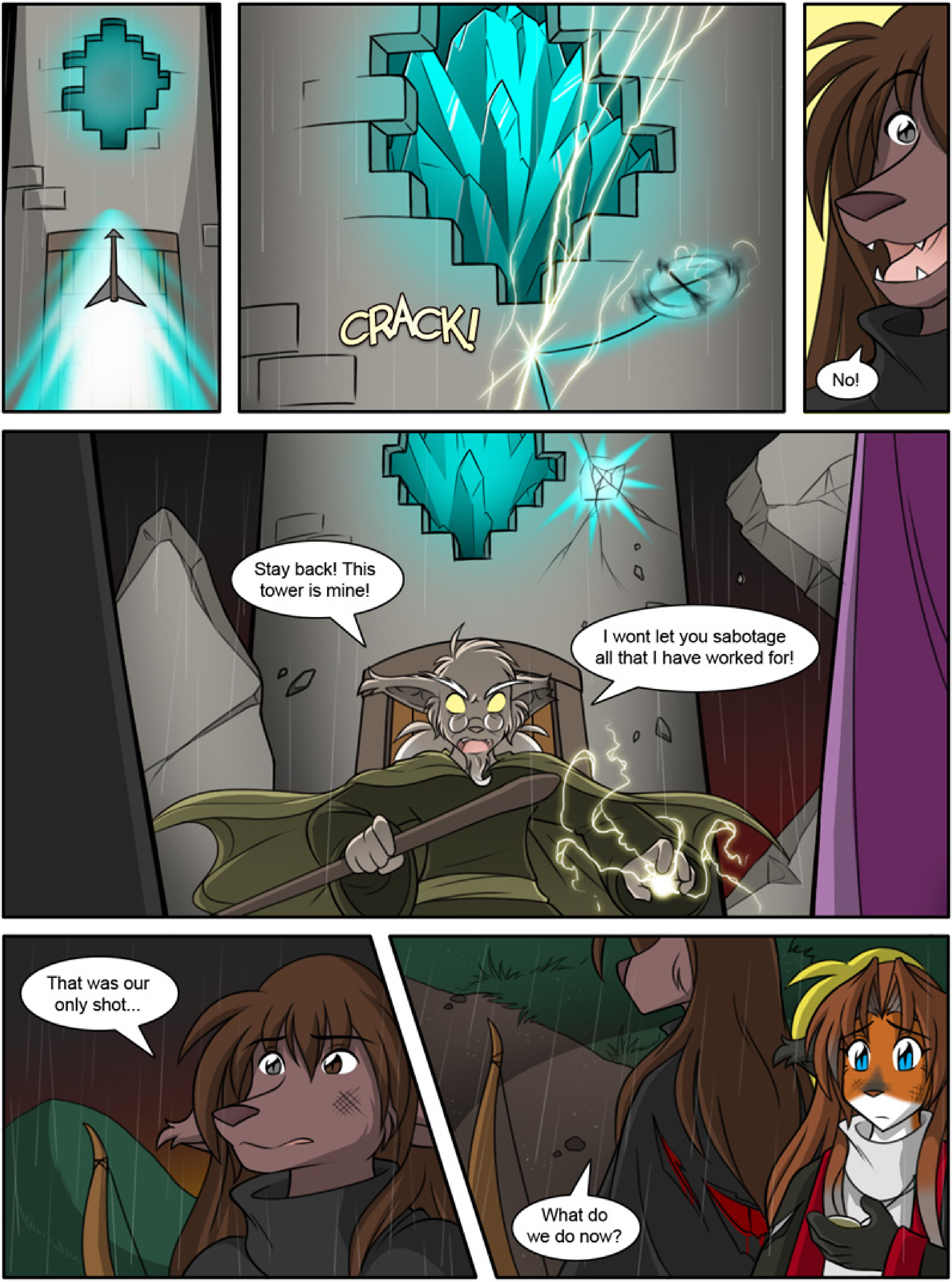

General, I gave you a direct order to stop!
No! Keith killed Cornelius. He and all his friends deserve to die!
Aaaaah!
Nngh!
Natani...
You leave me no choice!
Guards–!
Ah?!
...w-what now?!
CRACK!

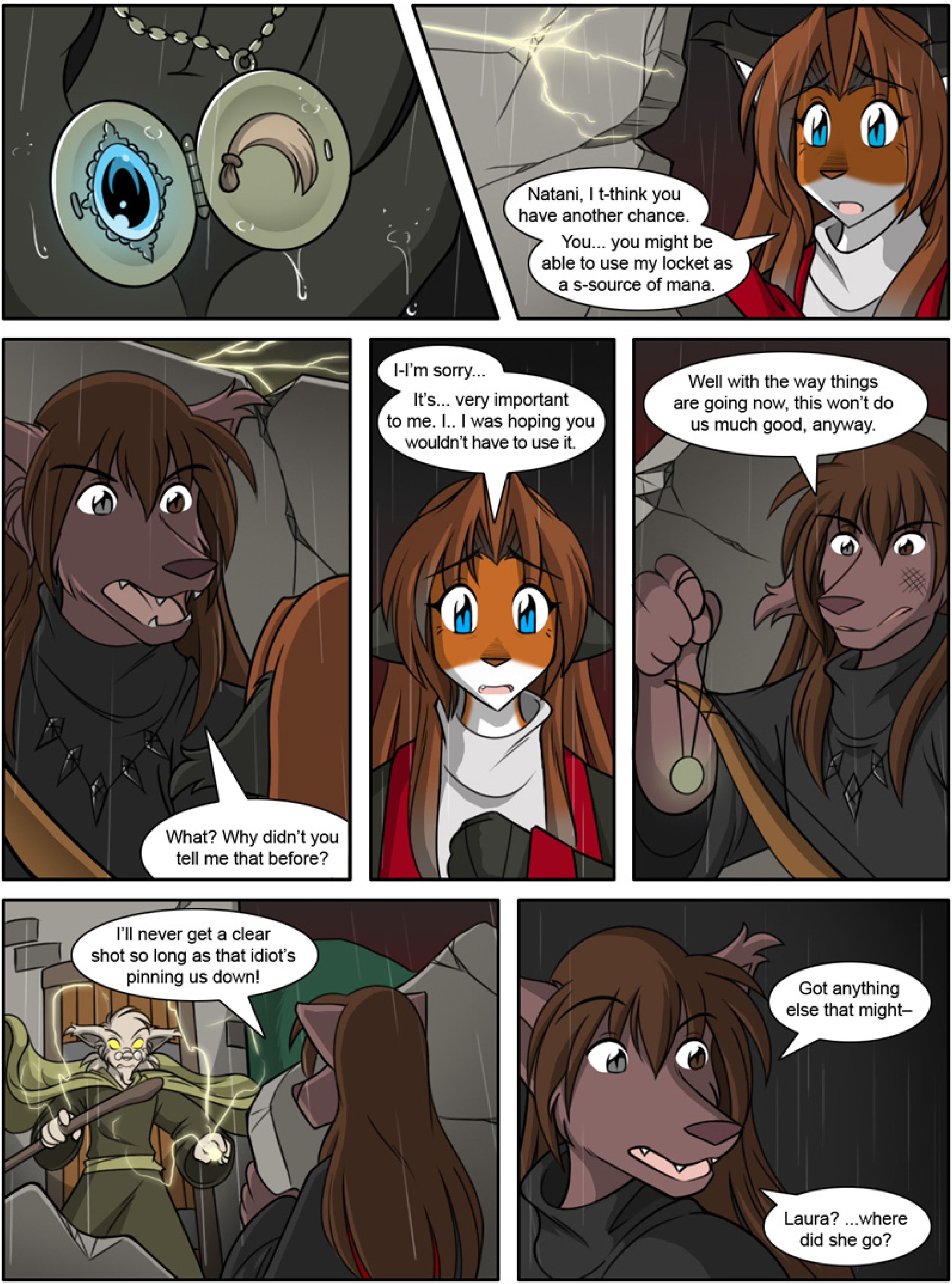

Tra...Trace!
Flora?
You, Basitin!
Are you the one harming Flora?

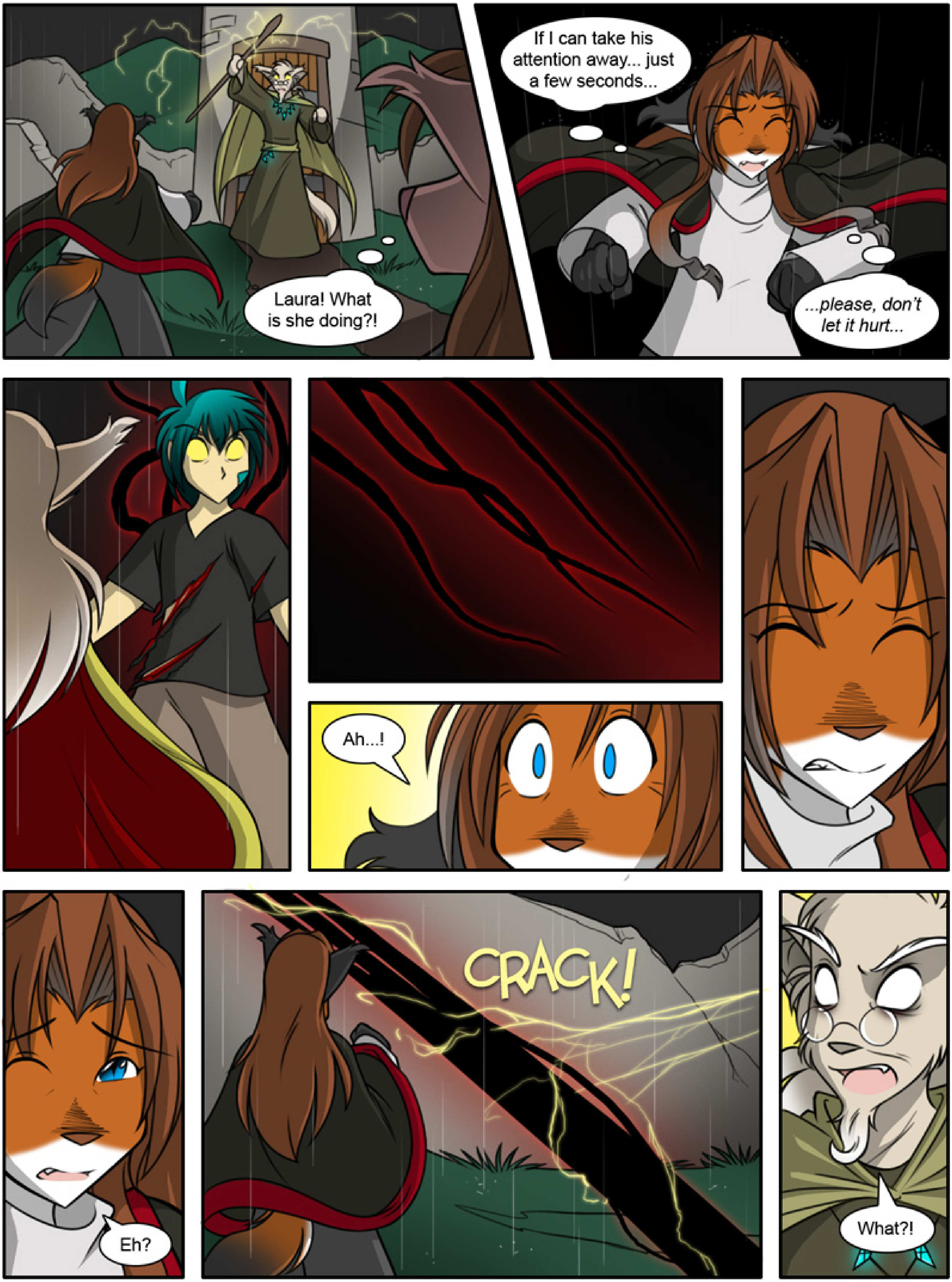

No matter...
I'll kill you all and sort it out later.
Defend the king!
Ah!
<Natani, the tower is feeding his powers!>
<And there's the vulnerability!>
<Erg, I see it...>
<Fat lot of good it does us, though.>
<We've only got one shot and no opening.>
<Keidran, are you saying the tower's causing this madness, and you can stop it?>
<Yes, I could...>
Very well! I'll give you your opening!

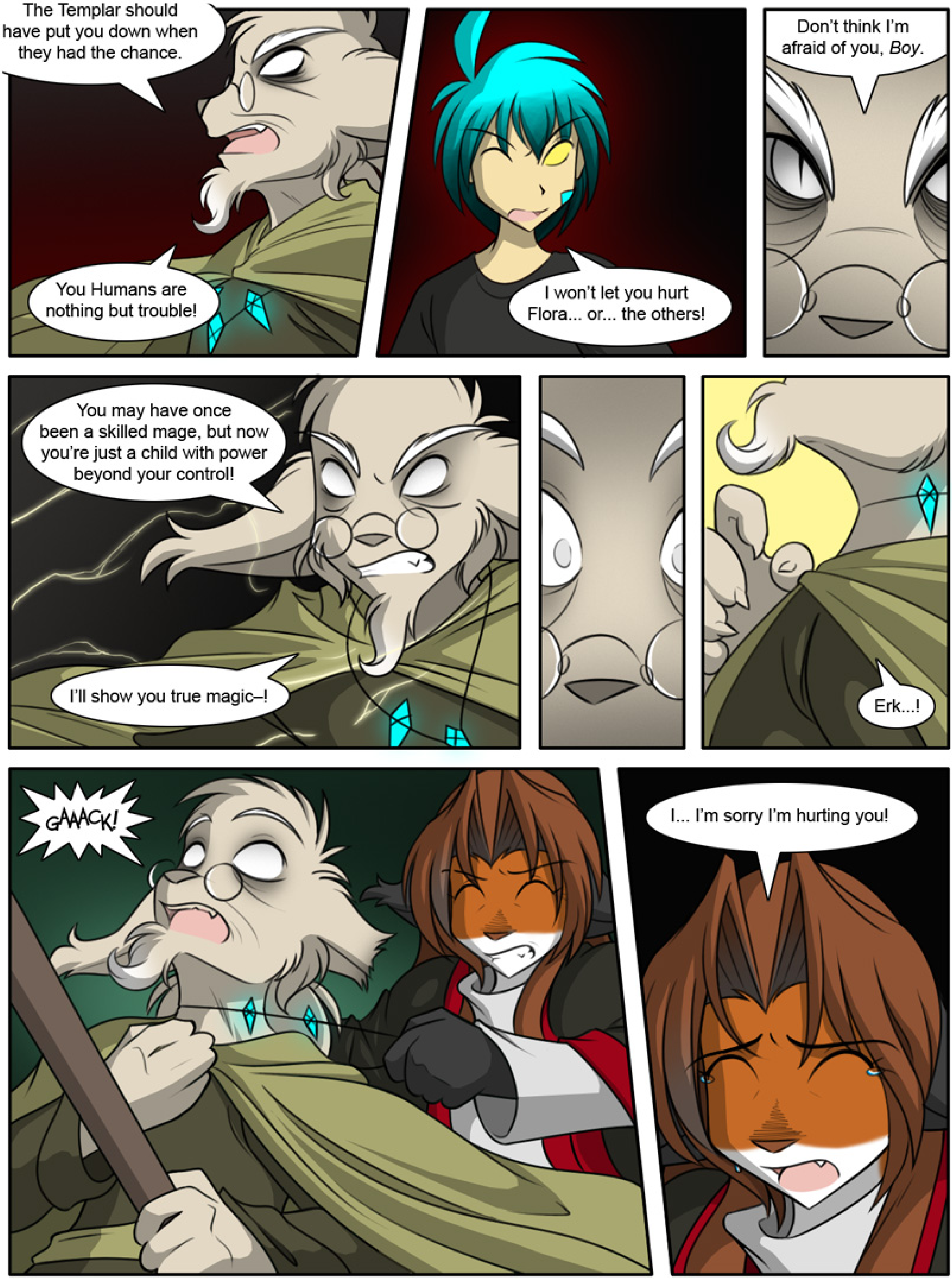

AAAAAAH!
Ah!
Ironic... in death your men serve me.

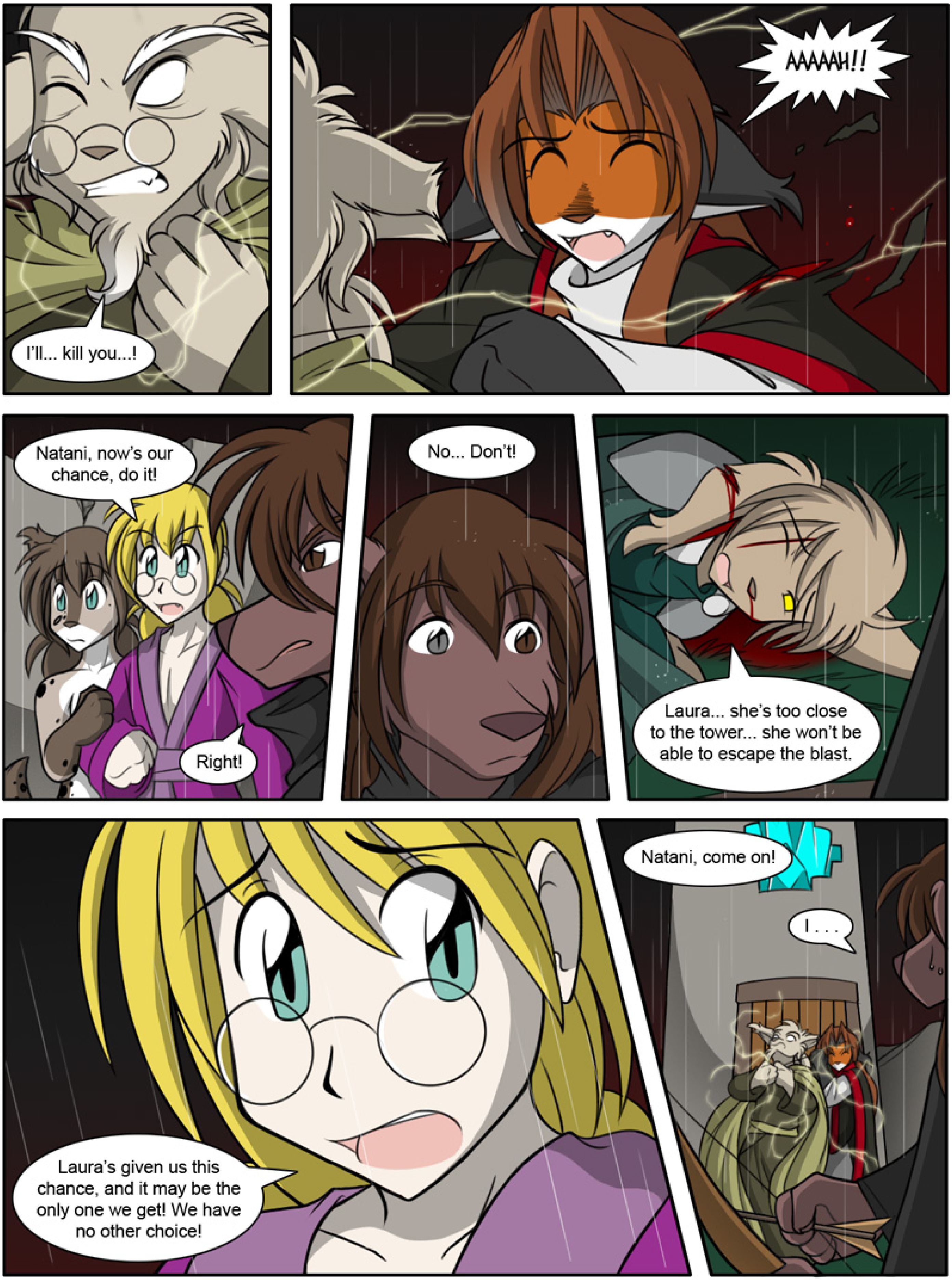

It's working... the debris is falling!
Natani, you need to take the shot!
I know, just a moment...
You'd better be right about this, Human!
Alright, Arrow, I've given you everything I've got... now...
Just... hit it!!

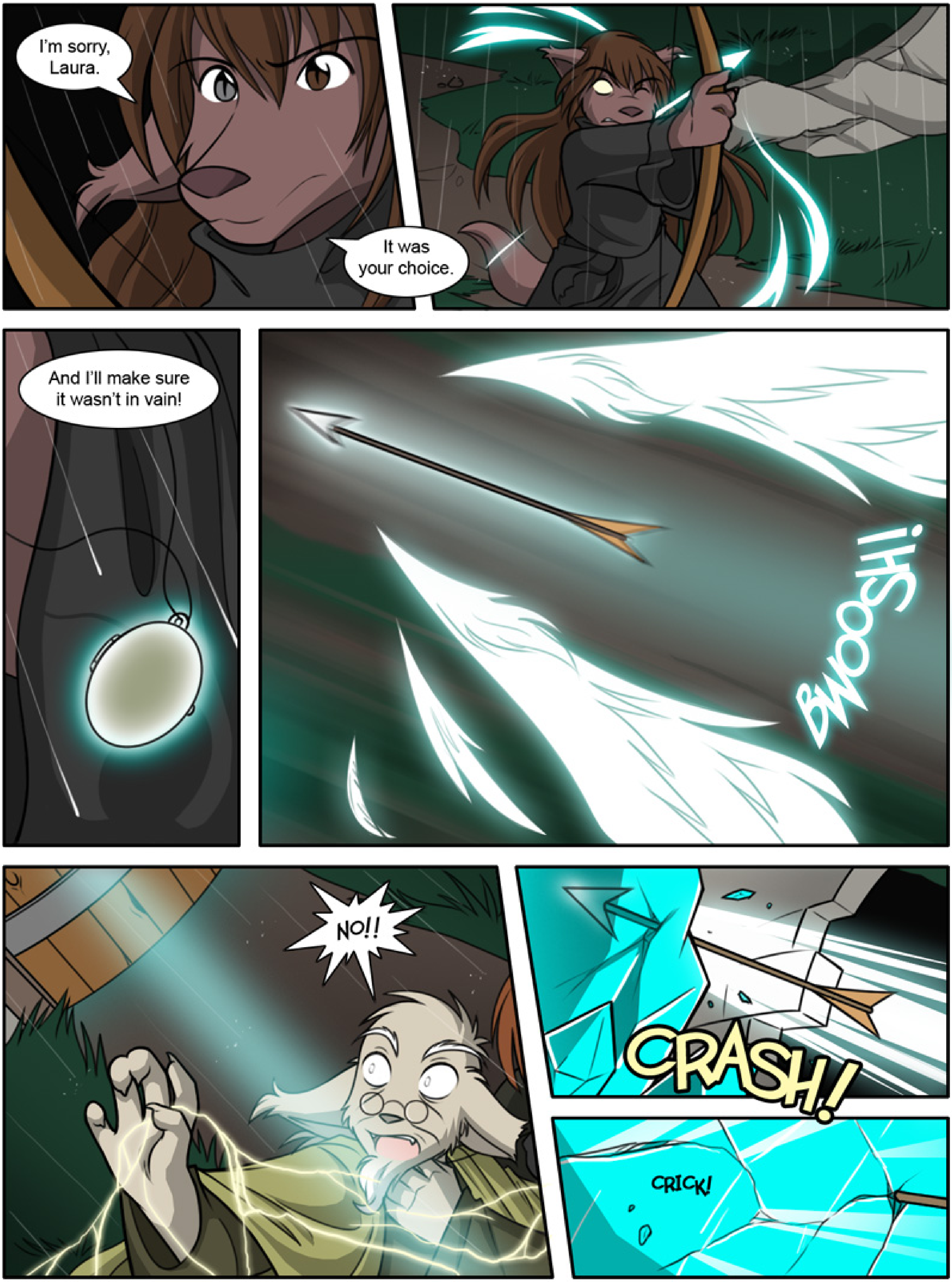

CRACK!
No!
Stay back! This tower is mine!
I wont let you sabotage all that I have worked for!
That was our only shot...
What do we do now?

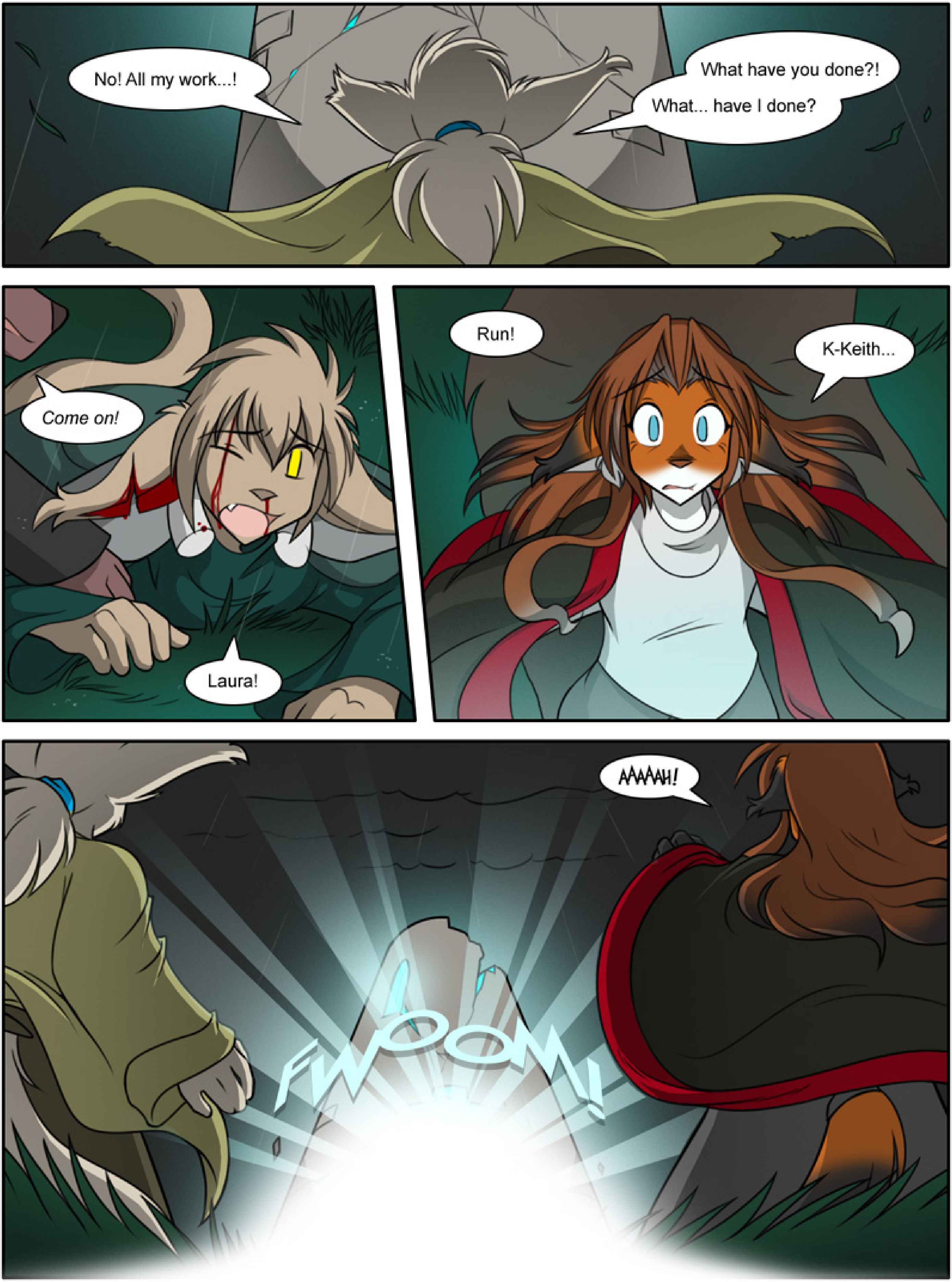

Natani, I t-think you have another chance.
You... you might be able to use my locket as a s-source of mana.
What? Why didn't you tell me that before?
I-I'm sorry...
It's... very important to me. I.. I was hoping you wouldn't have to use it.
Well with the way things are going now, this won't do us much good, anyway.
I'll never get a clear shot so long as that idiot's pinning us down!
Got anything else that might–
Laura? ...where did she go?

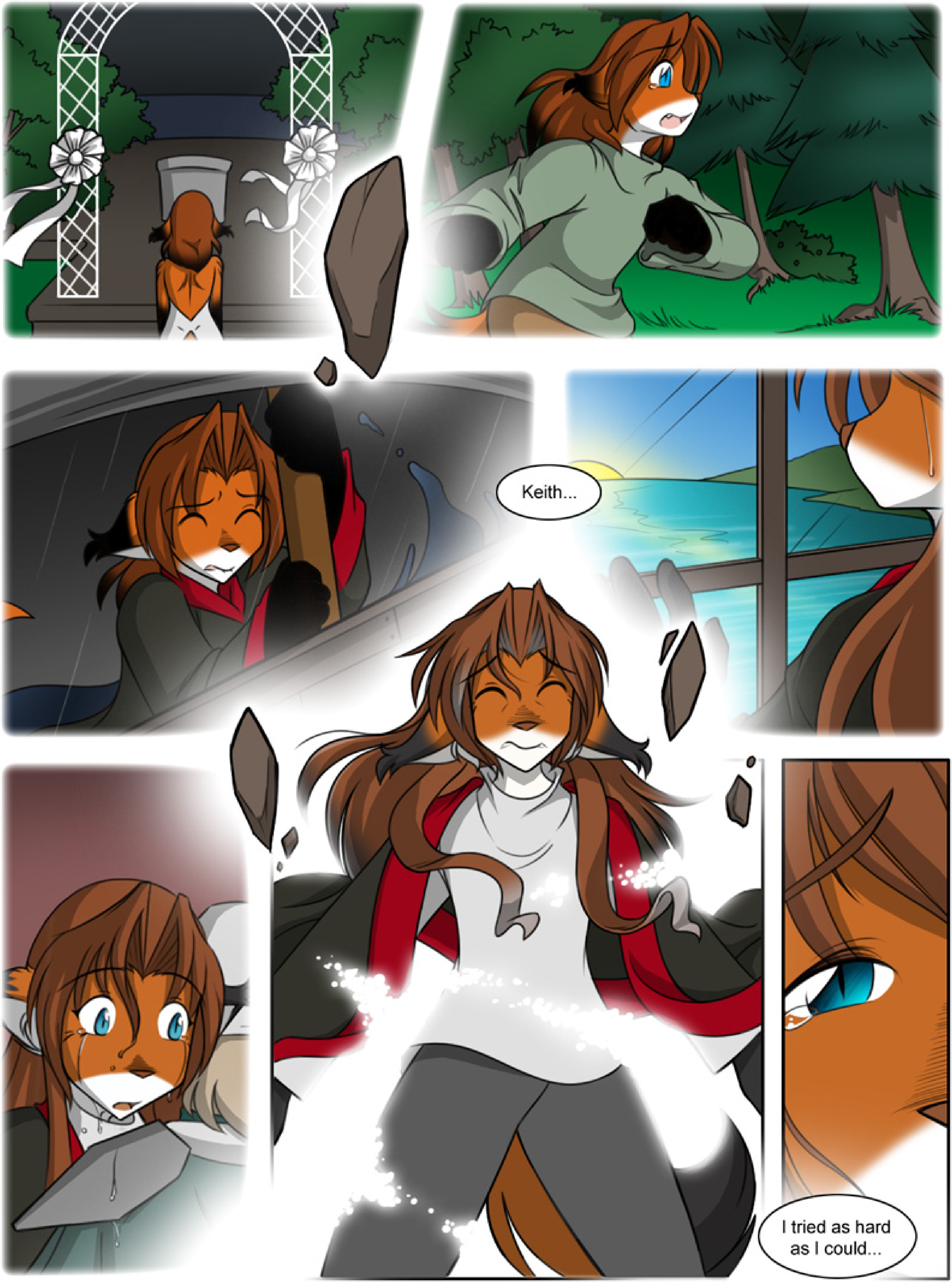

Laura! What is she doing?!
If I can take his attention away... just a few seconds...
...please, don't let it hurt...
Ah...!
Eh?
CRACK!
What?!


The Templar should have put you down when they had the chance.
You Humans are nothing but trouble!
I won't let you hurt Flora... or... the others!
Don't think I'm afraid of you, *Boy*.
You may have once been a skilled mage, but now you're just a child with power beyond your control!
I'll show you true magic–!
Erk...!
GAAACK!
I... I'm sorry I'm hurting you!

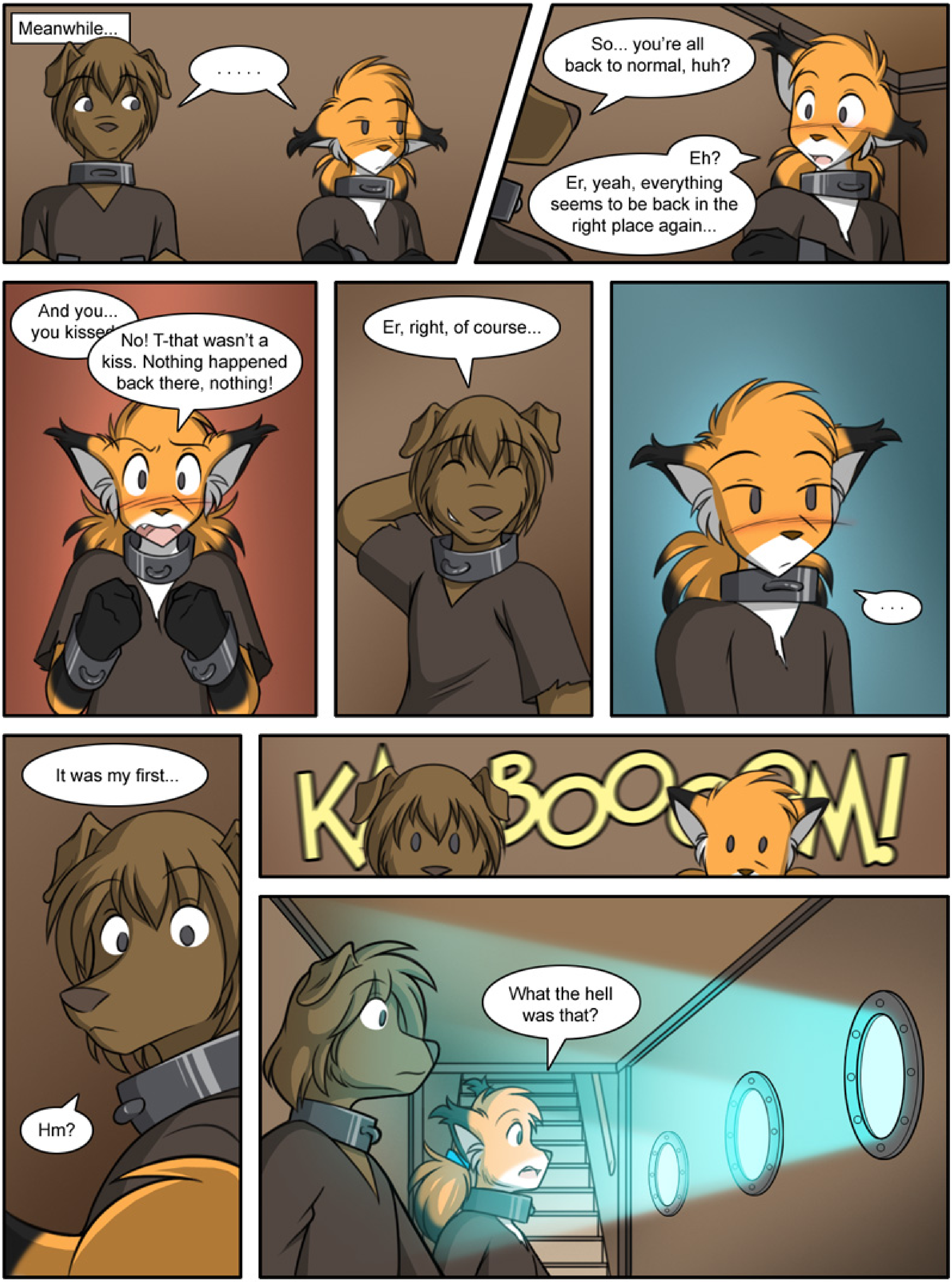

I'll... kill you...!
AAAAAH!!
Natani, now's our chance, do it!
Right!
No... Don't!
Laura... she's too close to the tower... she won't be able to escape the blast.
Laura's given us this chance, and it may be the only one we get! We have no other choice!
Natani, come on!
I . . .

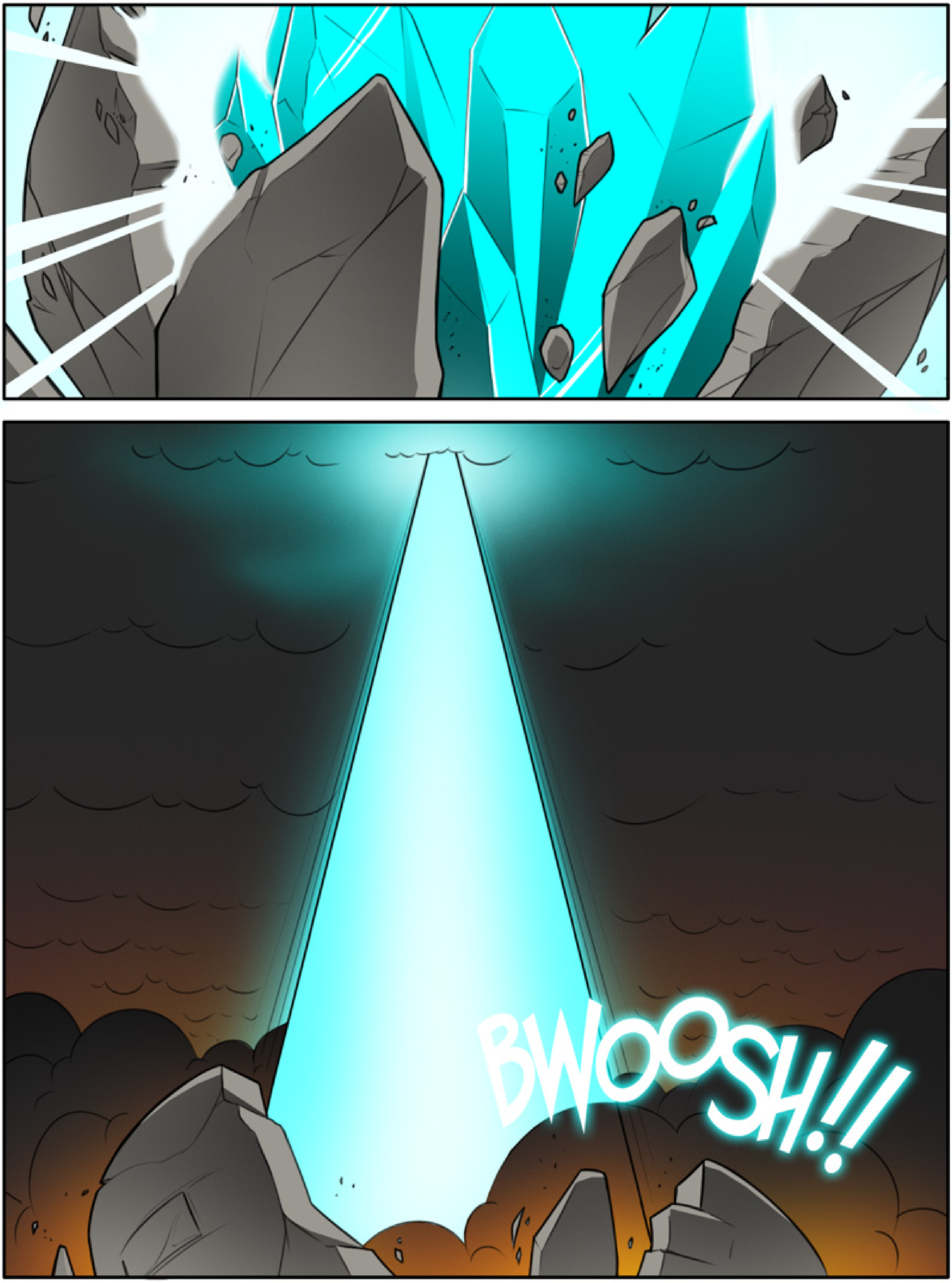

I'm sorry, Laura.
It was your choice.
And I'll make sure it wasn't in vain!
BWOOSH!
NO!!
CRASH!
CRICK!

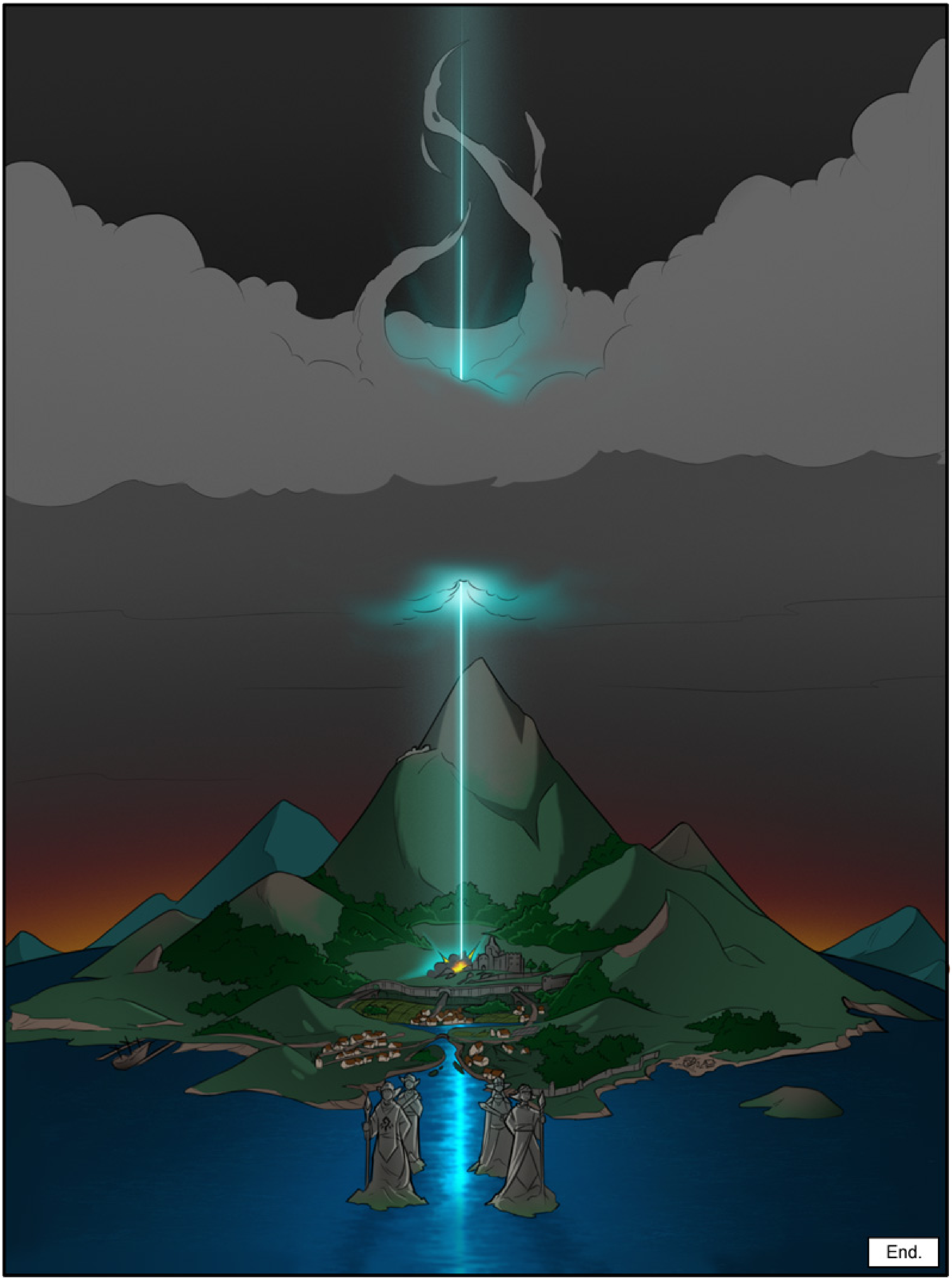

No! All my work...!
What have you done?!
What... have I done?
Come on!
Laura!
Run!
K-Keith...
AAAAAH!
FWOOM!

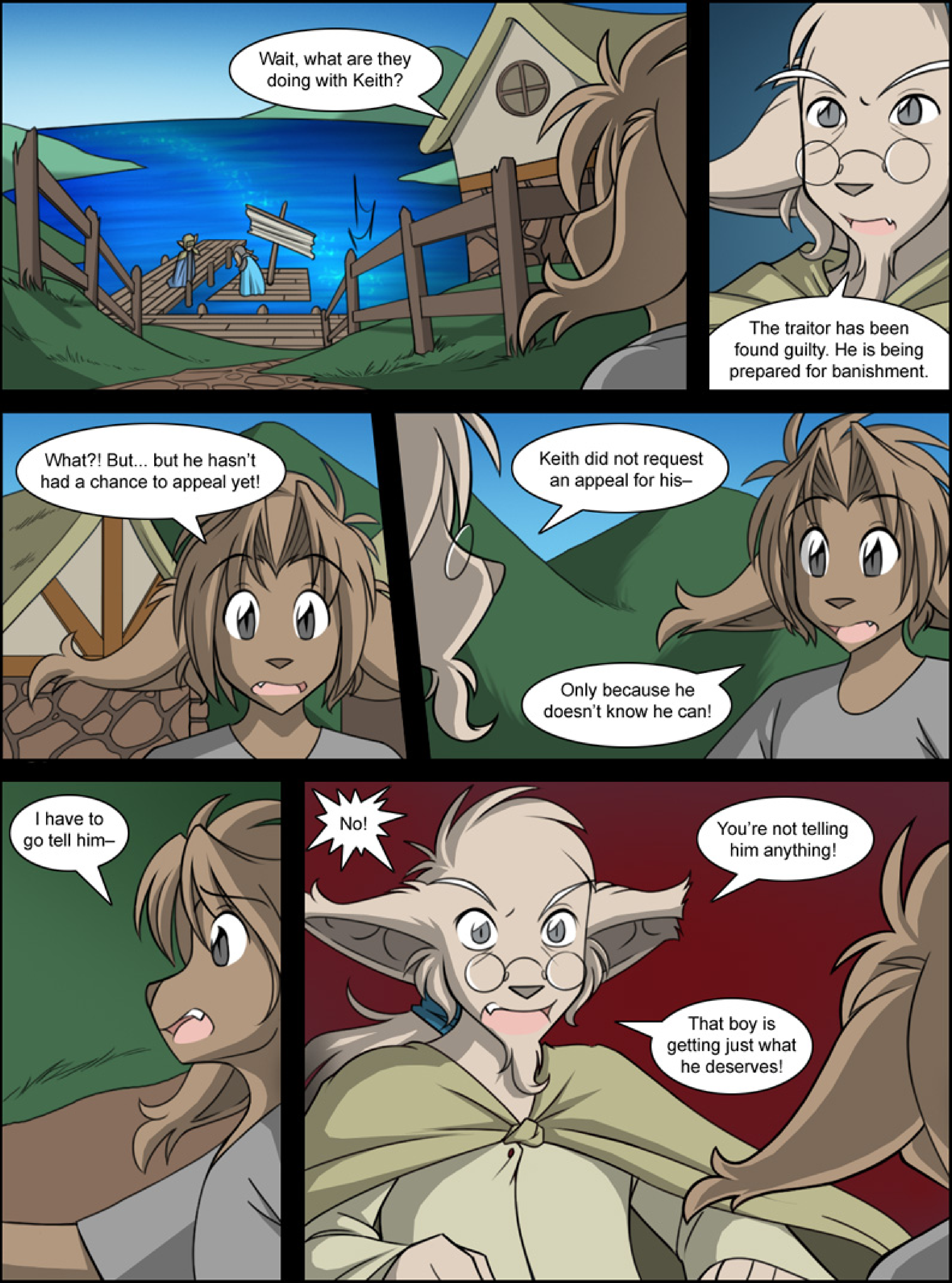

Keith...
I tried as hard as I could...

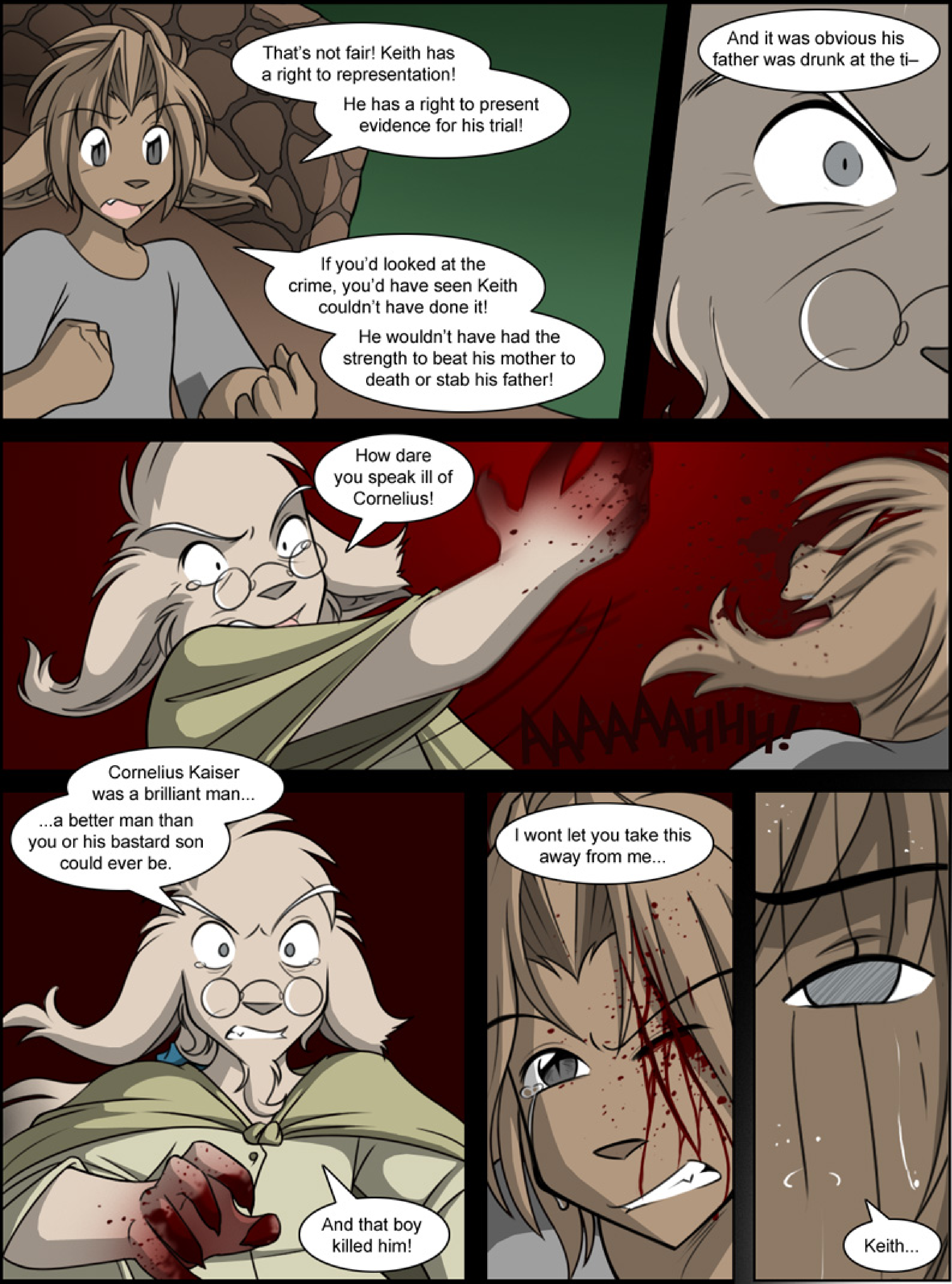
Oops...
6
6 Years
500+ Comics

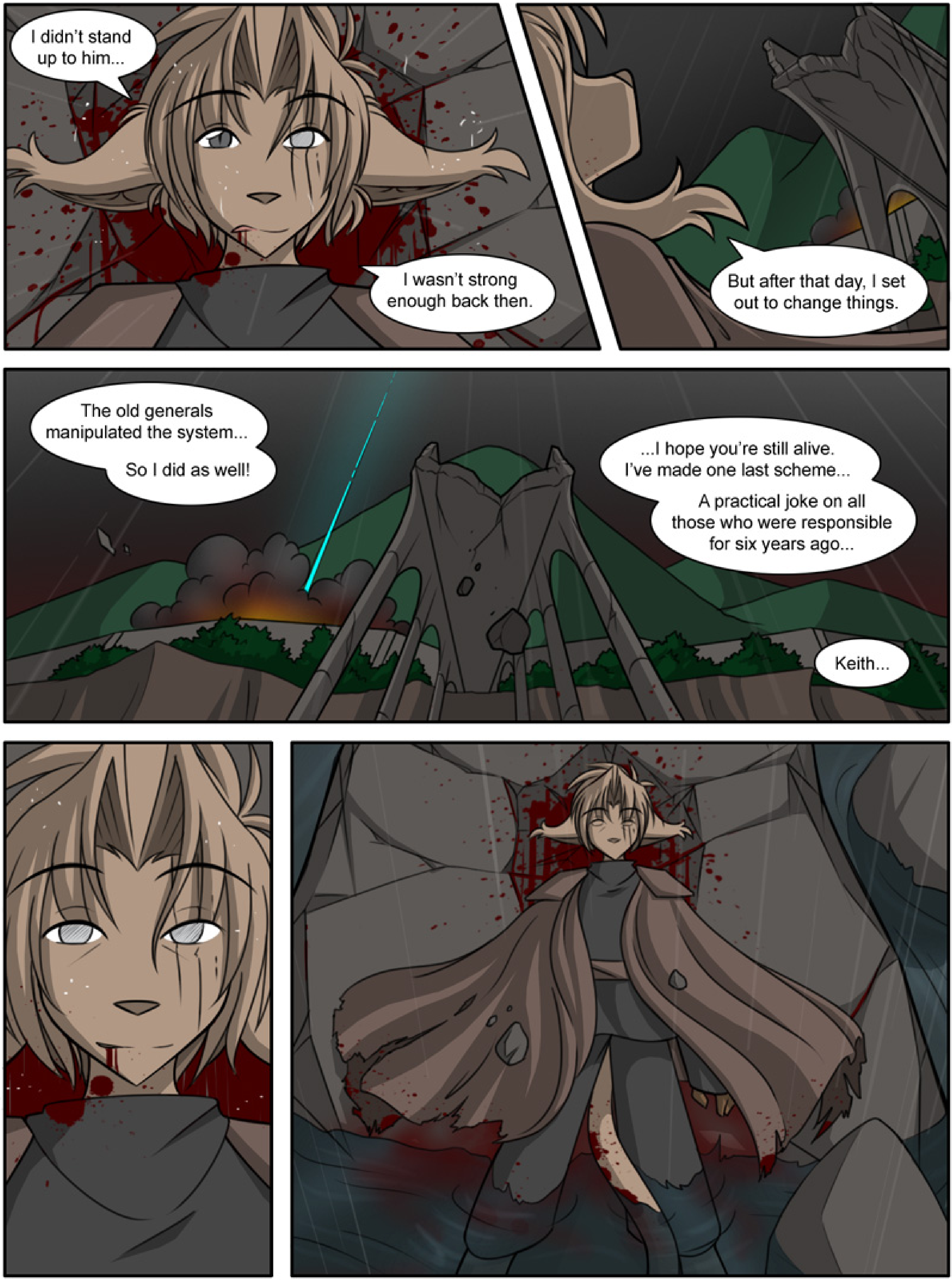

Meanwhile...
. . . . .
So... you're all back to normal, huh?
Eh?
Er, yeah, everything seems to be back in the right place again...
And you... you kisse
No! T-that wasn't a kiss. Nothing happened back there, nothing!
Er, right, of course...
. . .
It was my first...
Hm?
KABOOOOM!
What the hell was that?


BWOOSH!!

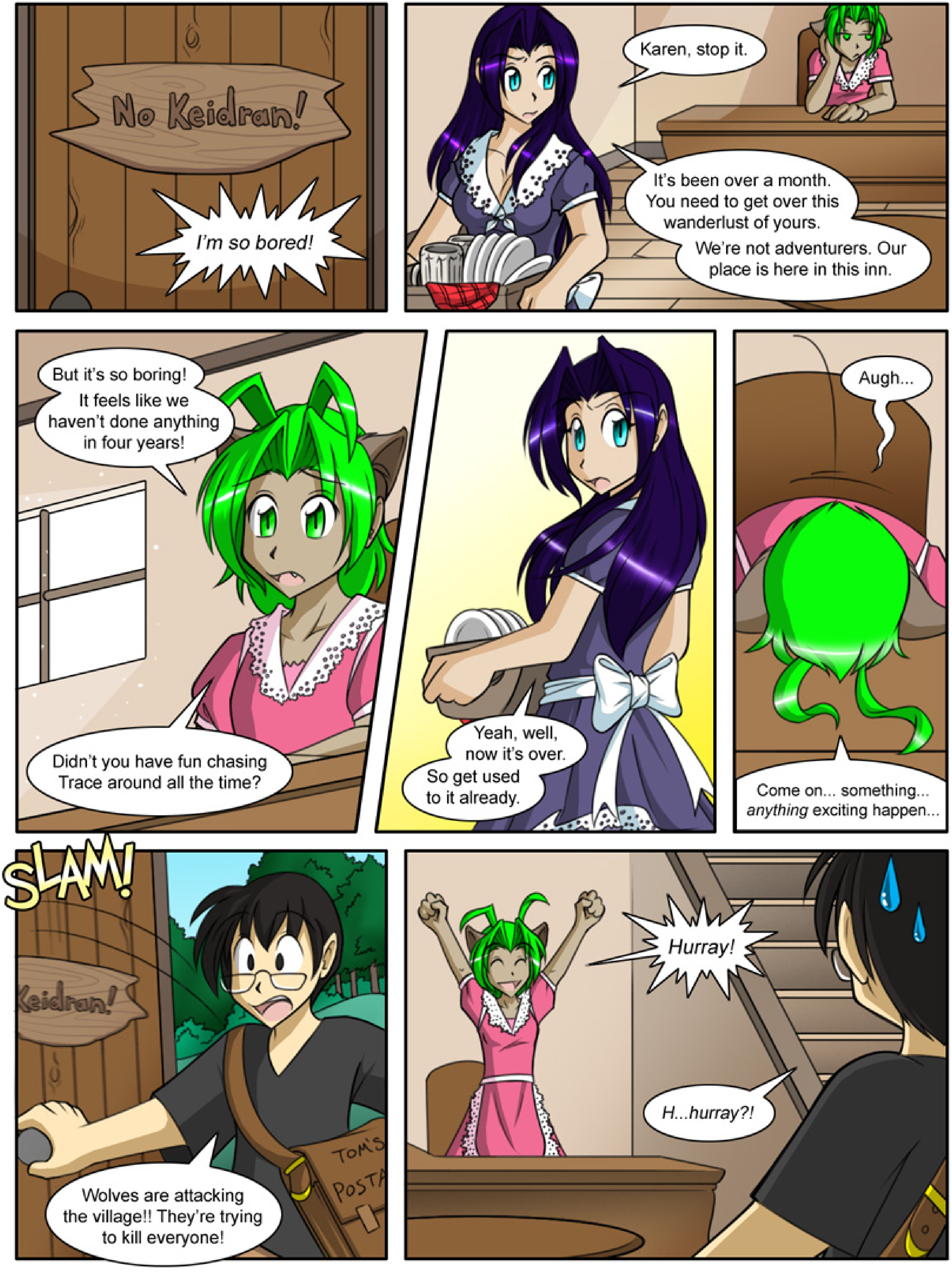

End.

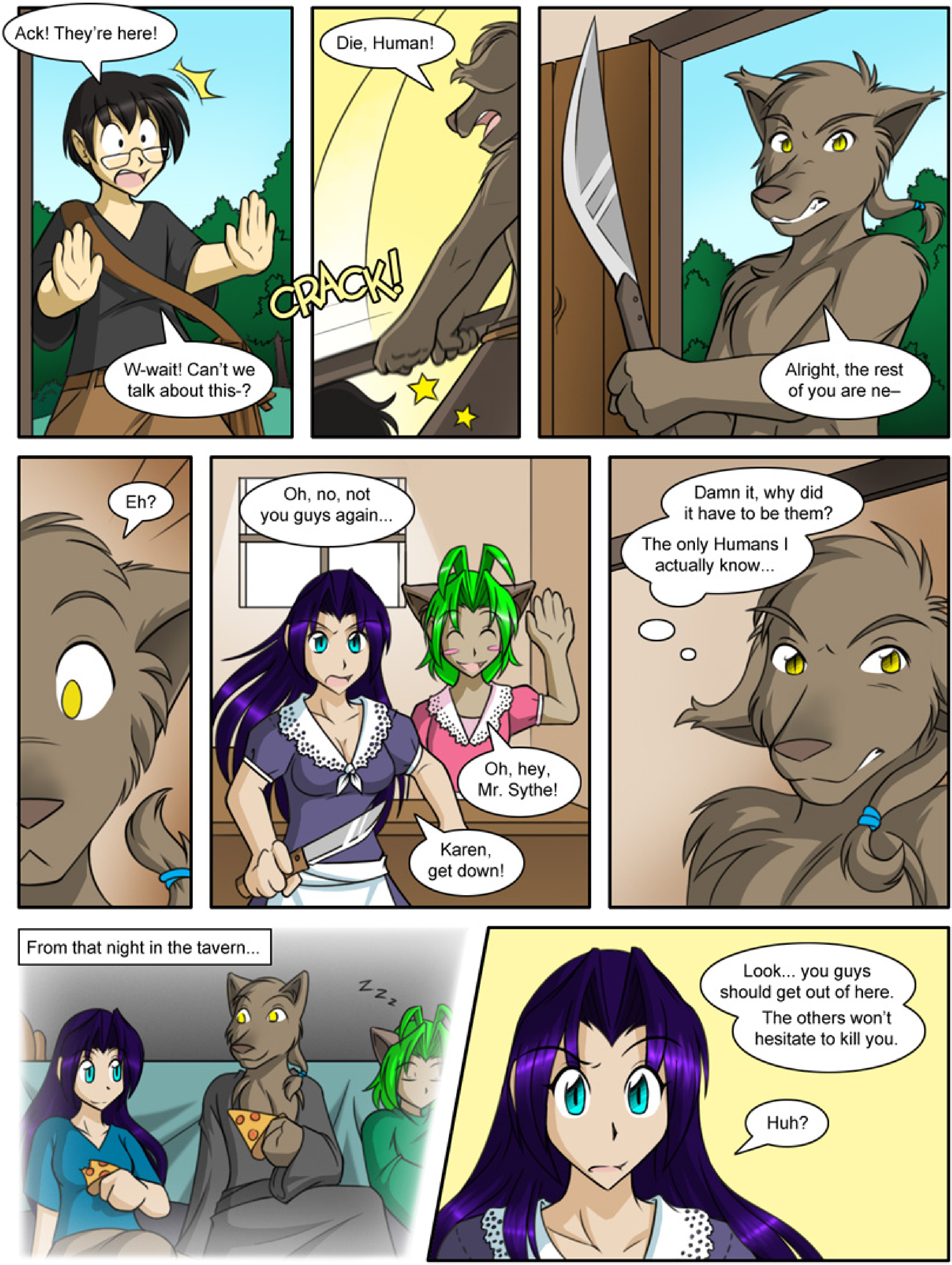

Wait, what are they doing with Keith?
The traitor has been found guilty. He is being prepared for banishment.
What?! But... but he hasn't had a chance to appeal yet!
Keith did not request an appeal for his–
Only because he doesn't know he can!
I have to go tell him–
No!
You're not telling him anything!
That boy is getting just what he deserves!

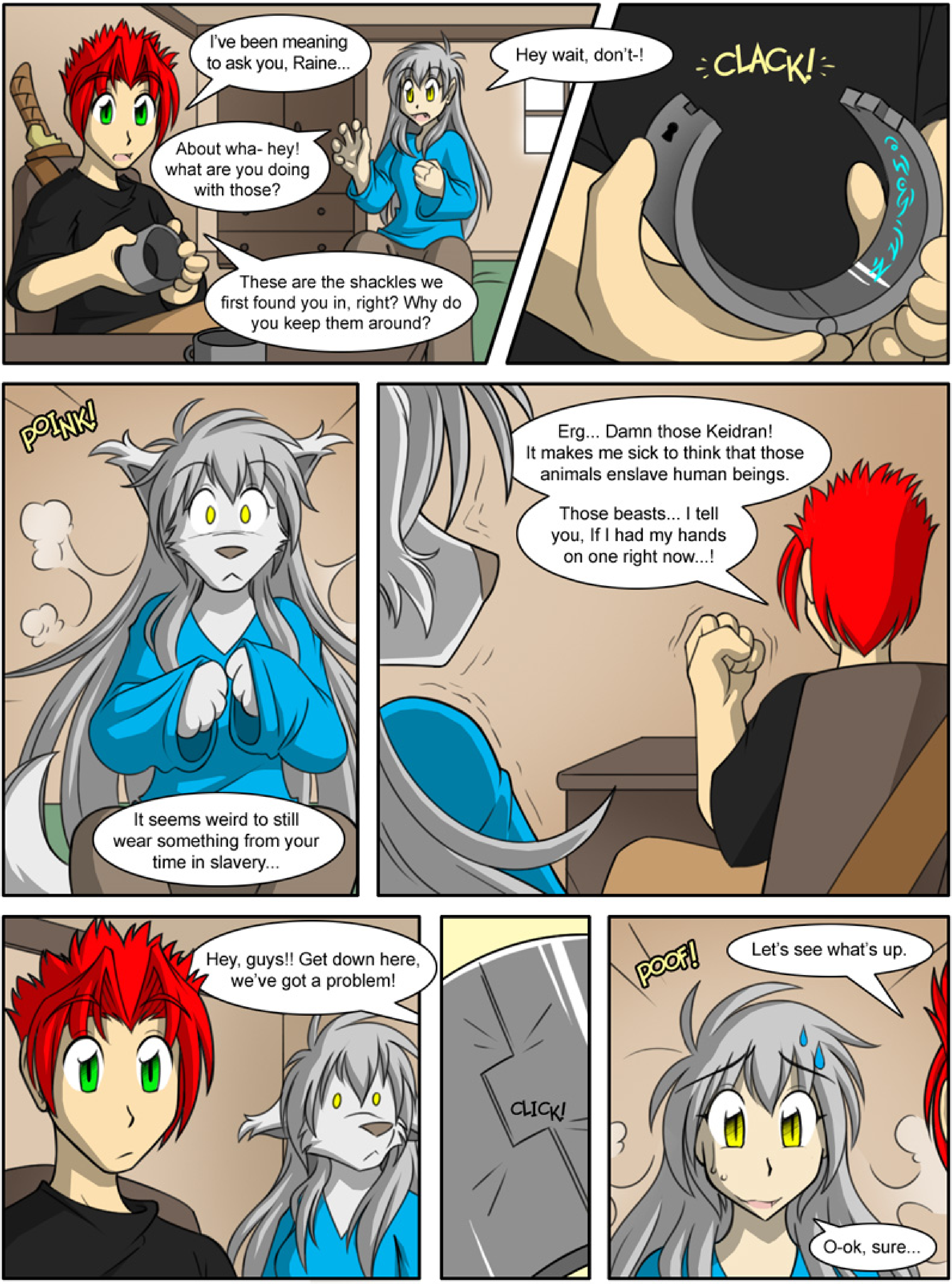

That's not fair! Keith has a right to representation!
He has a right to present evidence for his trial!
If you'd looked at the crime, you'd have seen Keith couldn't have done it!
He wouldn't have had the strength to beat his mother to death or stab his father!
And it was obvious his father was drunk at the ti–
How dare you speak ill of Cornelius!
AAAAAAHHH!
Cornelius Kaiser was a brilliant man...
...a better man than you or his bastard son could ever be.
And that boy killed him!
I wont let you take this away from me...
Keith...

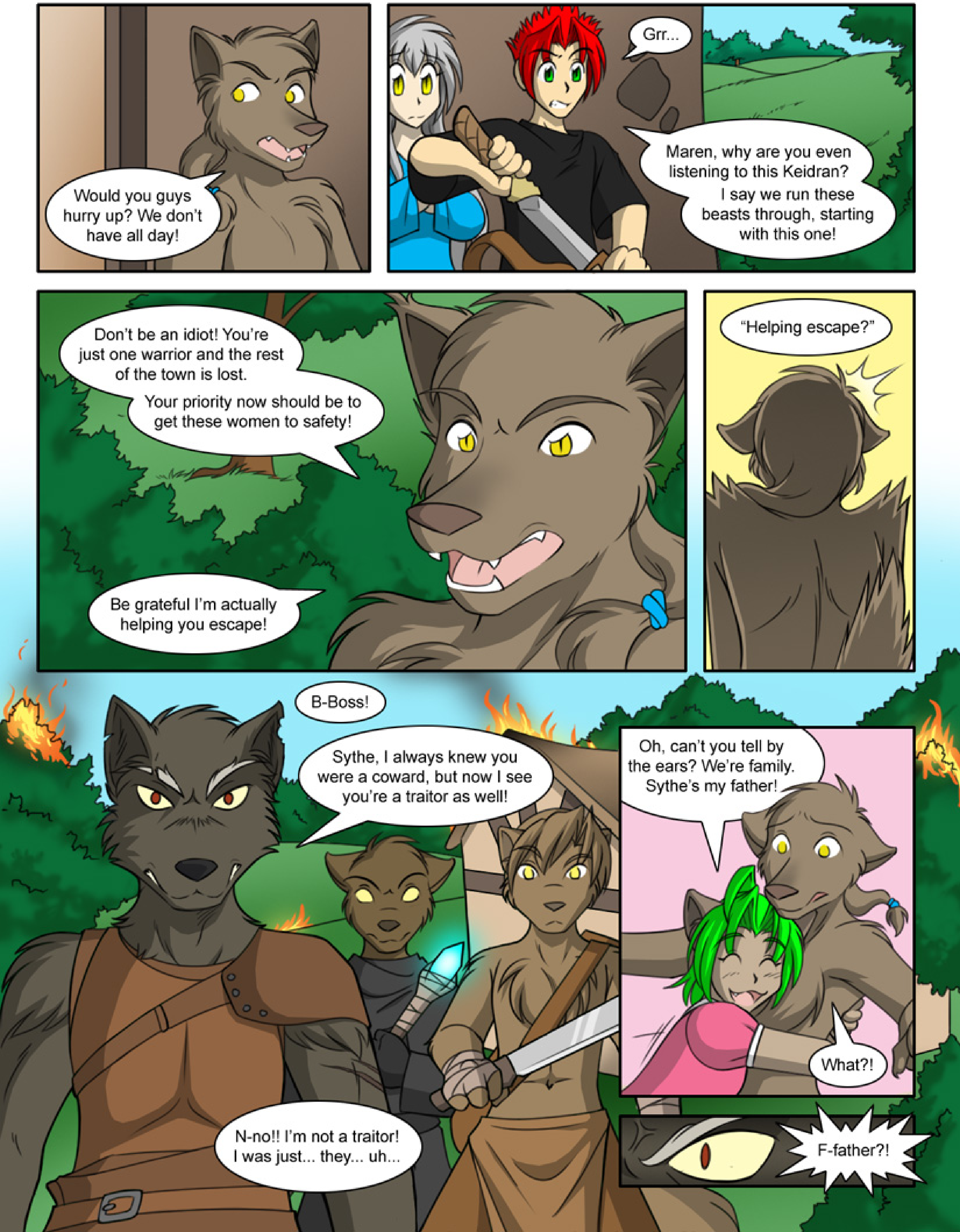

I didn't stand up to him...
I wasn't strong enough back then.
But after that day, I set out to change things.
The old generals manipulated the system...
So I did as well!
...I hope you're still alive. I've made one last scheme...
A practical joke on all those who were responsible for six years ago...
Keith...

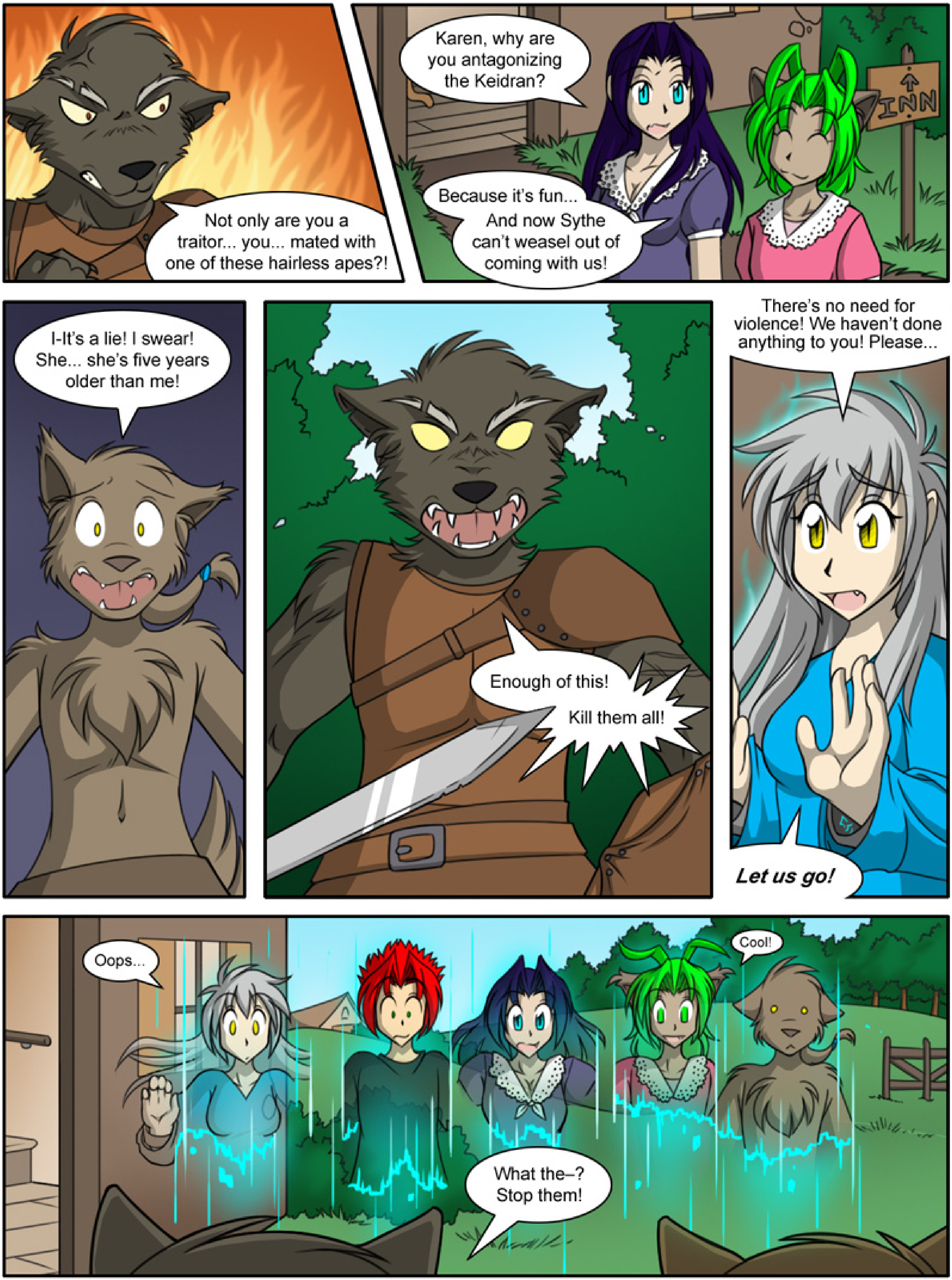
TwoKinds
Chapter Twelve
The Morning

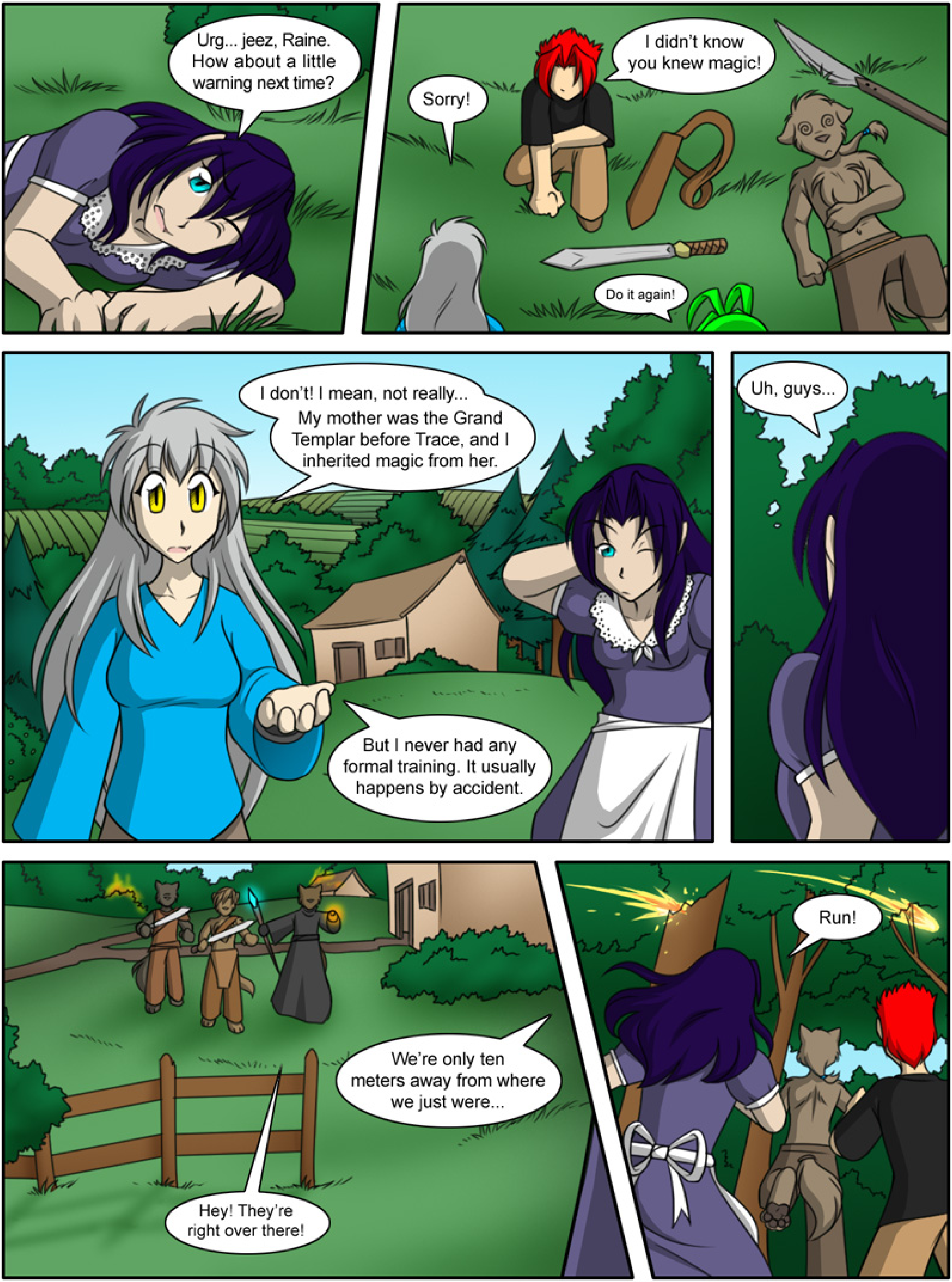

No Keidran!
I'm so bored!
Karen, stop it.
It's been over a month. You need to get over this wanderlust of yours.
We're not adventurers. Our place is here in this inn.
But it's so boring!
It feels like we haven't done anything in four years!
Didn't you have fun chasing Trace around all the time?
Yeah, well, now it's over.
So get used to it already.
Augh...
Come on... something... *anything* exciting happen...
SLAM!
Keidran!
TOM'S POSTA
Wolves are attacking the village!! They're trying to kill everyone!
Hurray!
H...hurray?!

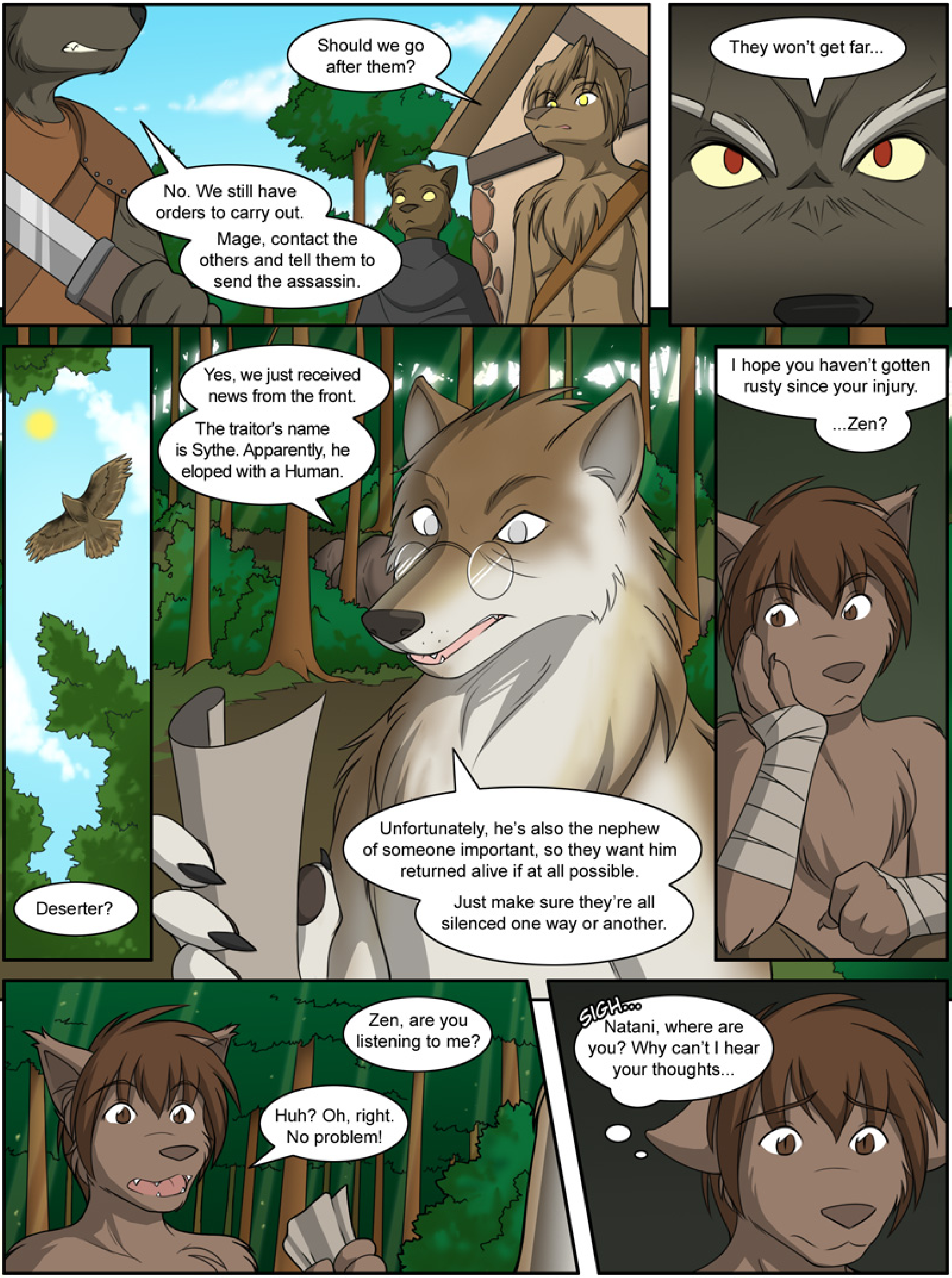

Ack! They're here!
W-wait! Can't we talk about this-?
Die, Human!
CRACK!
Alright, the rest of you are ne–
Eh?
Oh, no, not you guys again...
Oh, hey, Mr. Sythe!
Karen, get down!
Damn it, why did it have to be them?
The only Humans I actually know...
From that night in the tavern...
Z z z
Look... you guys should get out of here.
The others won't hesitate to kill you.
Huh?

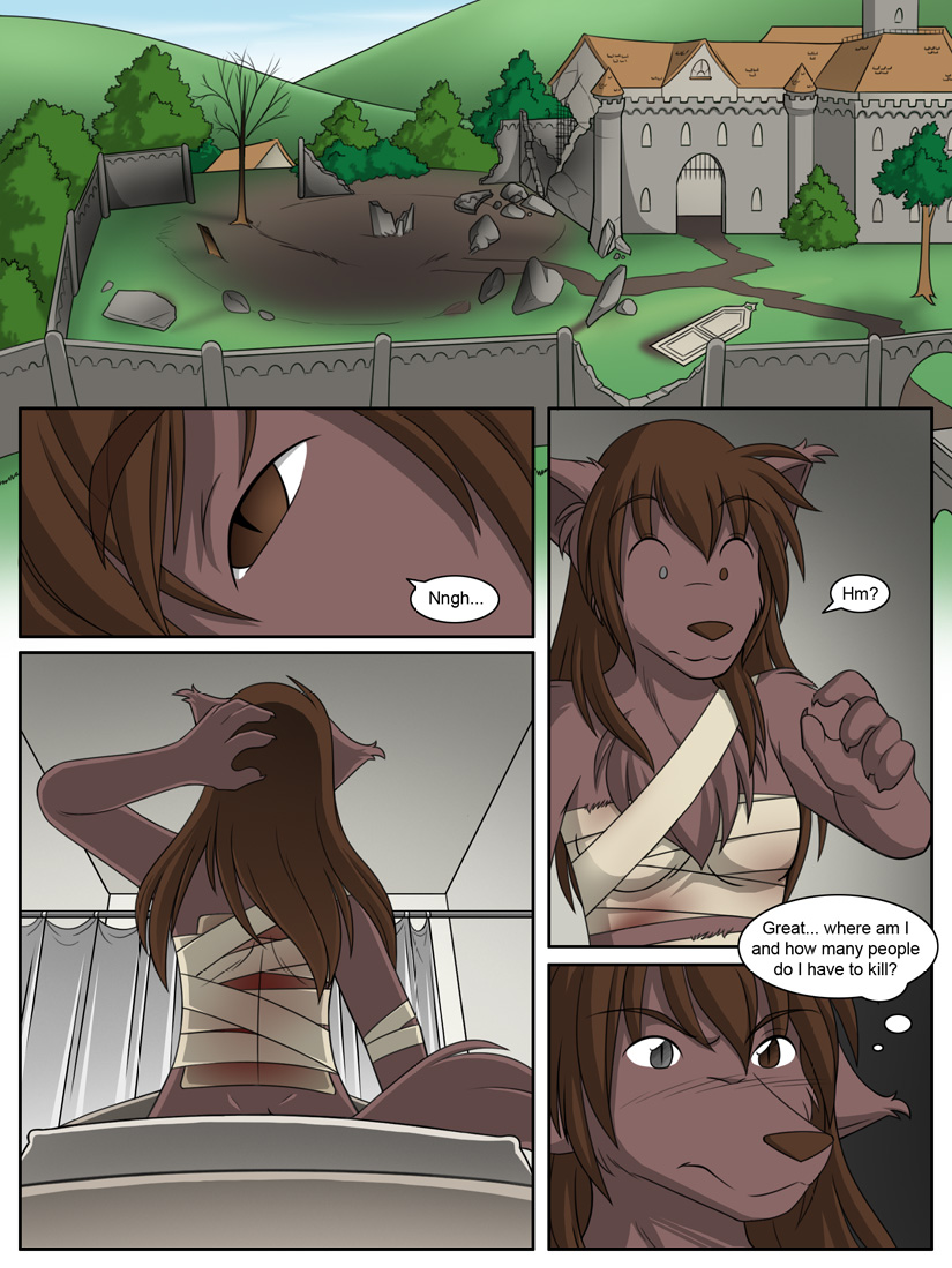

I've been meaning to ask you, Raine...
About wha- hey! what are you doing with those?
These are the shackles we first found you in, right? Why do you keep them around?
Hey wait, don't-!
CLACK!
POINK!
It seems weird to still wear something from your time in slavery...
Erg... Damn those Keidran! It makes me sick to think that those animals enslave human beings.
Those beasts... I tell you, If I had my hands on one right now...!
Hey, guys!! Get down here, we've got a problem!
CLICK!
POOF!
Let's see what's up.
O-ok, sure...

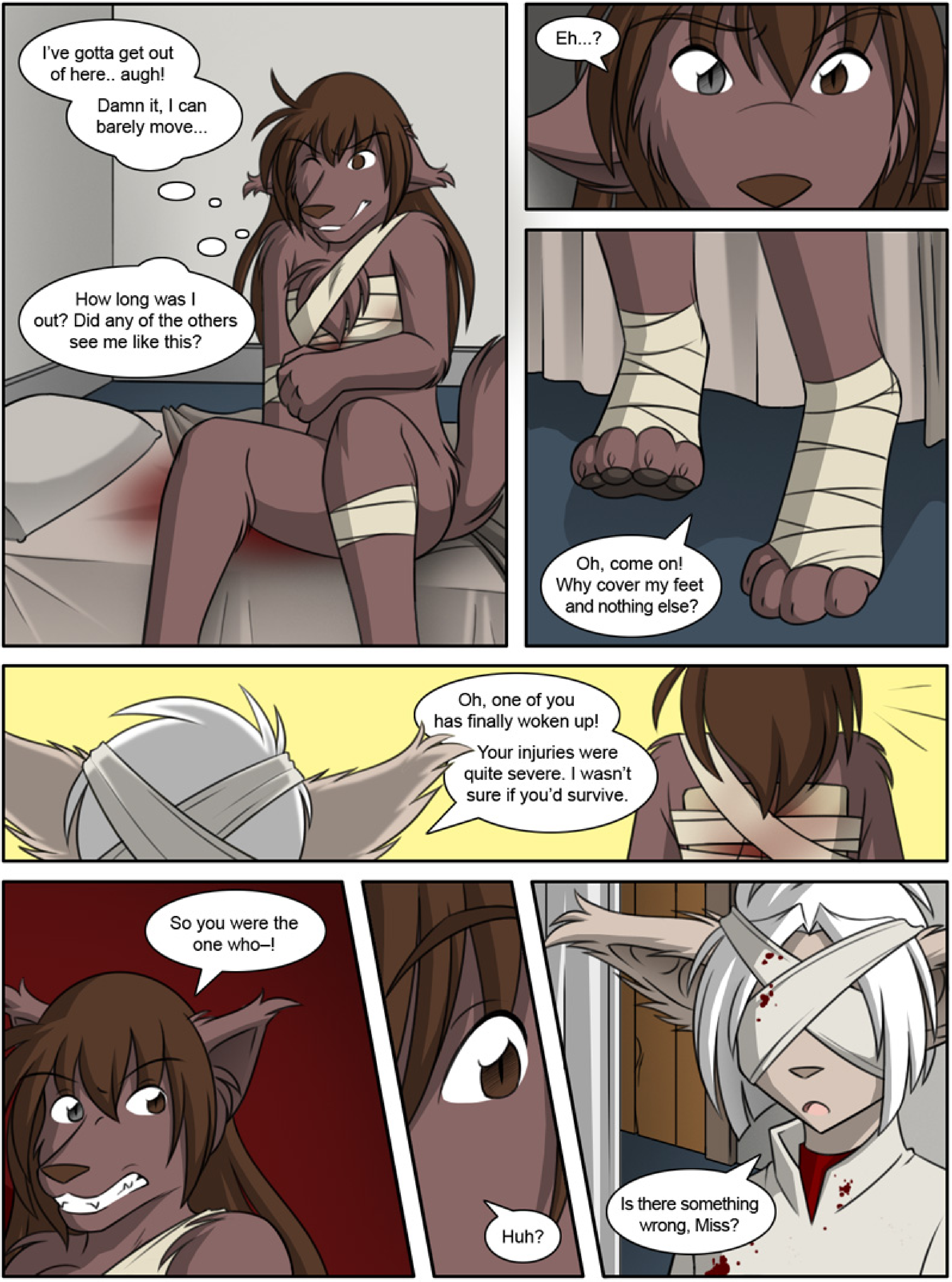

Would you guys hurry up? We don't have all day!
Grr...
Maren, why are you even listening to this Keidran?
I say we run these beasts through, starting with this one!
Don't be an idiot! You're just one warrior and the rest of the town is lost.
Your priority now should be to get these women to safety!
Be grateful I'm actually helping you escape!
"Helping escape?"
B-Boss!
Sythe, I always knew you were a coward, but now I see you're a traitor as well!
N-no!! I'm not a traitor! I was just... they... uh...
Oh, can't you tell by the ears? We're family. Sythe's my father!
What?!
F-father?!

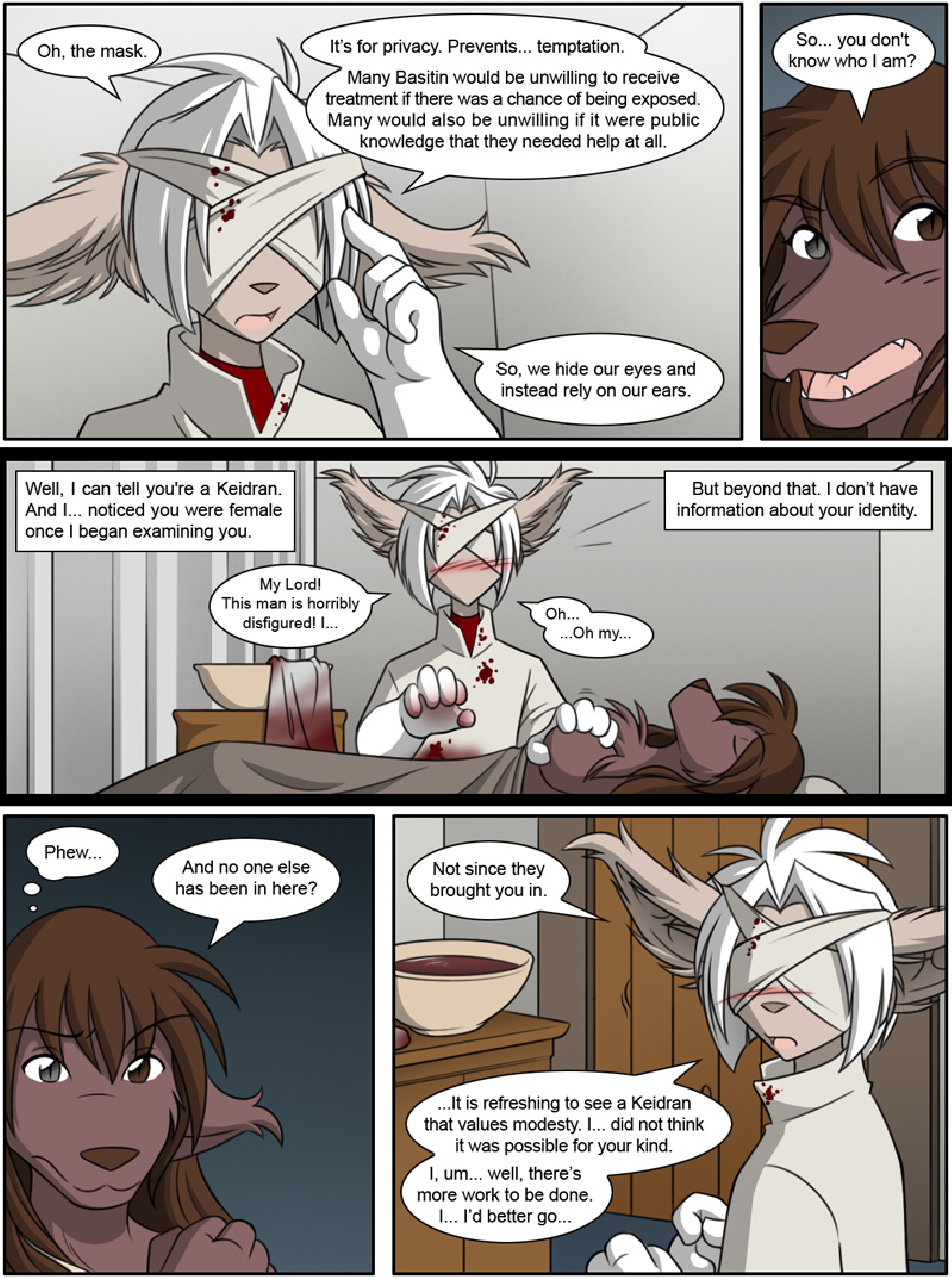

Not only are you a traitor... you... mated with one of these hairless apes?!
Karen, why are you antagonizing the Keidran?
INN
Because it's fun...
And now Sythe can't weasel out of coming with us!
I-It's a lie! I swear! She... she's five years older than me!
Enough of this!
Kill them all!
There's no need for violence! We haven't done anything to you! Please...
Let us go!
Oops...
Cool!
What the–? Stop them!

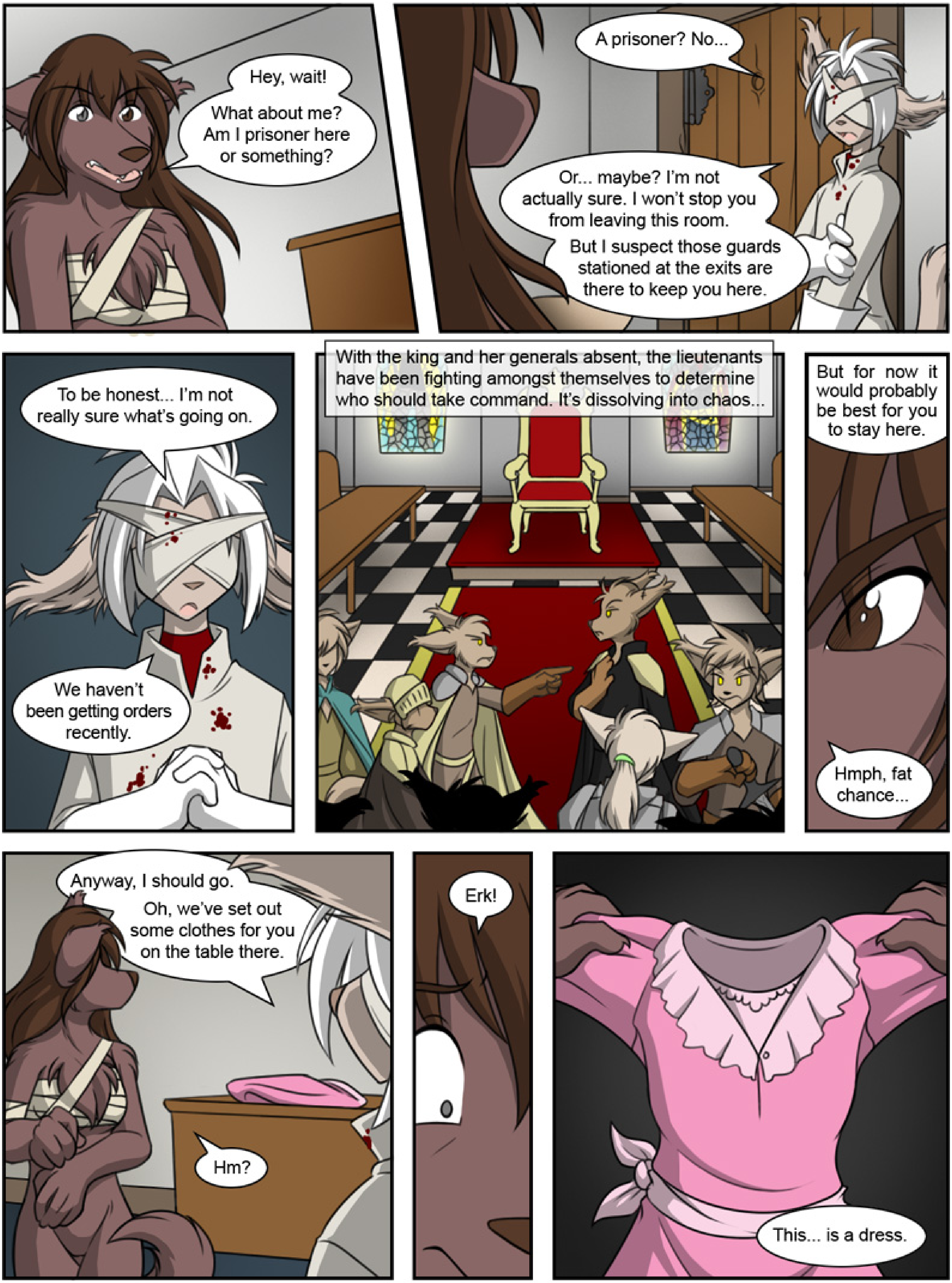

Urg... jeez, Raine. How about a little warning next time?
Sorry!
I didn't know you knew magic!
Do it again!
I don't! I mean, not really... My mother was the Grand Templar before Trace, and I inherited magic from her.
But I never had any formal training. It usually happens by accident.
Uh, guys...
We're only ten meters away from where we just were...
Hey! They're right over there!
Run!

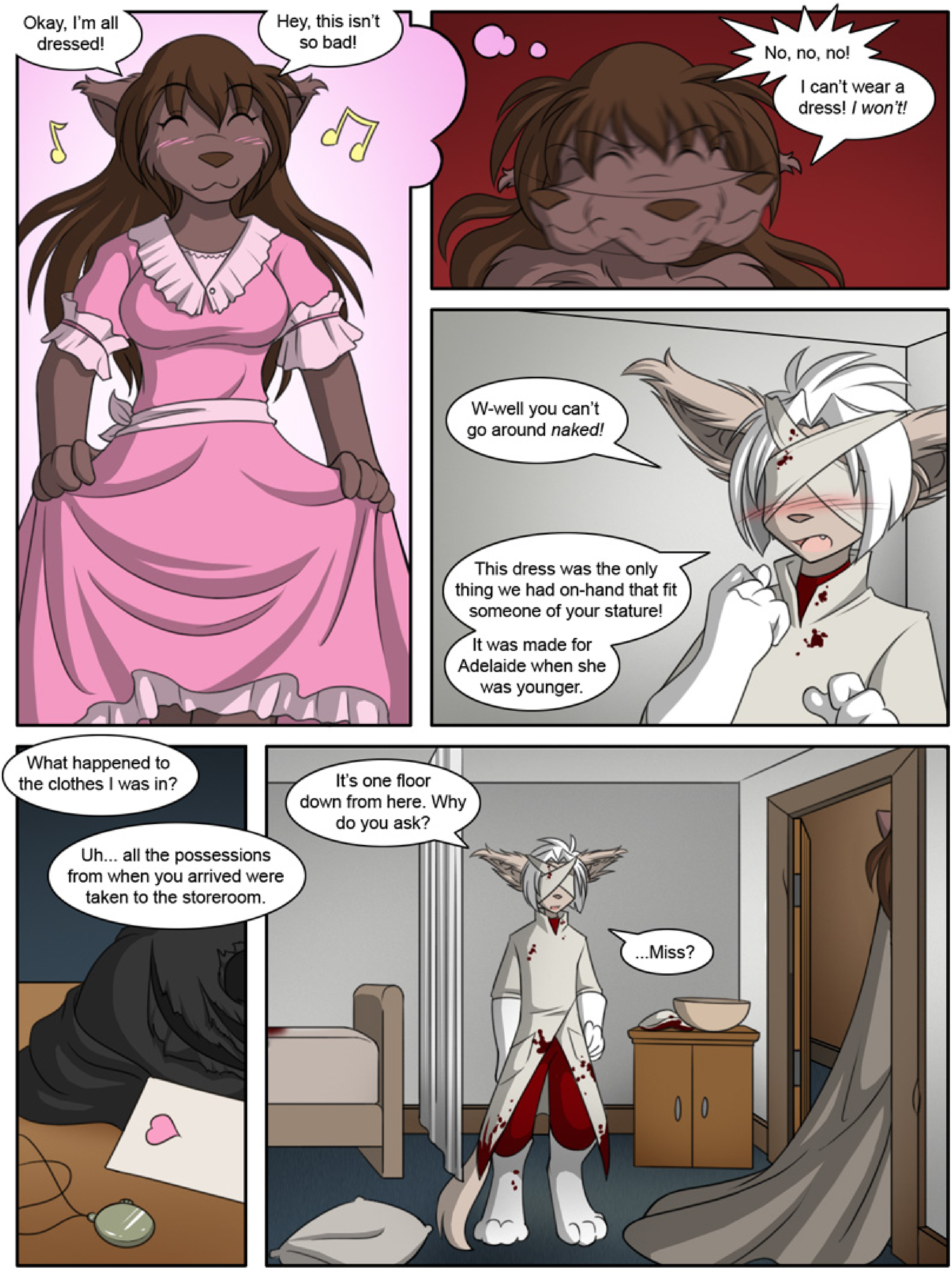

Should we go after them?
No. We still have orders to carry out.
Mage, contact the others and tell them to send the assassin.
They won't get far...
Deserter?
Yes, we just received news from the front.
The traitor's name is Sythe. Apparently, he eloped with a Human.
Unfortunately, he's also the nephew of someone important, so they want him returned alive if at all possible.
Just make sure they're all silenced one way or another.
I hope you haven't gotten rusty since your injury.
...Zen?
Zen, are you listening to me?
Huh? Oh, right. No problem!
SIGH...
Natani, where are you? Why can't I hear your thoughts...

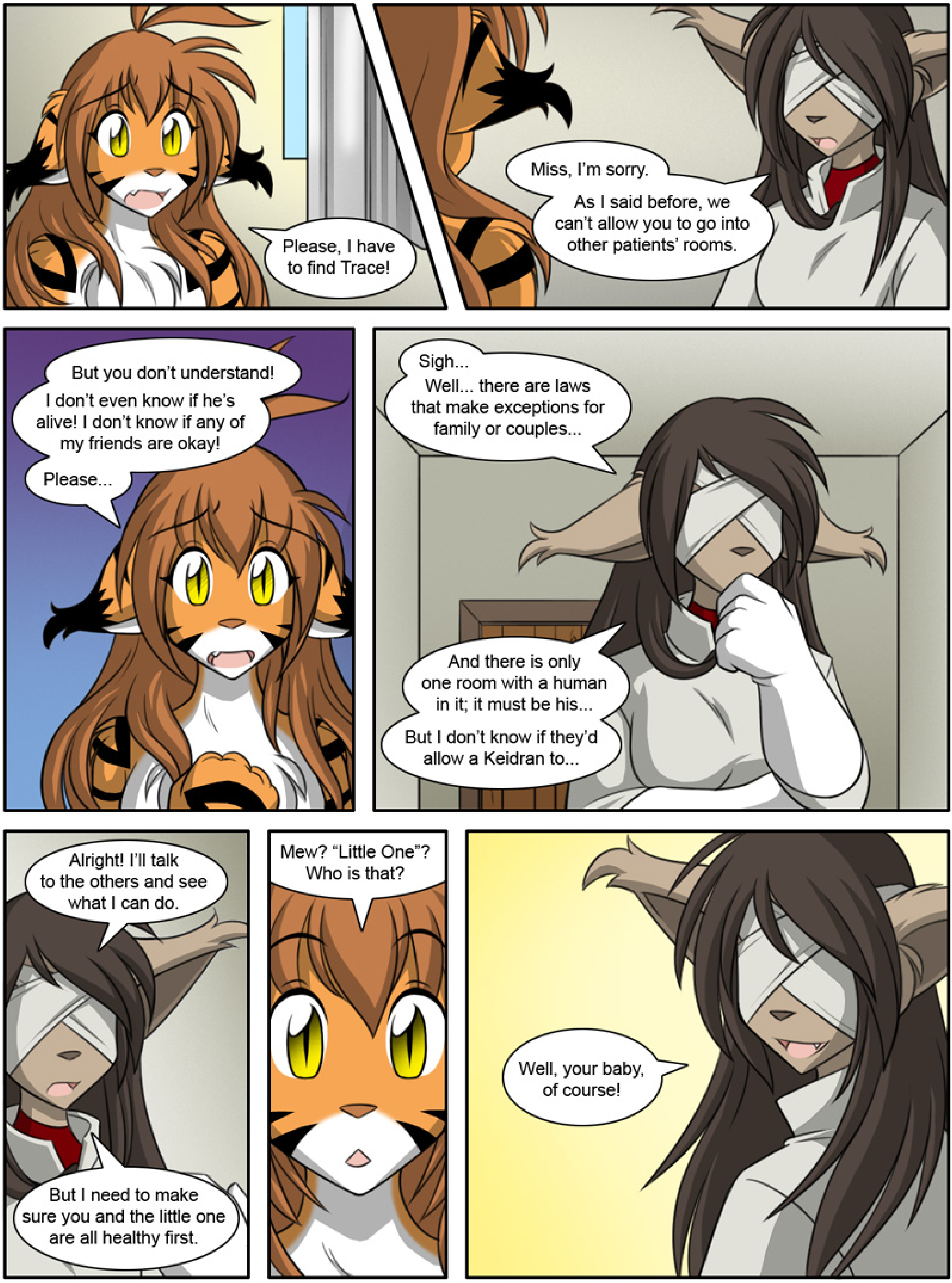

Nngh...
Hm?
Great... where am I and how many people do I have to kill?

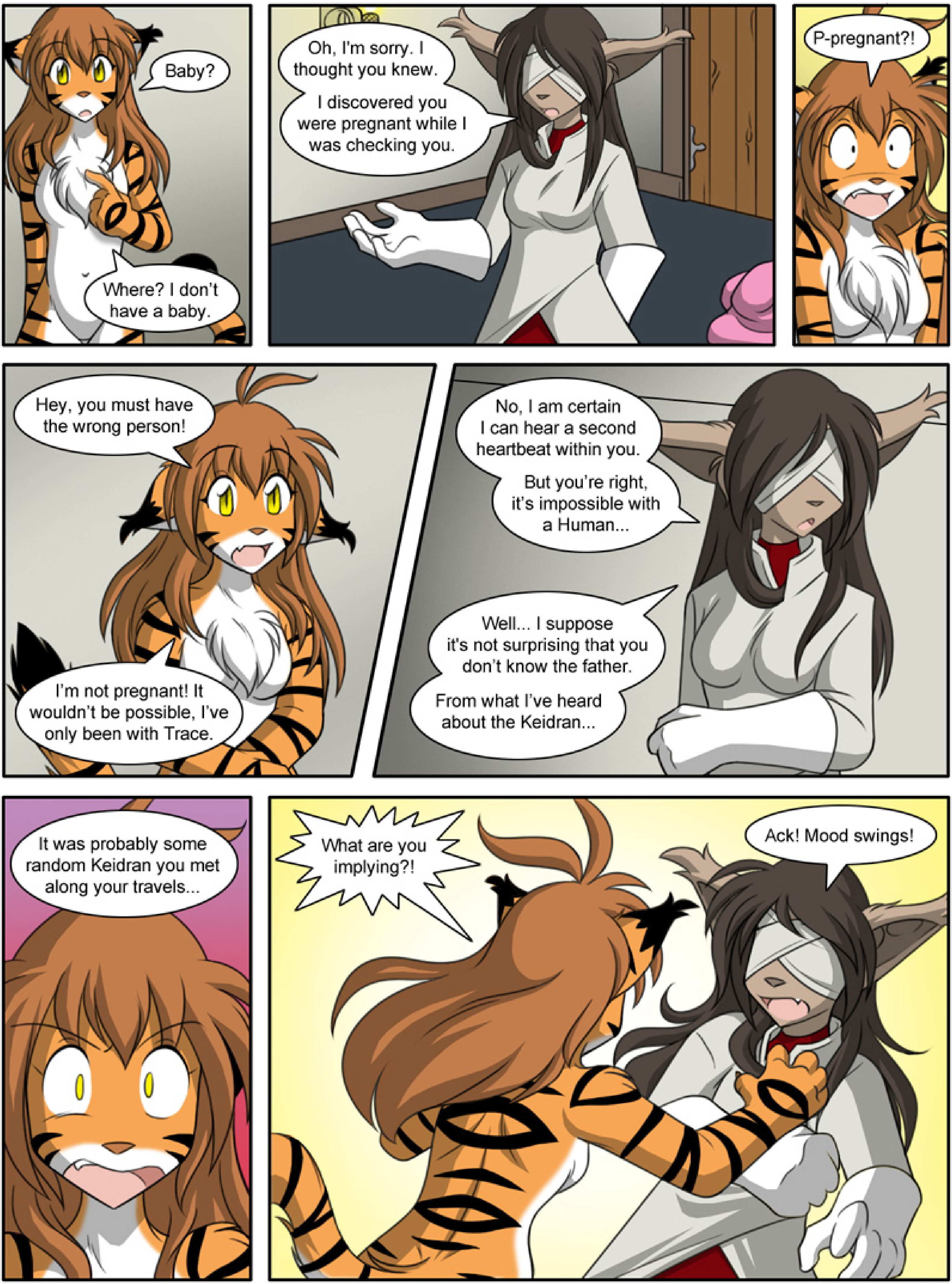

I've gotta get out of here.. augh!
Damn it, I can barely move...
How long was I out? Did any of the others see me like this?
Eh...?
Oh, come on! Why cover my feet and nothing else?
Oh, one of you has finally woken up!
Your injuries were quite severe. I wasn't sure if you'd survive.
So you were the one who–!
Huh?
Is there something wrong, Miss?

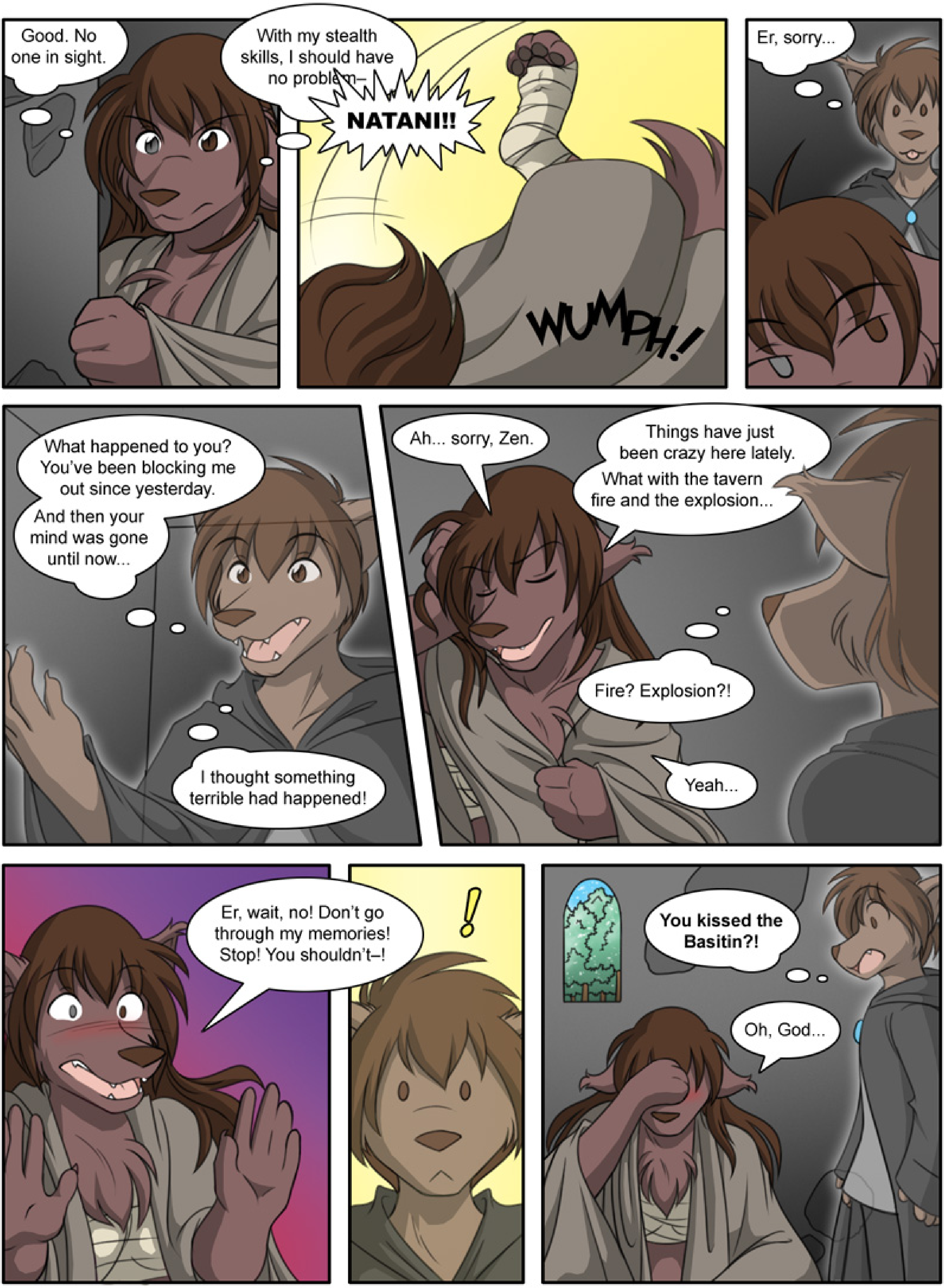

Oh, the mask.
It's for privacy. Prevents... temptation.
Many Basitin would be unwilling to receive treatment if there was a chance of being exposed. Many would also be unwilling if it were public knowledge that they needed help at all.
So, we hide our eyes and instead rely on our ears.
So... you don't know who I am?
Well, I can tell you're a Keidran. And I... noticed you were female once I began examining you.
My Lord! This man is horribly disfigured! I...
Oh... ...Oh my...
But beyond that. I don't have information about your identity.
Phew...
And no one else has been in here?
Not since they brought you in.
...It is refreshing to see a Keidran that values modesty. I... did not think it was possible for your kind.
I, um... well, there's more work to be done. I... I'd better go...

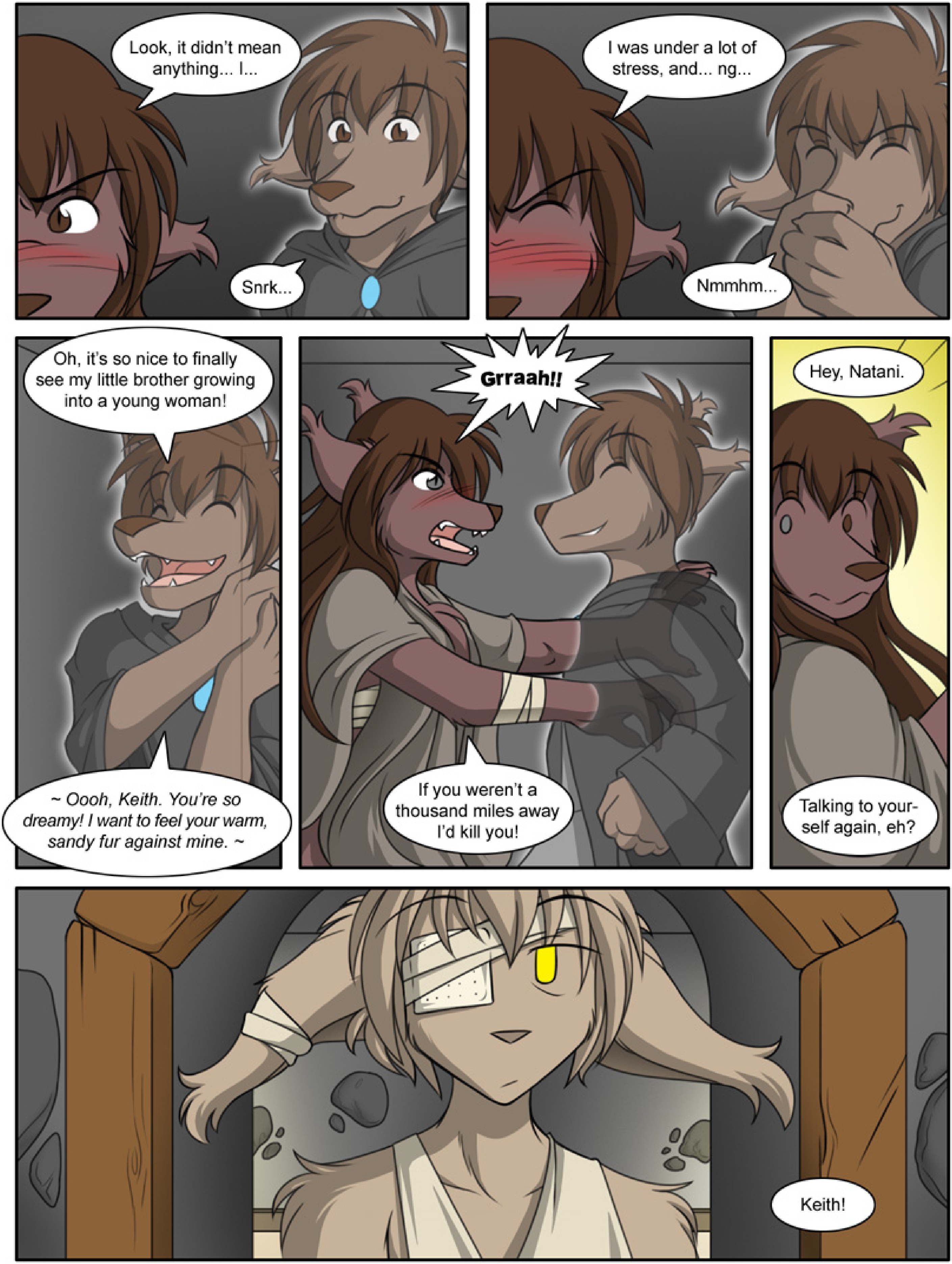

Hey, wait!
What about me? Am I prisoner here or something?
A prisoner? No...
Or... maybe? I'm not actually sure. I won't stop you from leaving this room.
But I suspect those guards stationed at the exits are there to keep you here.
To be honest... I'm not really sure what's going on.
We haven't been getting orders recently.
With the king and her generals absent, the lieutenants have been fighting amongst themselves to determine who should take command. It's dissolving into chaos...
But for now it would probably be best for you to stay here.
Hmph, fat chance...
Anyway, I should go.
Oh, we've set out some clothes for you on the table there.
Hm?
Erk!
This... is a dress.

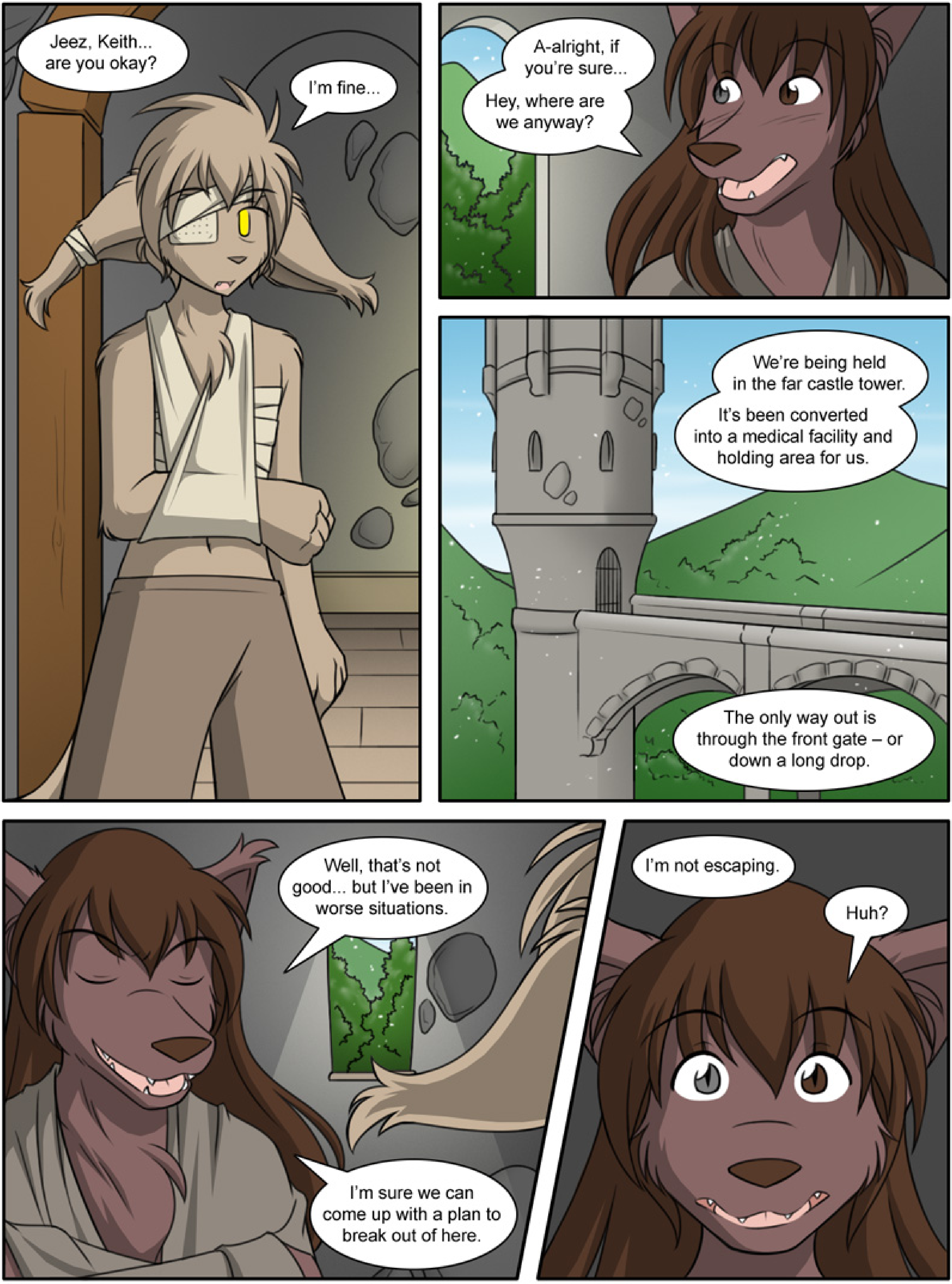

Okay, I'm all dressed!
Hey, this isn't so bad!
No, no, no!
I can't wear a dress! *I won't!*
W-well you can't go around *naked!*
This dress was the only thing we had on-hand that fit someone of your stature!
It was made for Adelaide when she was younger.
What happened to the clothes I was in?
Uh... all the possessions from when you arrived were taken to the storeroom.
It's one floor down from here. Why do you ask?
...Miss?

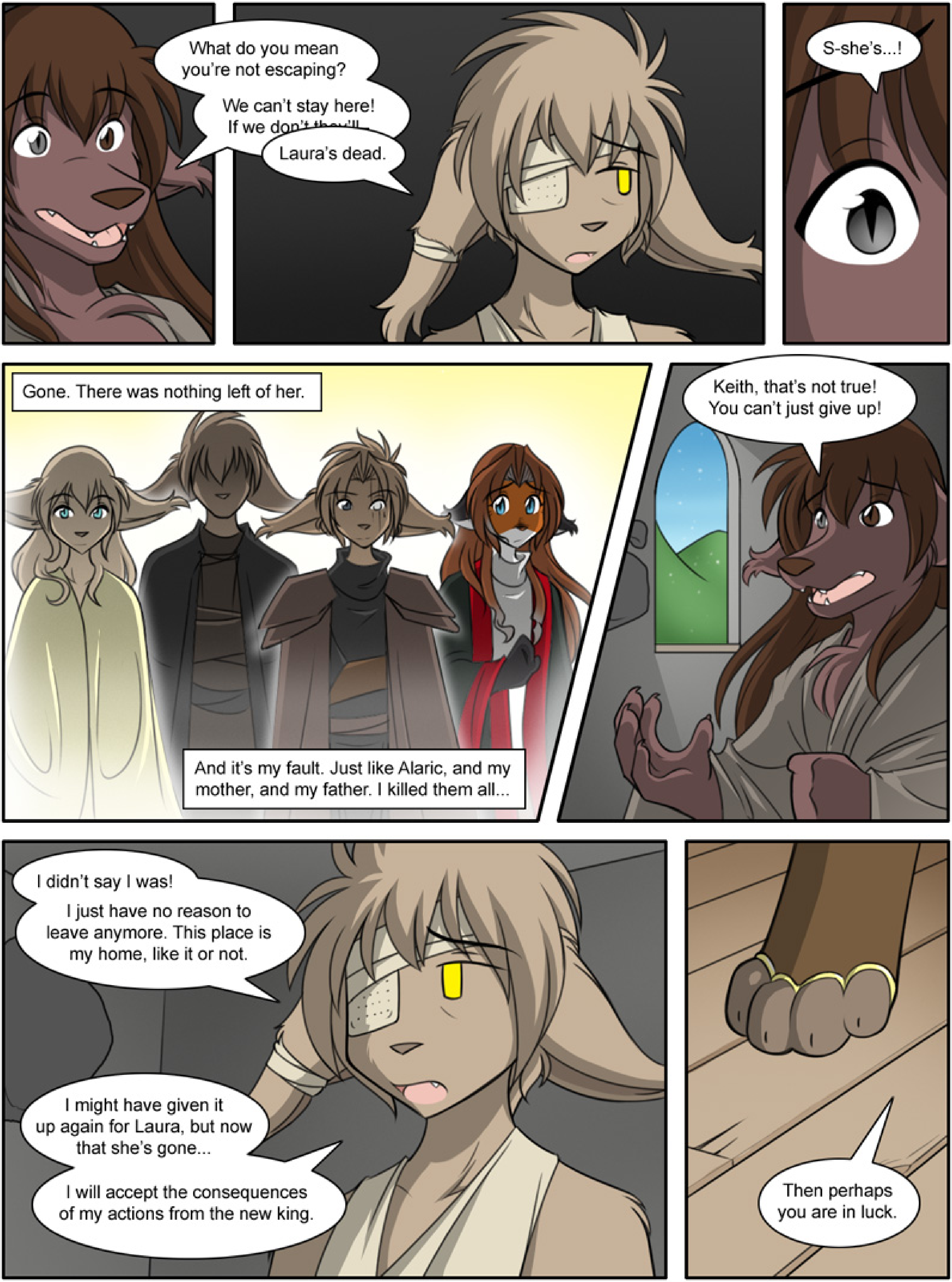

Please, I have to find Trace!
Miss, I'm sorry.
As I said before, we can't allow you to go into other patients' rooms.
But you don't understand!
I don't even know if he's alive! I don't know if any of my friends are okay!
Please...
Sigh...
Well... there are laws that make exceptions for family or couples...
And there is only one room with a human in it; it must be his...
But I don't know if they'd allow a Keidran to...
Alright! I'll talk to the others and see what I can do.
But I need to make sure you and the little one are all healthy first.
Mew? "Little One"? Who is that?
Well, your baby, of course!

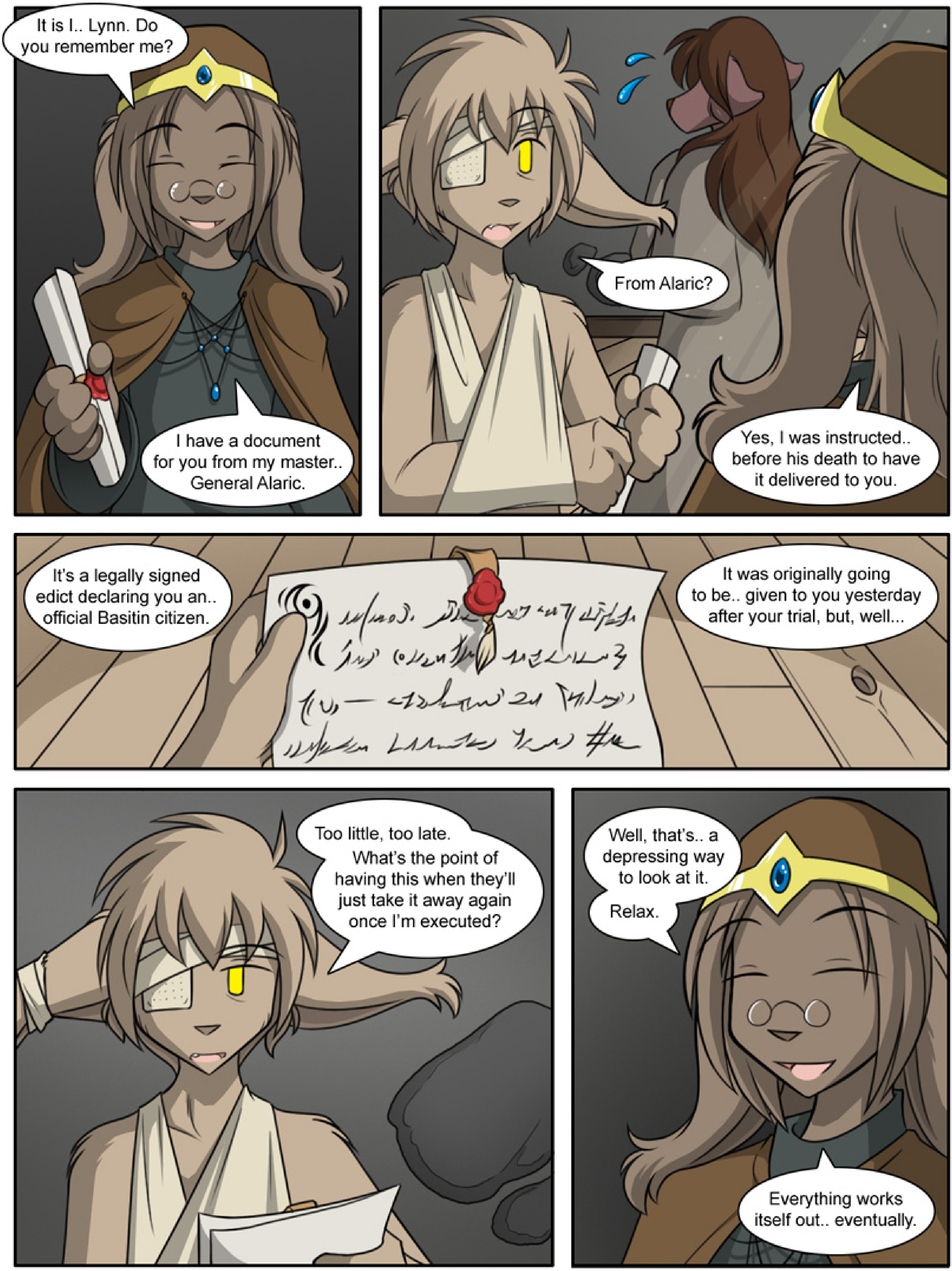

Baby?
Where? I don't have a baby.
Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you knew.
I discovered you were pregnant while I was checking you.
P-pregnant?!
Hey, you must have the wrong person!
I'm not pregnant! It wouldn't be possible, I've only been with Trace.
No, I am certain I can hear a second heartbeat within you.
But you're right, it's impossible with a Human...
Well... I suppose it's not surprising that you don't know the father.
From what I've heard about the Keidran...
It was probably some random Keidran you met along your travels...
What are you implying?!
Ack! Mood swings!

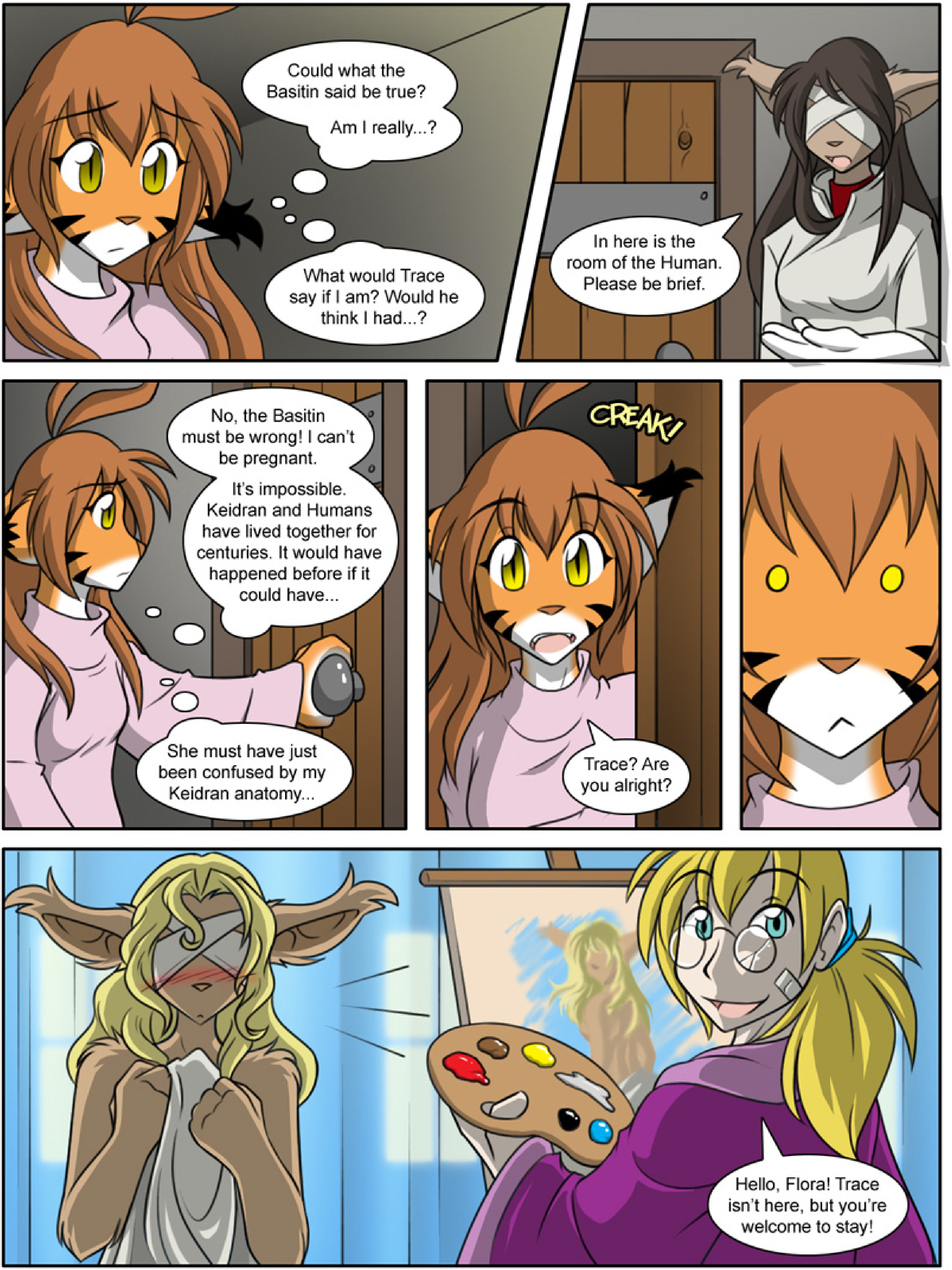

Good. No one in sight.
With my stealth skills, I should have no problem–
NATANI!!
WUMPH!
Er, sorry...
What happened to you? You've been blocking me out since yesterday.
And then your mind was gone until now...
I thought something terrible had happened!
Ah... sorry, Zen.
Things have just been crazy here lately.
What with the tavern fire and the explosion...
Fire? Explosion?!
Yeah...
Er, wait, no! Don't go through my memories! Stop! You shouldn't–!
!
You kissed the Basitin?!
Oh, God...

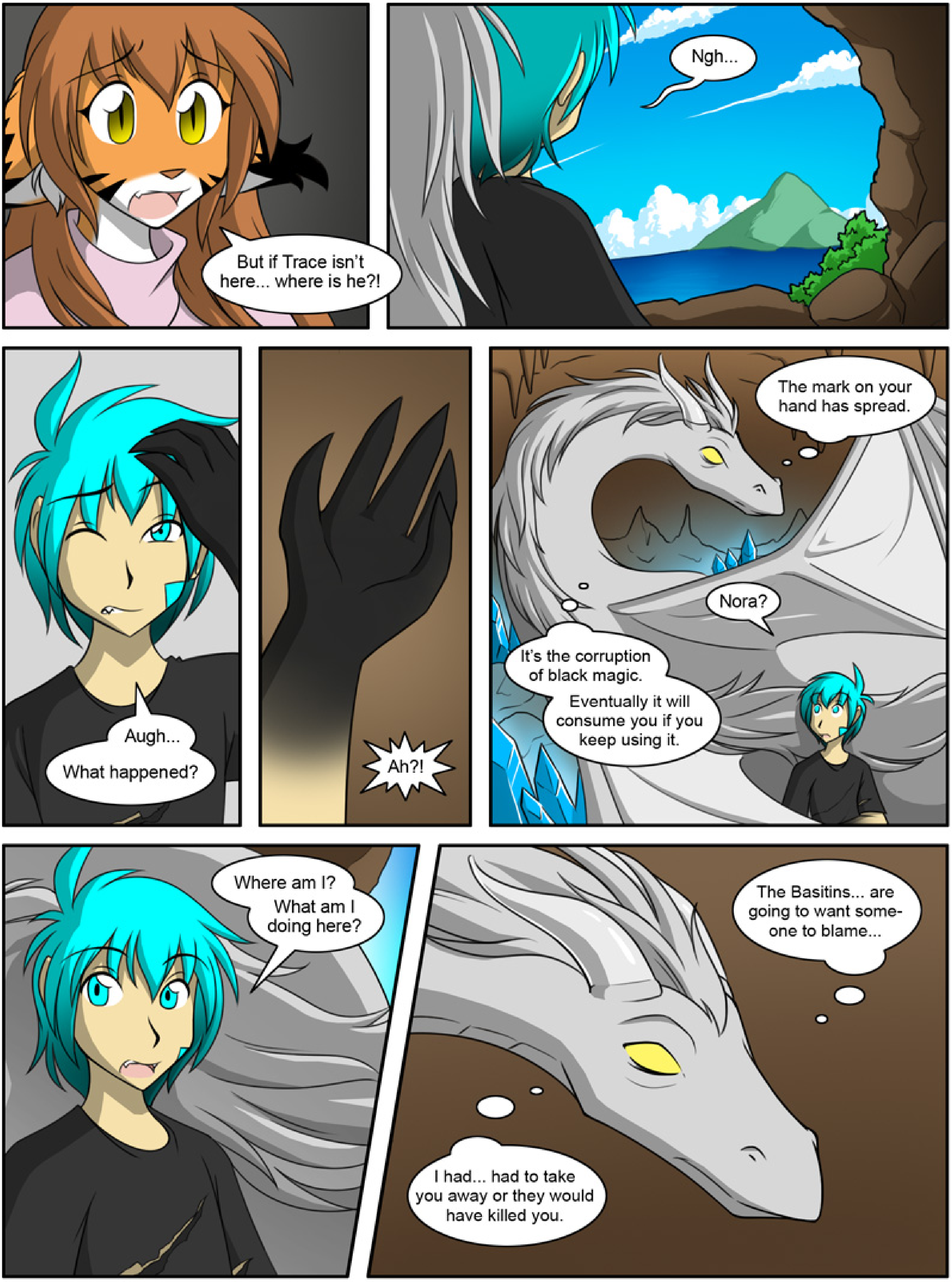

Look, it didn't mean anything... I...
Snrk...
I was under a lot of stress, and... ng...
Nmmhm...
Oh, it's so nice to finally see my little brother growing into a young woman!
~ *Oooh, Keith. You're so dreamy! I want to feel your warm, sandy fur against mine.* ~
Grraah!!
If you weren't a thousand miles away I'd kill you!
Hey, Natani.
Talking to your-self again, eh?
Keith!

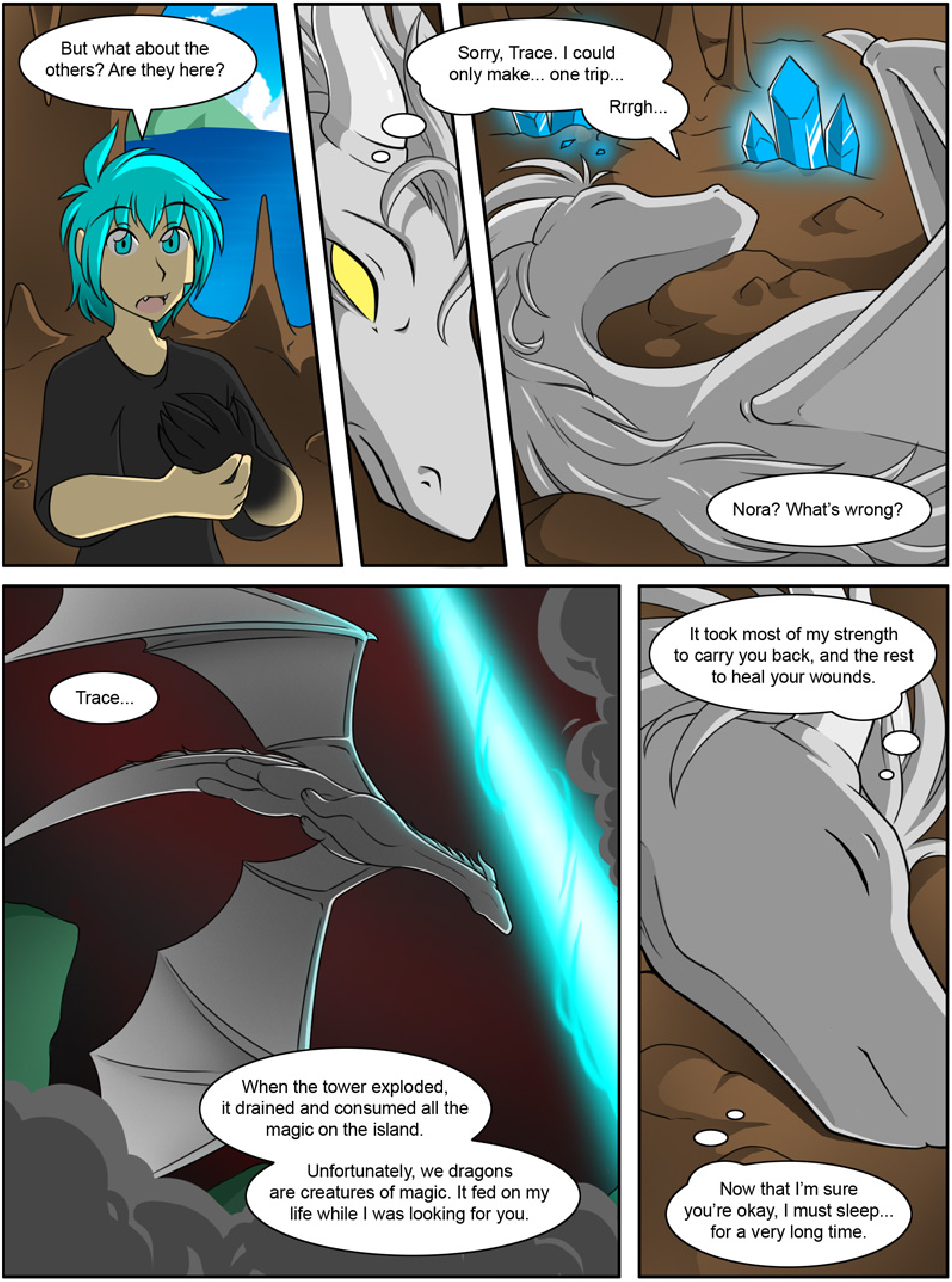

Jeez, Keith... are you okay?
I'm fine...
A-alright, if you're sure...
Hey, where are we anyway?
We're being held in the far castle tower.
It's been converted into a medical facility and holding area for us.
The only way out is through the front gate – or down a long drop.
Well, that's not good... but I've been in worse situations.
I'm sure we can come up with a plan to break out of here.
I'm not escaping.
Huh?

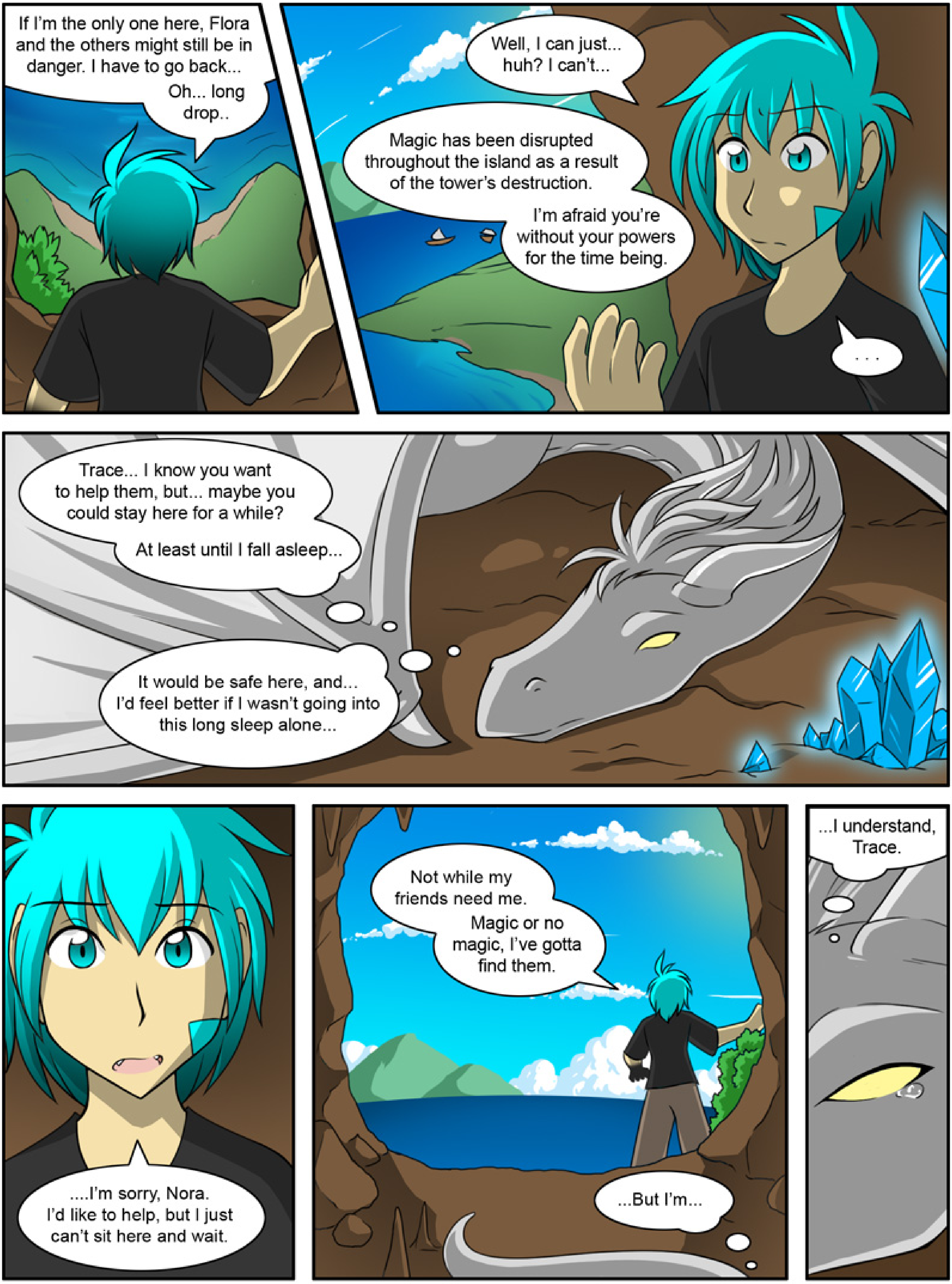

What do you mean you're not escaping?
We can't stay here! If we don't they'll
Laura's dead.
S-she's...!
Gone. There was nothing left of her.
And it's my fault. Just like Alaric, and my mother, and my father. I killed them all...
Keith, that's not true! You can't just give up!
I didn't say I was!
I just have no reason to leave anymore. This place is my home, like it or not.
I might have given it up again for Laura, but now that she's gone...
I will accept the consequences of my actions from the new king.
Then perhaps you are in luck.

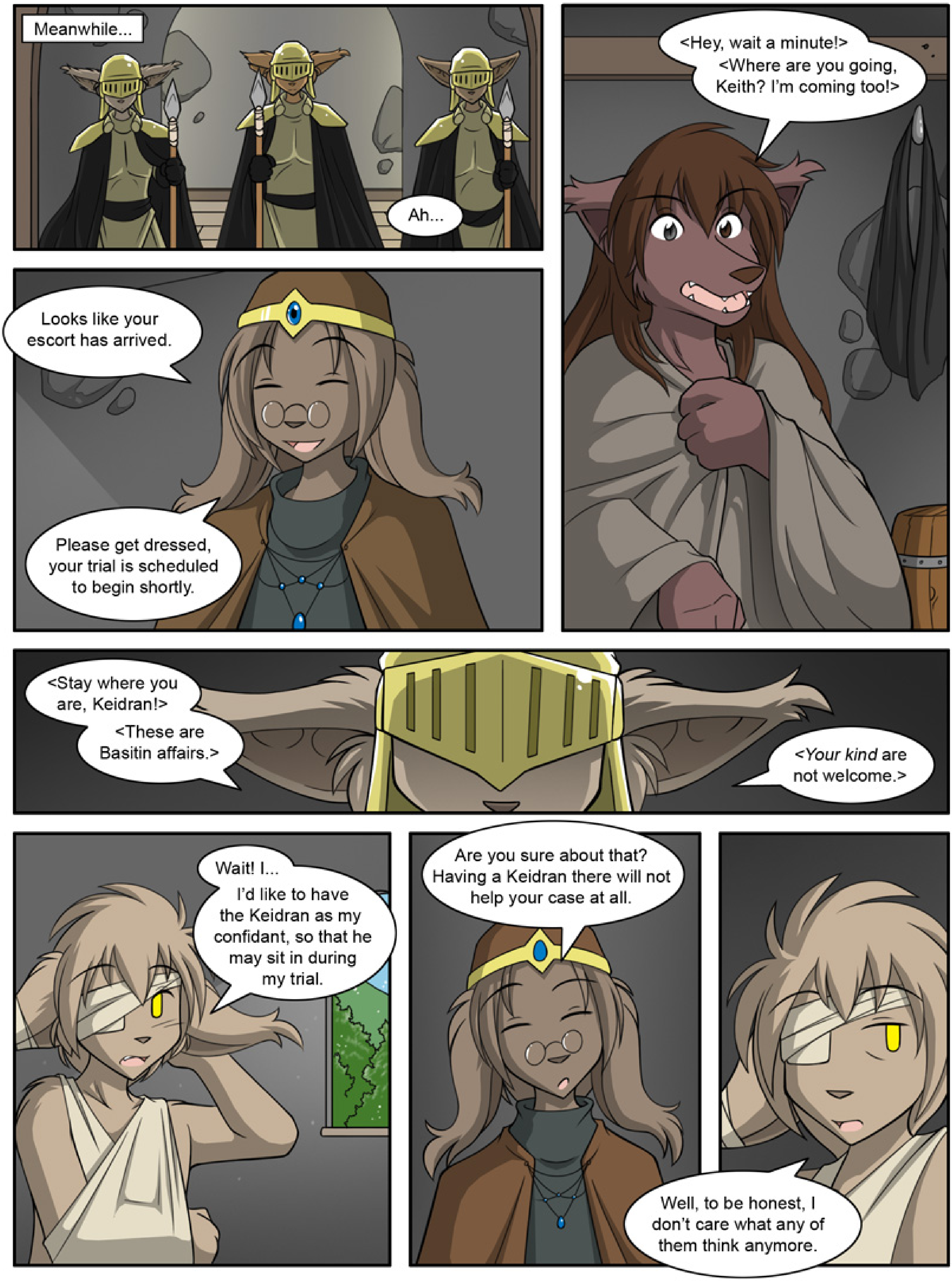

It is I.. Lynn. Do you remember me?
I have a document for you from my master.. General Alaric.
From Alaric?
Yes, I was instructed.. before his death to have it delivered to you.
It's a legally signed edict declaring you an.. official Basitin citizen.
It was originally going to be.. given to you yesterday after your trial, but, well...
Too little, too late.
What's the point of having this when they'll just take it away again once I'm executed?
Well, that's.. a depressing way to look at it.
Relax.
Everything works itself out.. eventually.

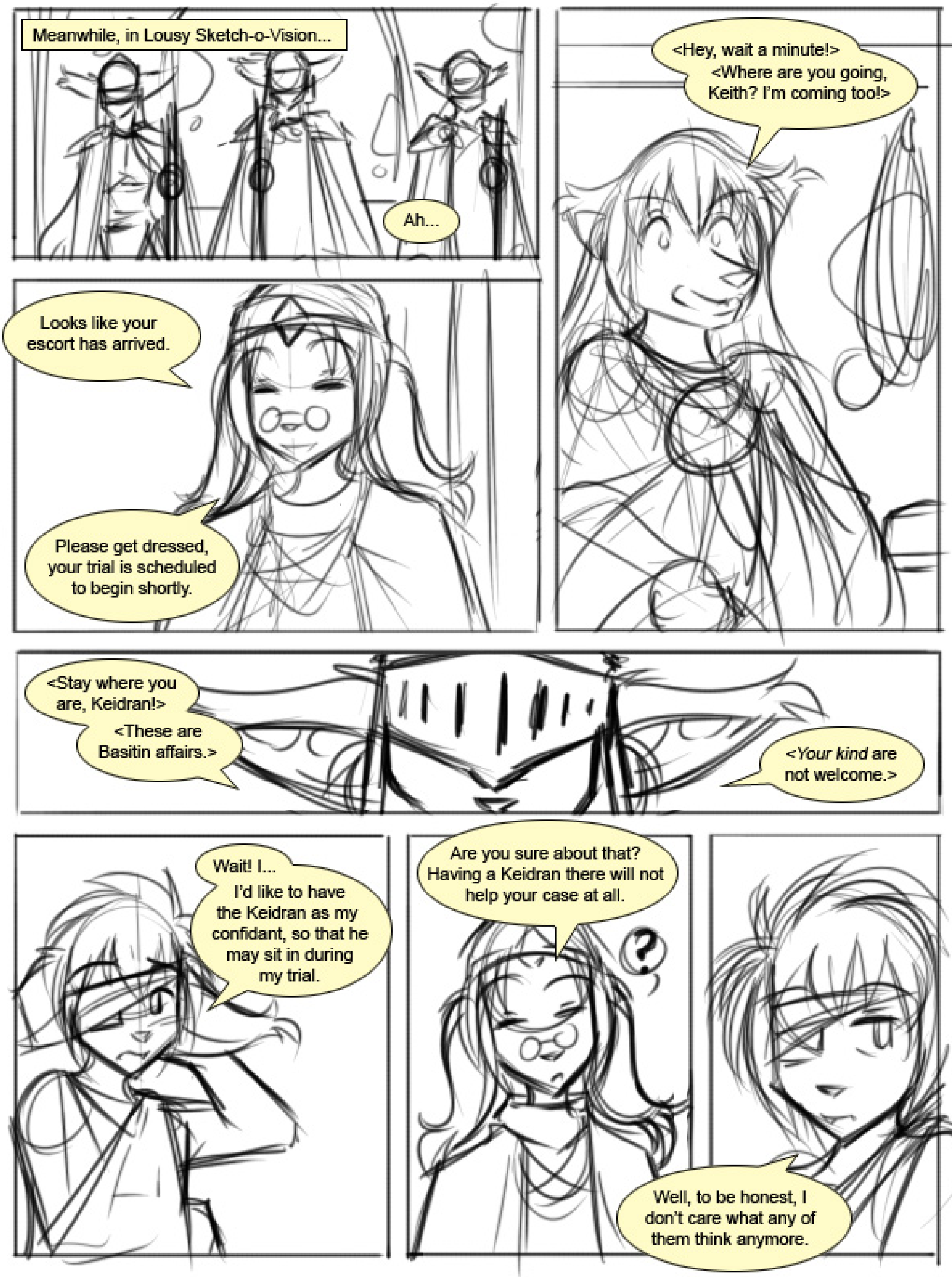

Could what the Basitin said be true?
Am I really...?
What would Trace say if I am? Would he think I had...?
In here is the room of the Human. Please be brief.
No, the Basitin must be wrong! I can't be pregnant.
It's impossible. Keidran and Humans have lived together for centuries. It would have happened before if it could have...
She must have just been confused by my Keidran anatomy...
CREAK!
Trace? Are you alright?
Hello, Flora! Trace isn't here, but you're welcome to stay!


But if Trace isn't here... where is he?!
Ngh...
Augh...
What happened?
Ah?!
The mark on your hand has spread.
Nora?
It's the corruption of black magic.
Eventually it will consume you if you keep using it.
Where am I?
What am I doing here?
The Basitins... are going to want some-one to blame...
I had... had to take you away or they would have killed you.


But what about the others? Are they here?
Sorry, Trace. I could only make... one trip...
Rrrgh...
Nora? What's wrong?
Trace...
When the tower exploded, it drained and consumed all the magic on the island.
Unfortunately, we dragons are creatures of magic. It fed on my life while I was looking for you.
It took most of my strength to carry you back, and the rest to heal your wounds.
Now that I'm sure you're okay, I must sleep... for a very long time.


If I'm the only one here, Flora and the others might still be in danger. I have to go back...
Oh... long drop..
Well, I can just... huh? I can't...
Magic has been disrupted throughout the island as a result of the tower's destruction.
I'm afraid you're without your powers for the time being.
. . .
Trace... I know you want to help them, but... maybe you could stay here for a while?
At least until I fall asleep...
It would be safe here, and... I'd feel better if I wasn't going into this long sleep alone...
....I'm sorry, Nora. I'd like to help, but I just can't sit here and wait.
Not while my friends need me.
Magic or no magic, I've gotta find them.
...But I'm...
...I understand, Trace.


Meanwhile...
Ah...
Looks like your escort has arrived.
Please get dressed, your trial is scheduled to begin shortly.
<Hey, wait a minute!>
<Where are you going, Keith? I'm coming too!>
<Stay where you are, Keidran!>
<These are Basitin affairs.>
<*Your kind* are not welcome.>
Wait! I...
I'd like to have the Keidran as my confidant, so that he may sit in during my trial.
Are you sure about that? Having a Keidran there will not help your case at all.
Well, to be honest, I don't care what any of them think anymore.


Meanwhile, in Lousy Sketch-o-Vision...
Ah...
<Hey, wait a minute!>
<Where are you going, Keith? I'm coming too!>
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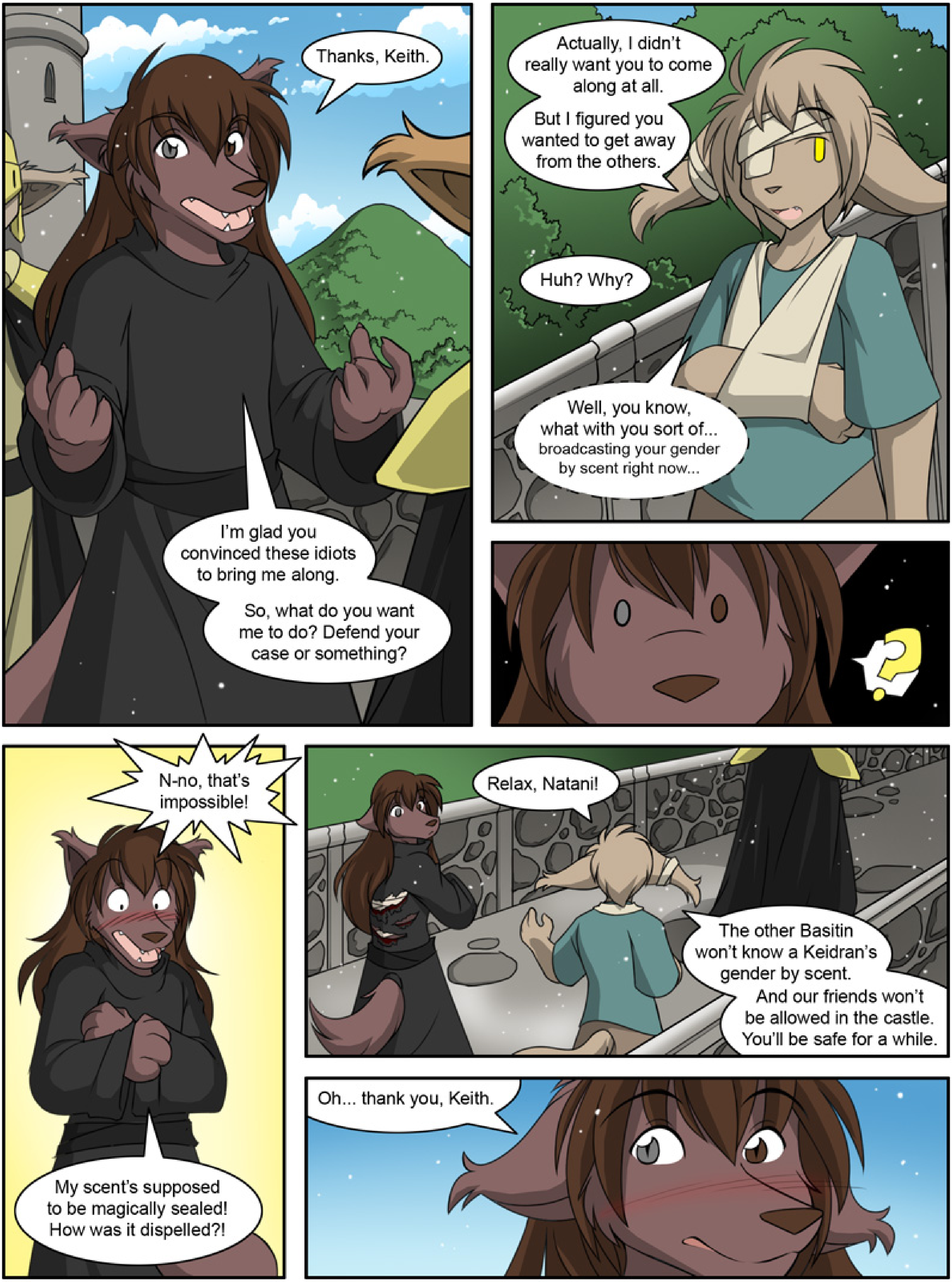
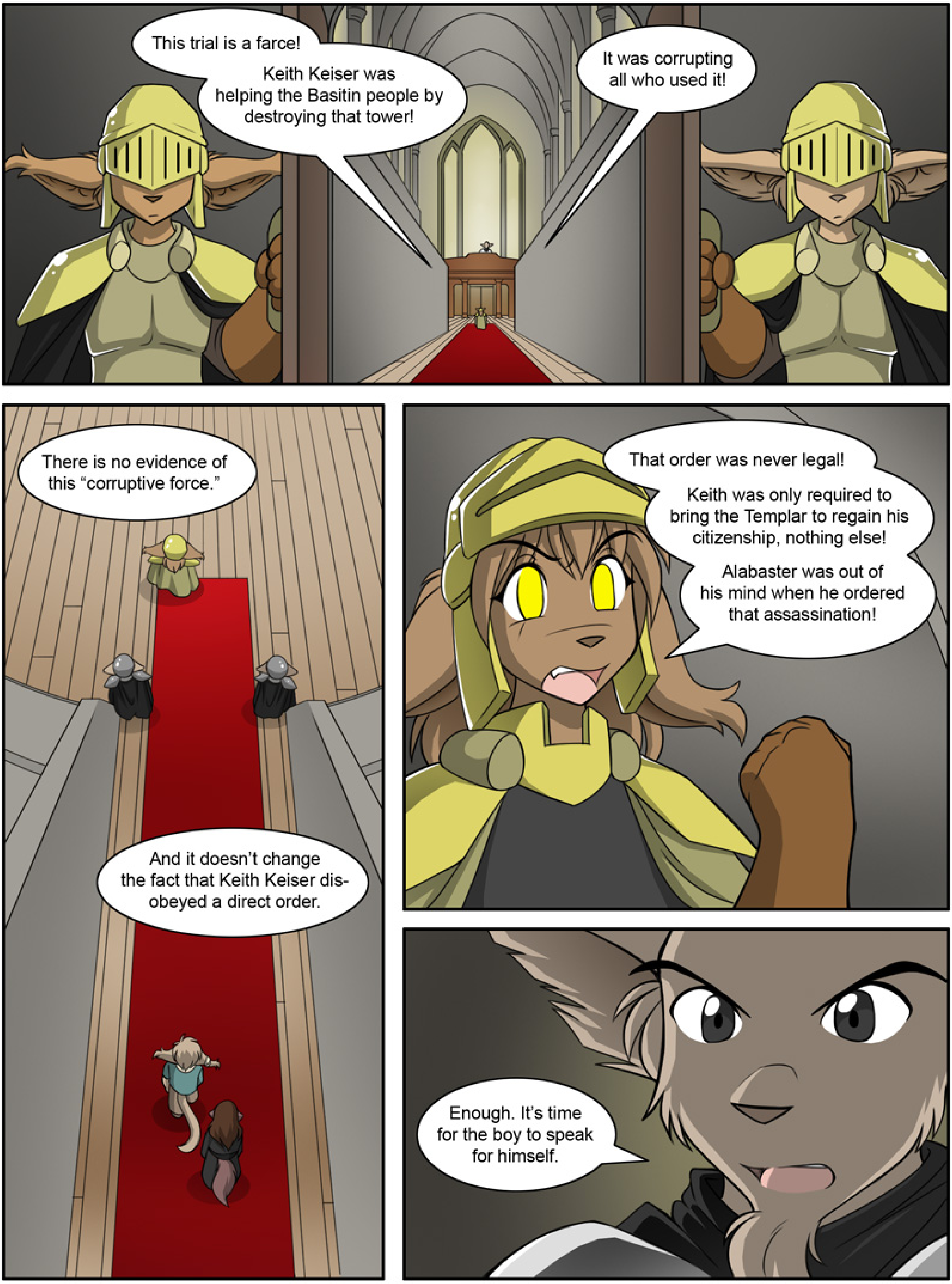
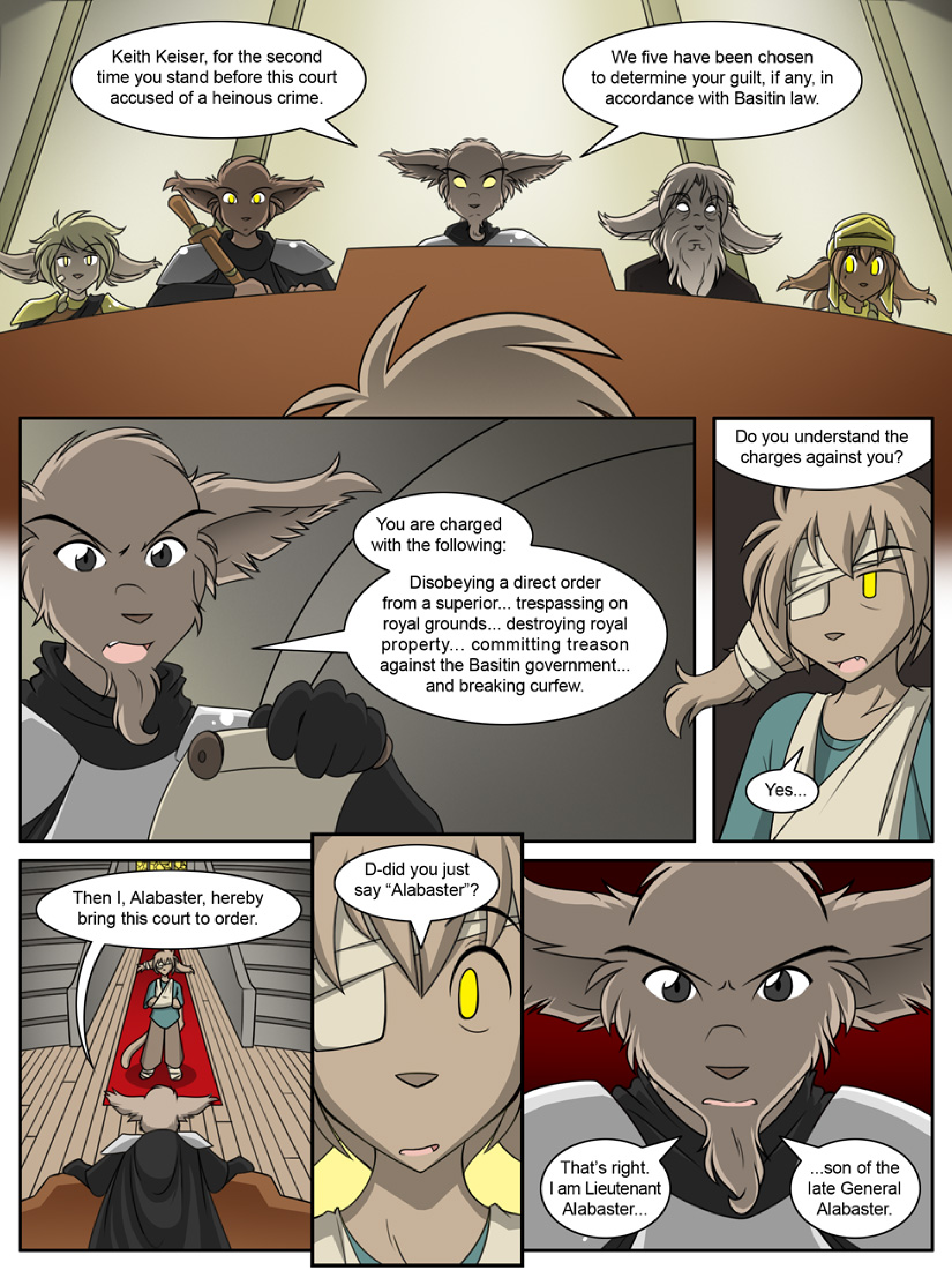
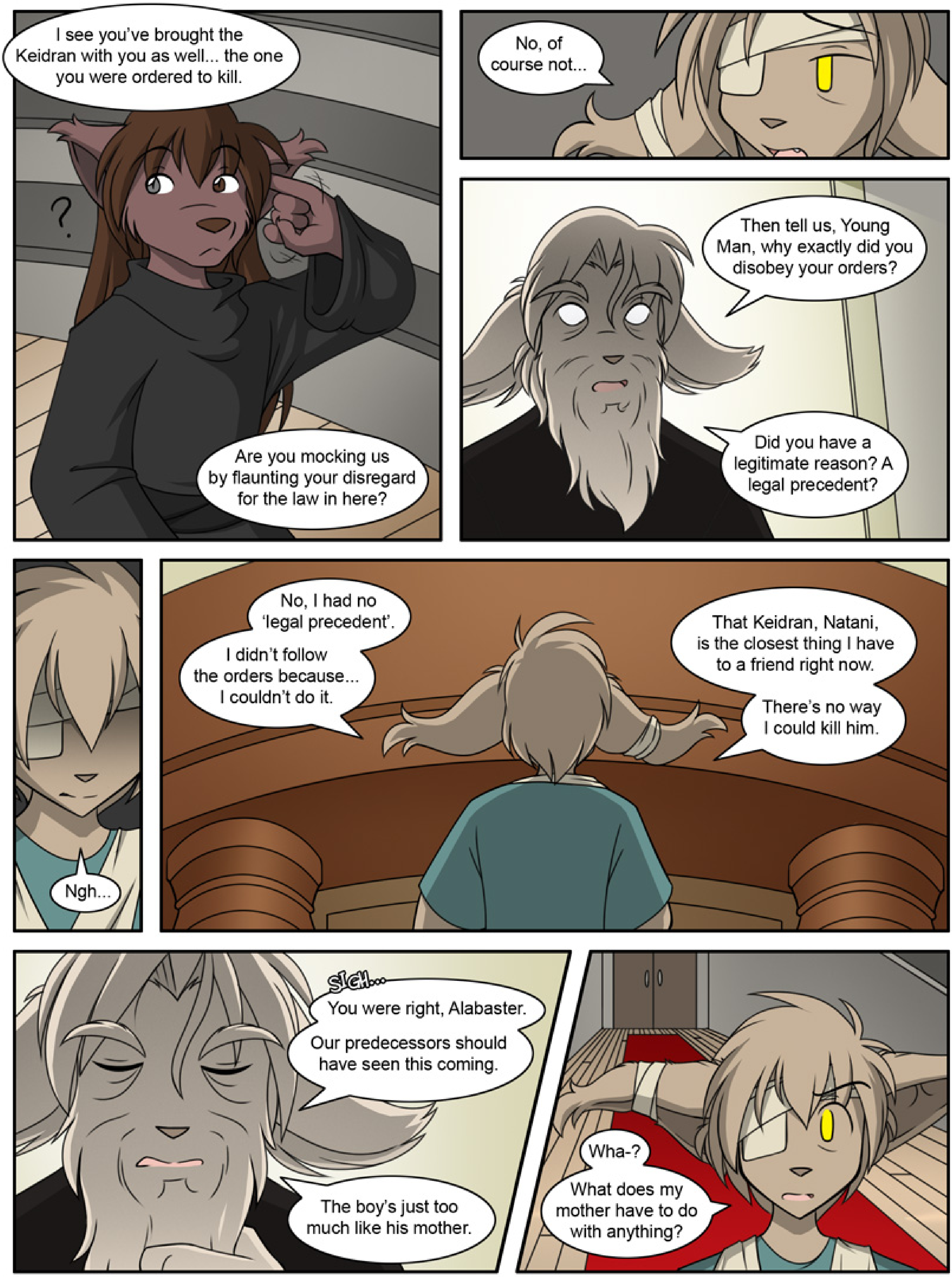
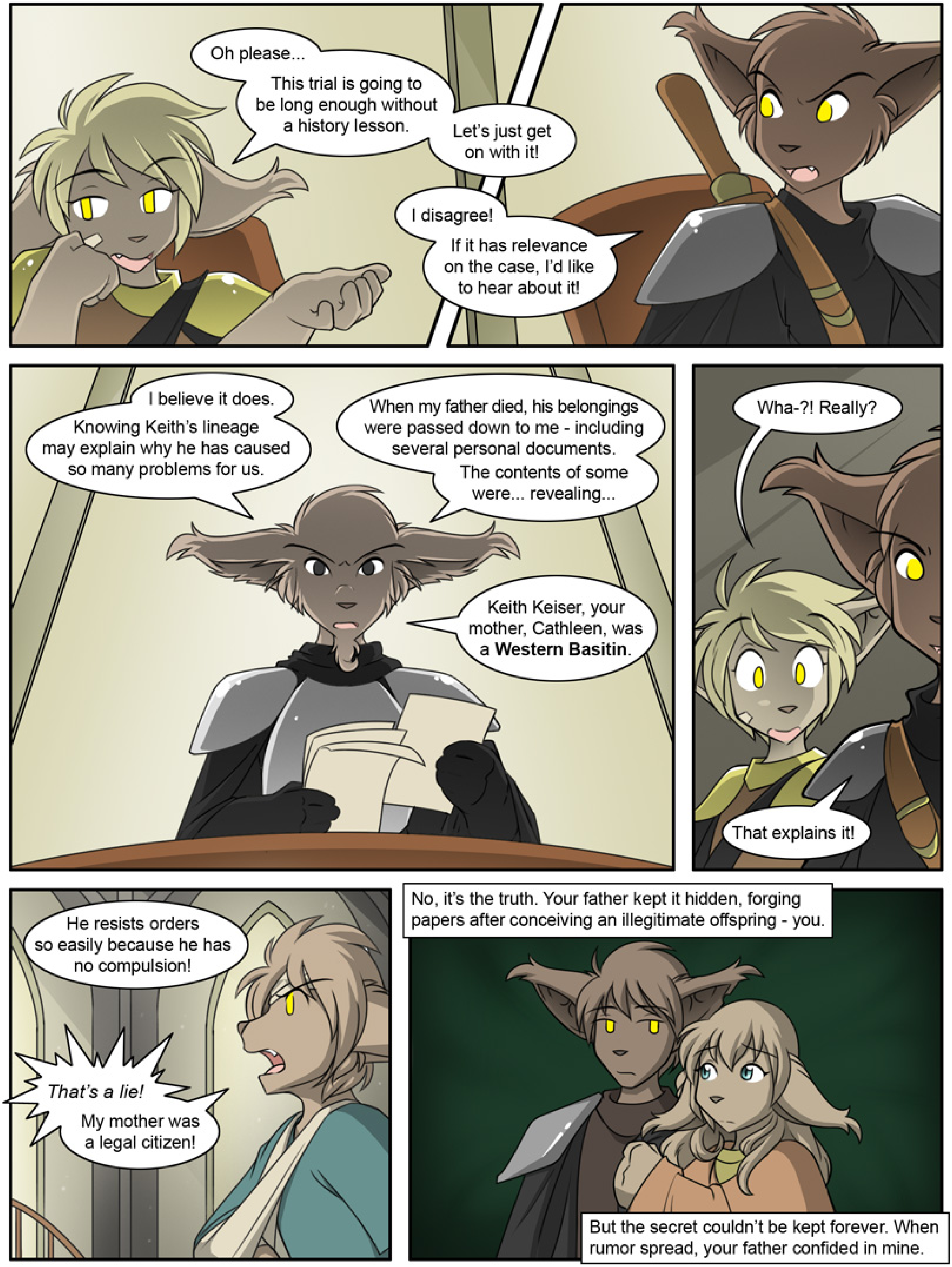
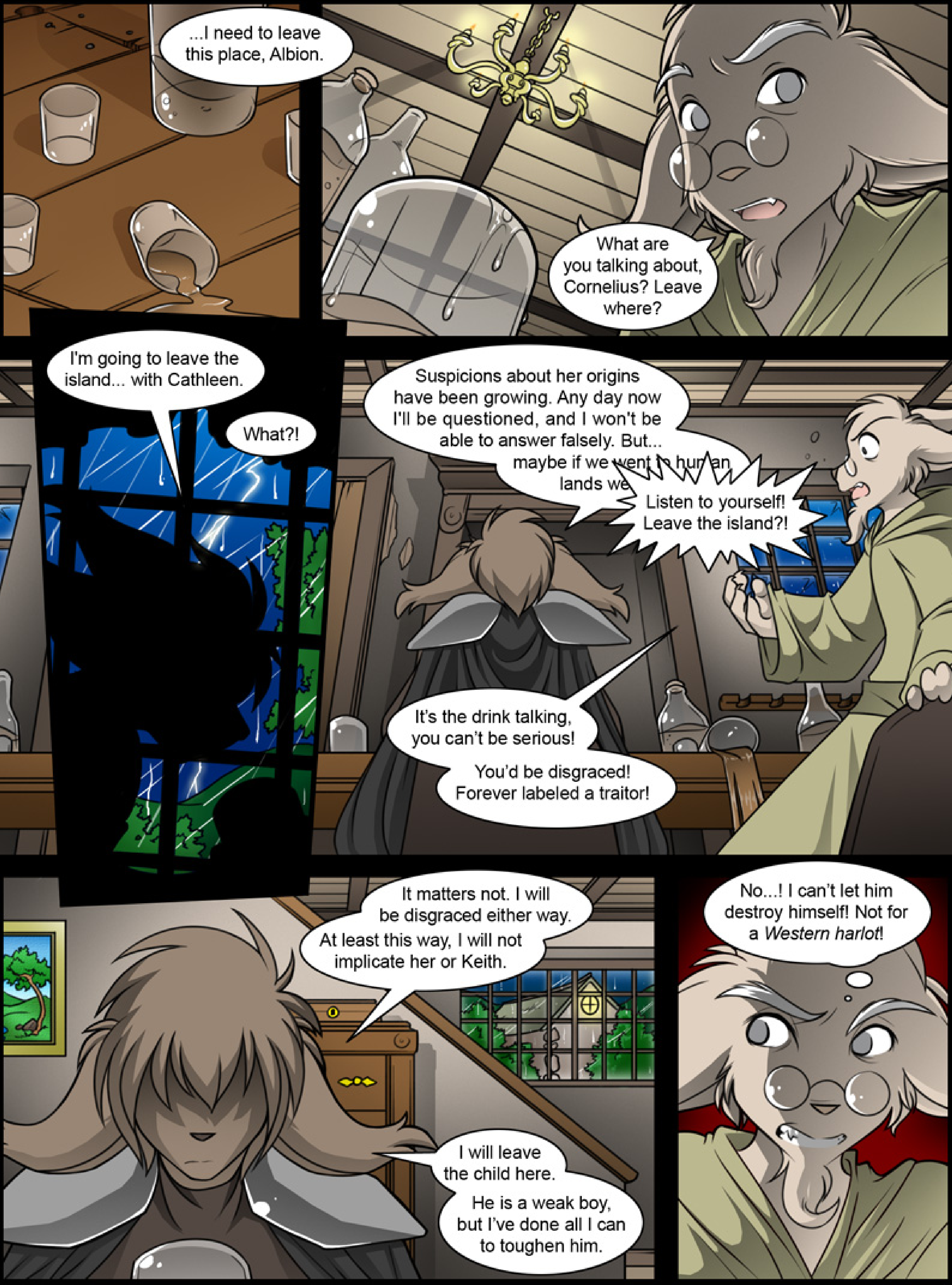

Thanks, Keith.
I'm glad you convinced these idiots to bring me along.
So, what do you want me to do? Defend your case or something?
Actually, I didn't really want you to come along at all.
But I figured you wanted to get away from the others.
Huh? Why?
Well, you know, what with you sort of... broadcasting your gender by scent right now...
?
N-no, that's impossible!
My scent's supposed to be magically sealed! How was it dispelled?!
Relax, Natani!
The other Basitin won't know a Keidran's gender by scent.
And our friends won't be allowed in the castle. You'll be safe for a while.
Oh... thank you, Keith.


This trial is a farce!
Keith Keiser was helping the Basitin people by destroying that tower!
It was corrupting all who used it!
There is no evidence of this "corruptive force."
And it doesn't change the fact that Keith Keiser disobeyed a direct order.
That order was never legal!
Keith was only required to bring the Templar to regain his citizenship, nothing else!
Alabaster was out of his mind when he ordered that assassination!
Enough. It's time for the boy to speak for himself.

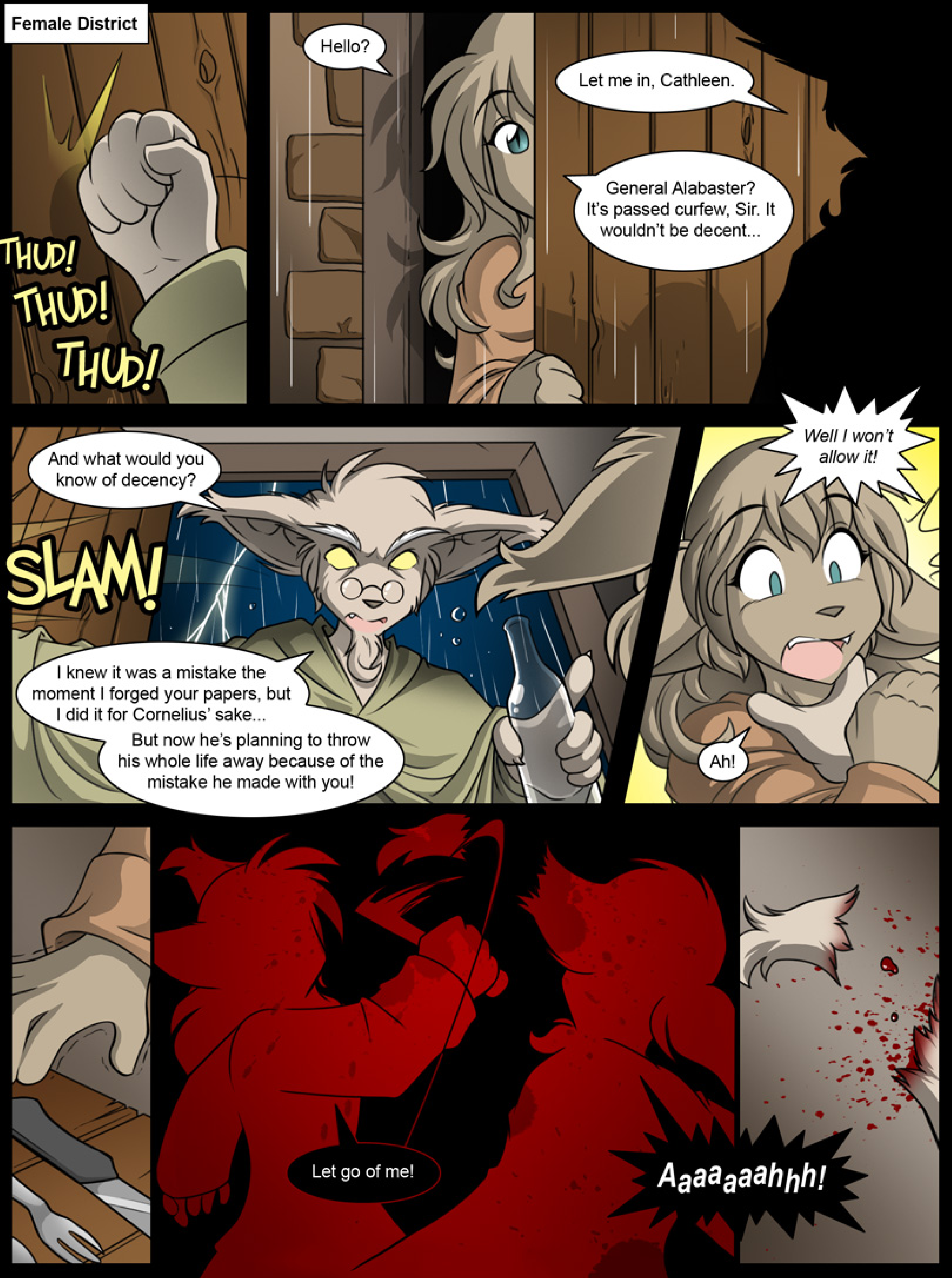

Keith Keiser, for the second time you stand before this court accused of a heinous crime.
We five have been chosen to determine your guilt, if any, in accordance with Basitin law.
You are charged with the following:
Disobeying a direct order from a superior... trespassing on royal grounds... destroying royal property... committing treason against the Basitin government... and breaking curfew.
Do you understand the charges against you?
Yes...
Then I, Alabaster, hereby bring this court to order.
D-did you just say "Alabaster"?
That's right. I am Lieutenant Alabaster...
...son of the late General Alabaster.

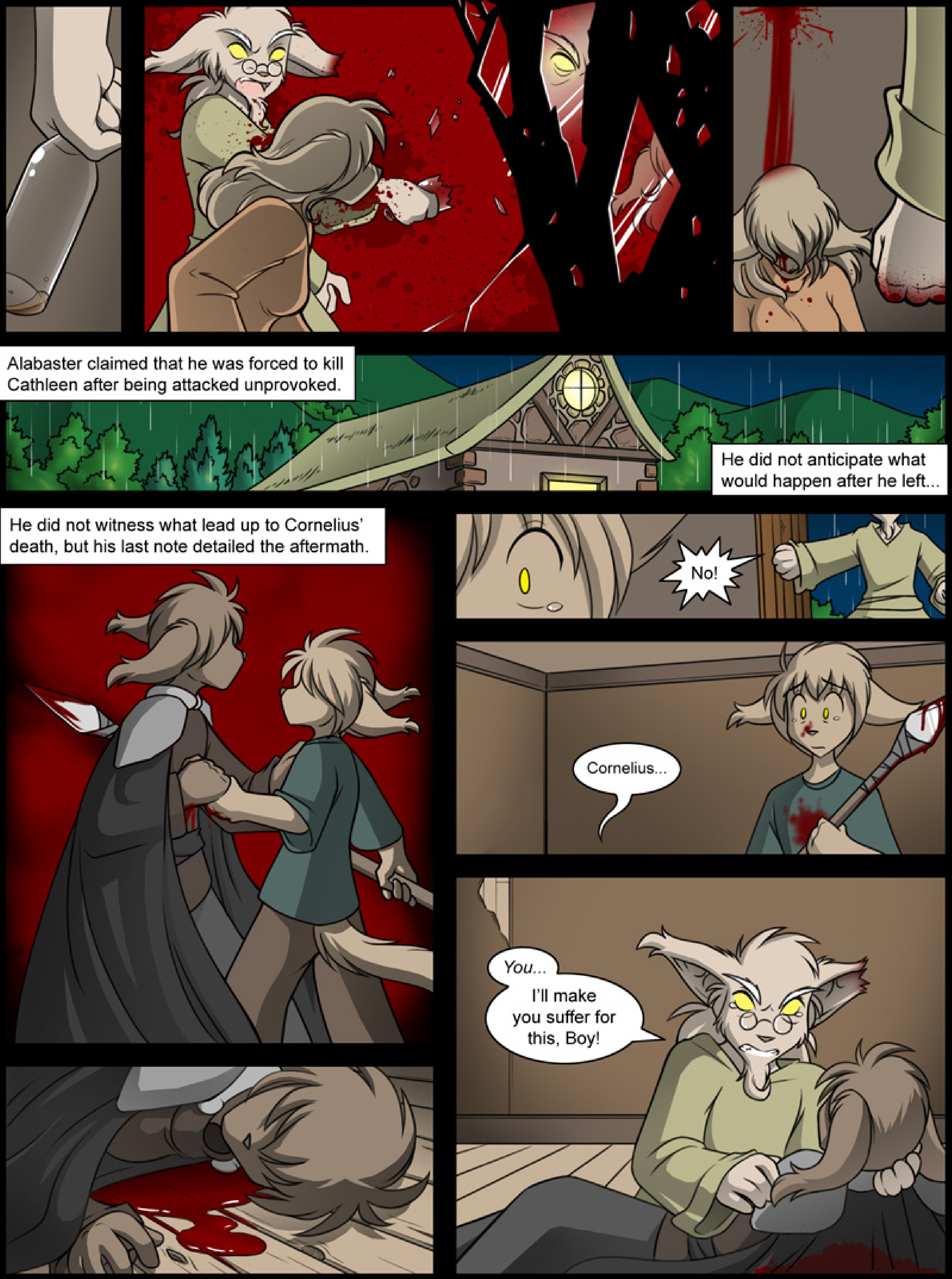

I see you've brought the Keidran with you as well... the one you were ordered to kill.
?
Are you mocking us by flaunting your disregard for the law in here?
No, of course not...
Then tell us, Young Man, why exactly did you disobey your orders?
Did you have a legitimate reason? A legal precedent?
Ngh...
No, I had no 'legal precedent'.
I didn't follow the orders because... I couldn't do it.
That Keidran, Natani, is the closest thing I have to a friend right now.
There's no way I could kill him.
SIGH...
You were right, Alabaster.
Our predecessors should have seen this coming.
The boy's just too much like his mother.
Wha-?
What does my mother have to do with anything?

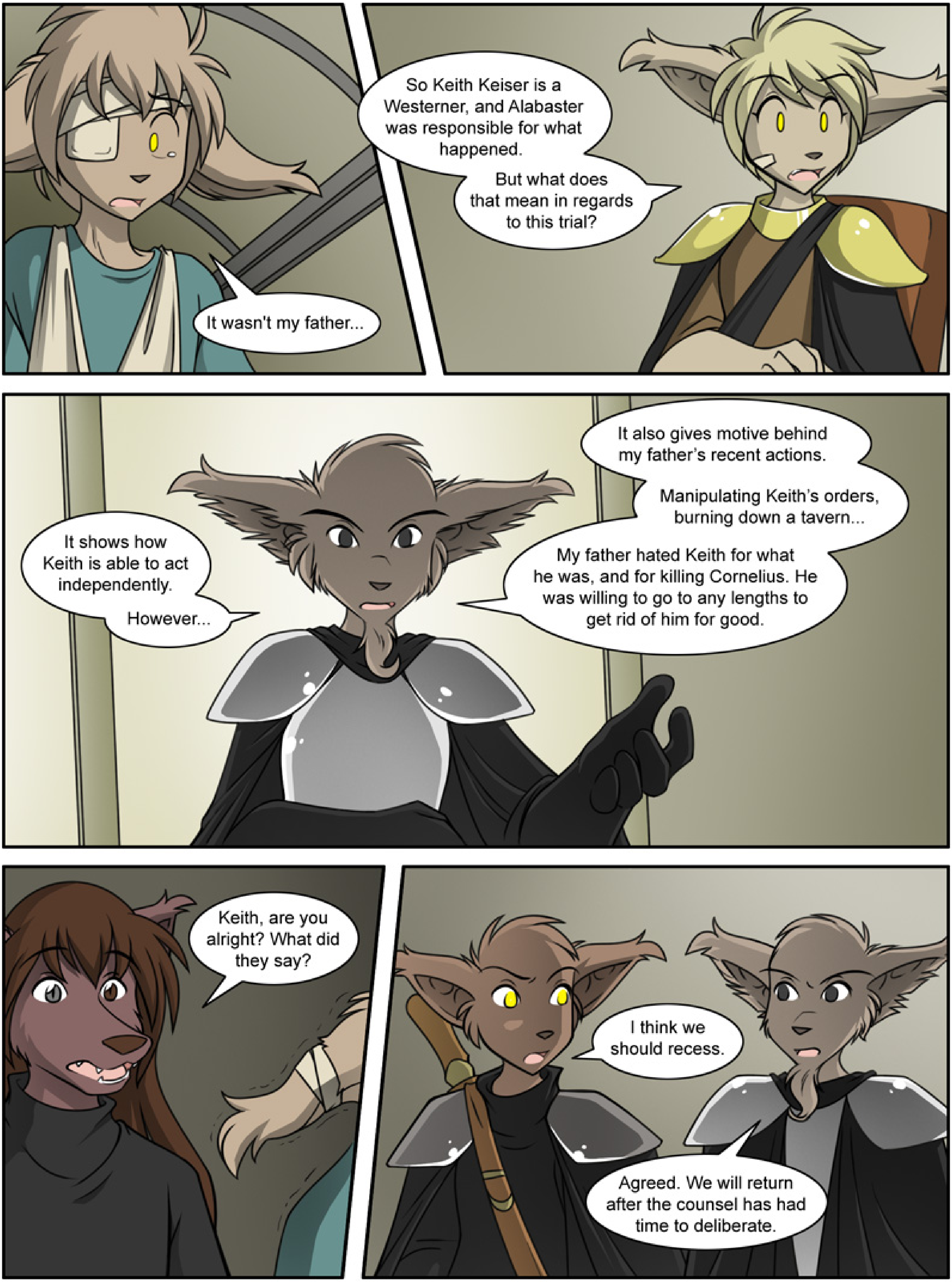

Oh please...
This trial is going to be long enough without a history lesson.
Let's just get on with it!
I disagree!
If it has relevance on the case, I'd like to hear about it!
I believe it does.
Knowing Keith's lineage may explain why he has caused so many problems for us.
When my father died, his belongings were passed down to me - including several personal documents.
The contents of some were... revealing...
Keith Keiser, your mother, Cathleen, was a **Western Basitin**.
Wha-?! Really?
That explains it!
He resists orders so easily because he has no compulsion!
That's a lie!
My mother was a legal citizen!
No, it's the truth. Your father kept it hidden, forging papers after conceiving an illegitimate offspring - you.
But the secret couldn't be kept forever. When rumor spread, your father confided in mine.

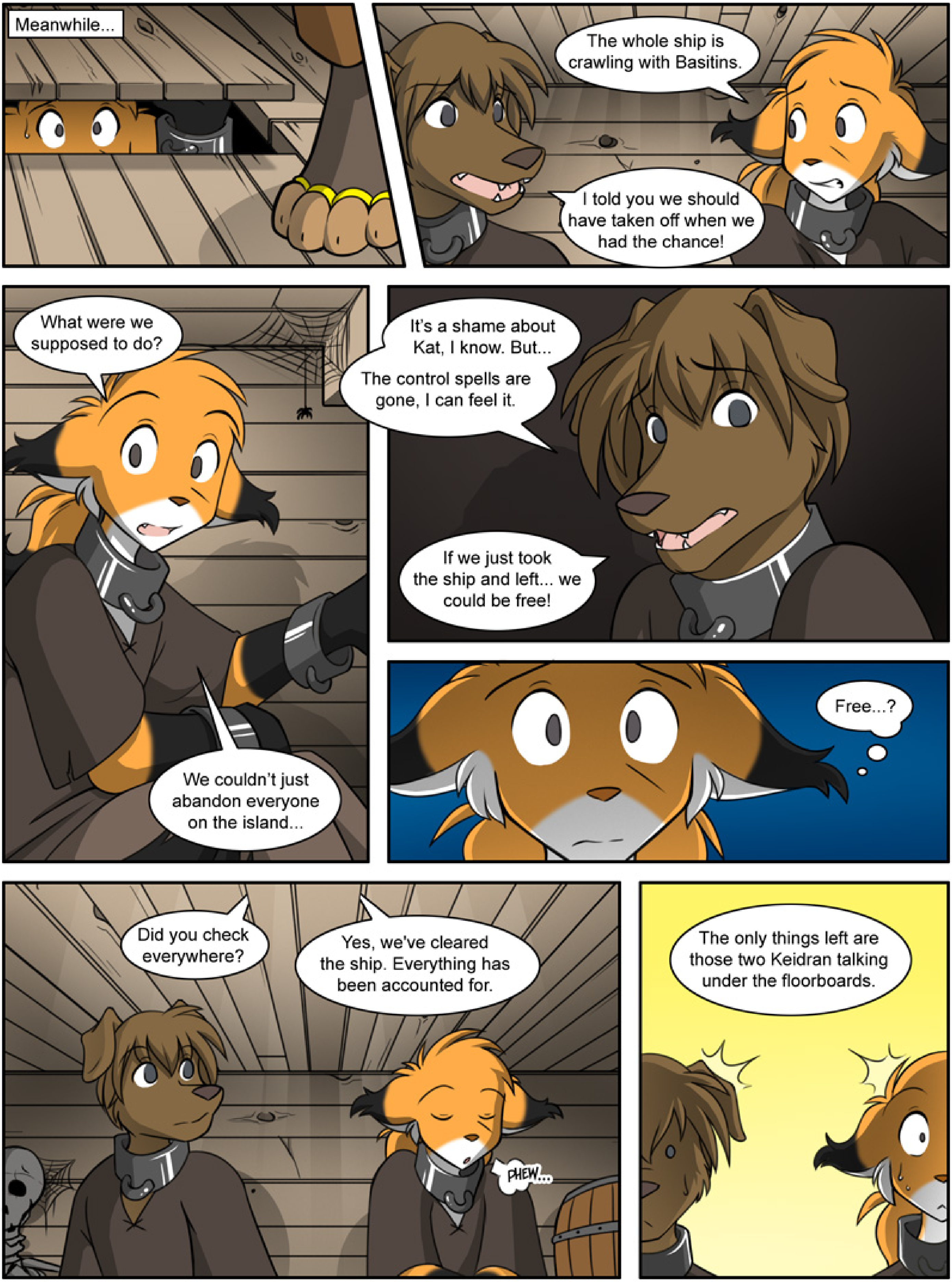

...I need to leave this place, Albion.
What are you talking about, Cornelius? Leave where?
I'm going to leave the island... with Cathleen.
What?!
Suspicions about her origins have been growing. Any day now I'll be questioned, and I won't be able to answer falsely. But...
maybe if we went to human lands we
Listen to yourself! Leave the island?!
It's the drink talking, you can't be serious!
You'd be disgraced! Forever labeled a traitor!
It matters not. I will be disgraced either way.
At least this way, I will not implicate her or Keith.
I will leave the child here.
He is a weak boy, but I've done all I can to toughen him.
No...! I can't let him destroy himself! Not for a *Western harlot*!

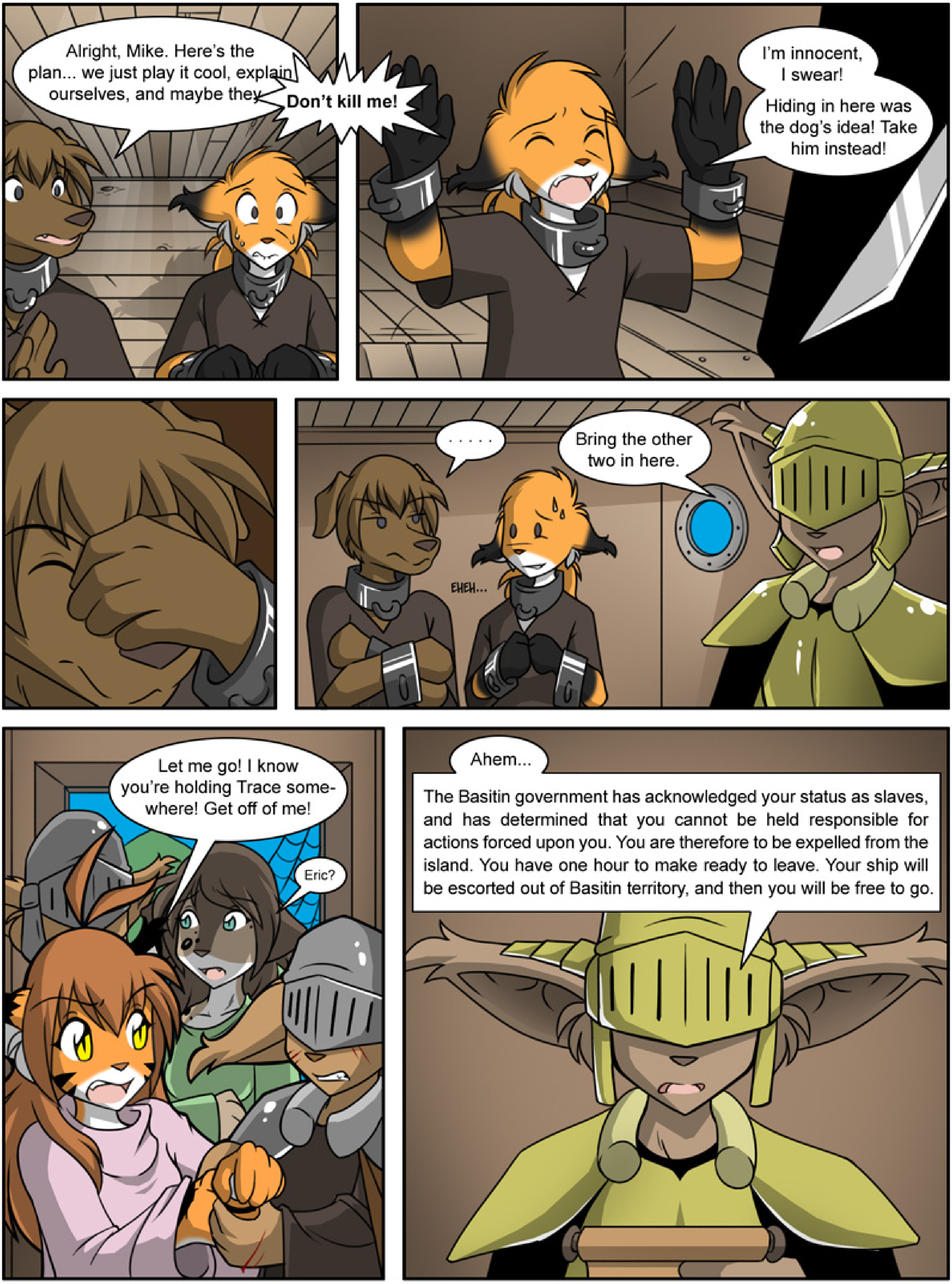
23

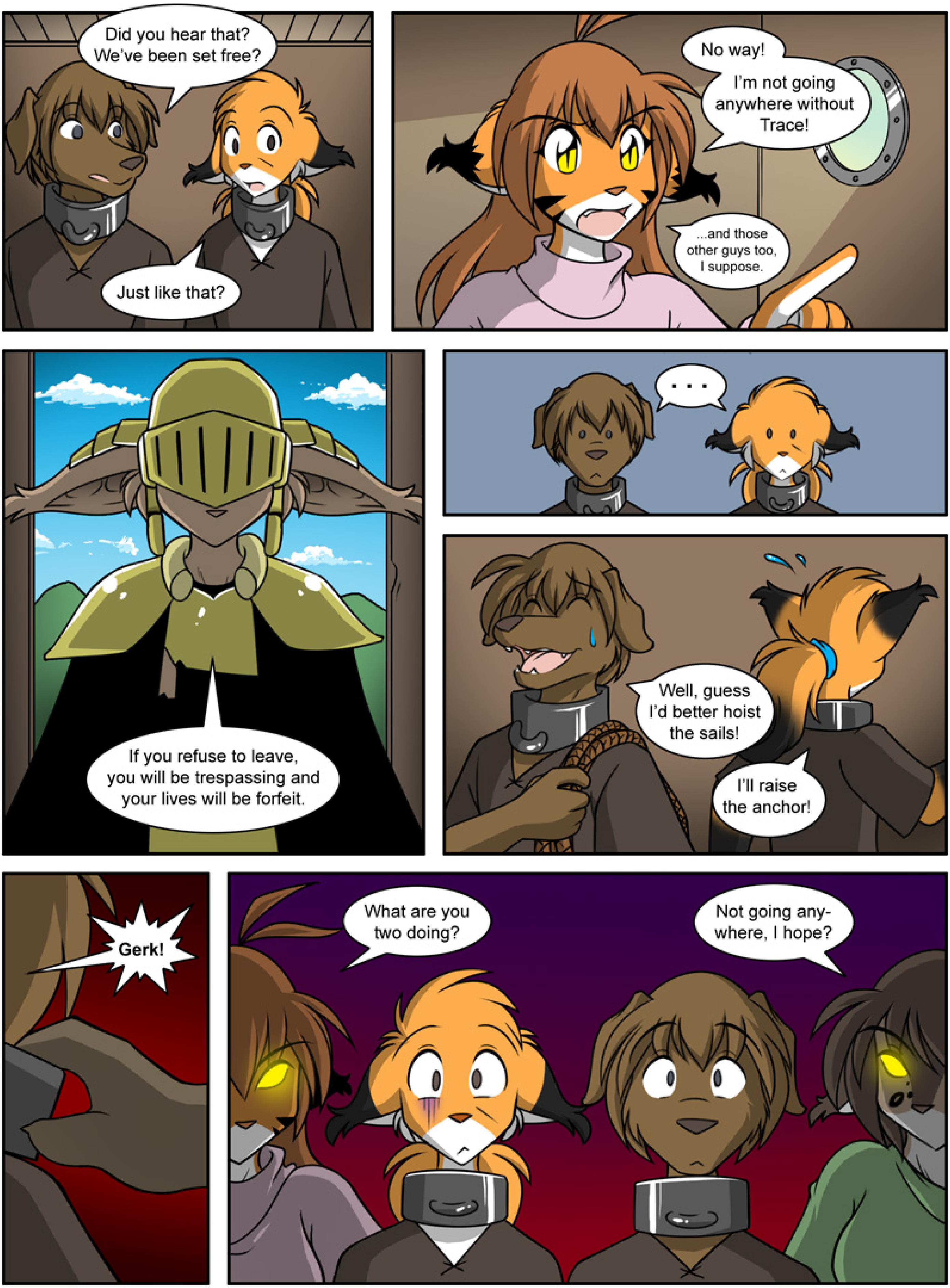

Female District
THUD! THUD! THUD!
Hello?
Let me in, Cathleen.
General Alabaster? It's passed curfew, Sir. It wouldn't be decent...
And what would you know of decency?
SLAM!
I knew it was a mistake the moment I forged your papers, but I did it for Cornelius' sake...
But now he's planning to throw his whole life away because of the mistake he made with you!
Well I won't allow it!
Ah!
Let go of me!
Aaaaaahhh!

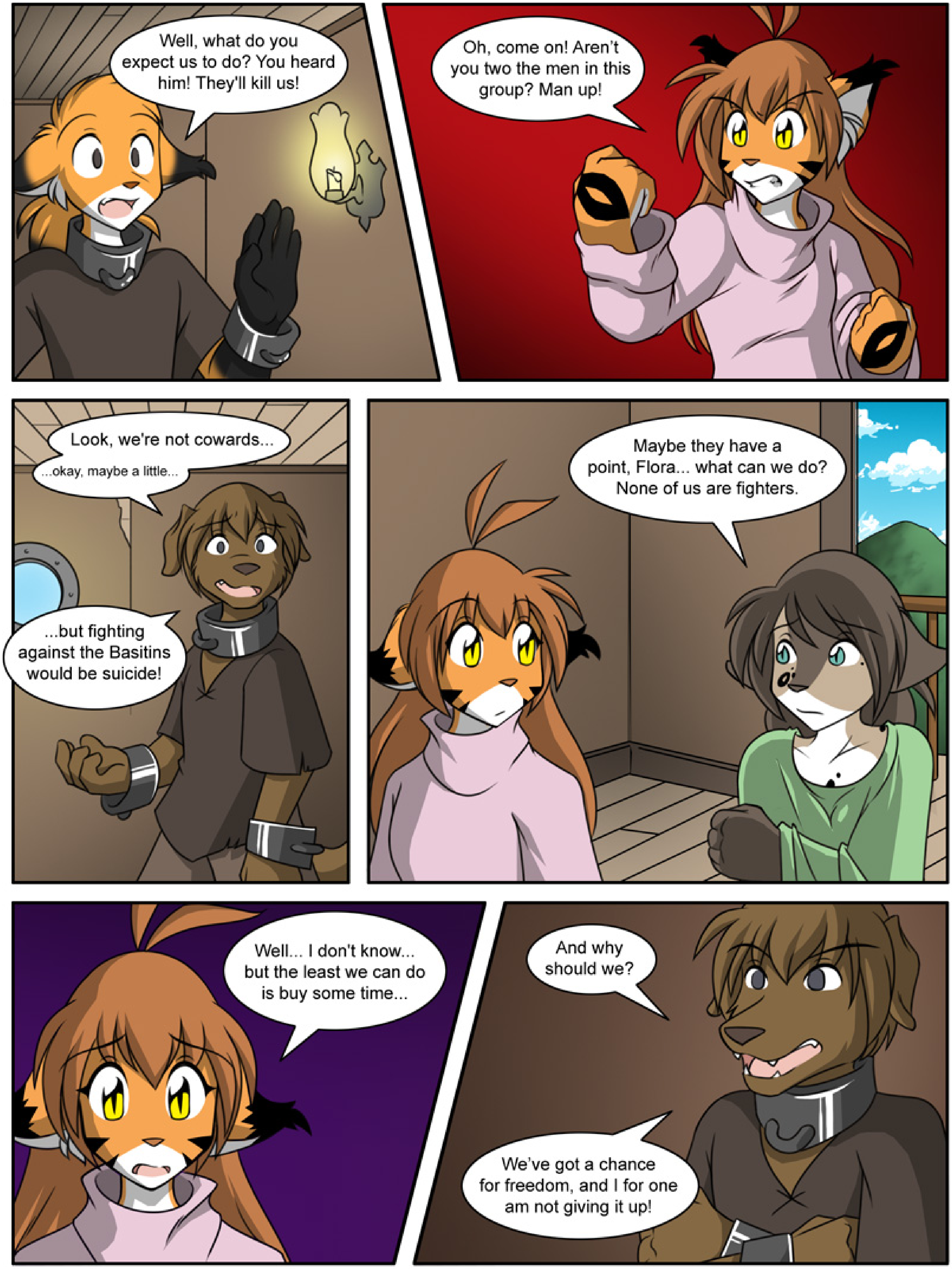

Alabaster claimed that he was forced to kill Cathleen after being attacked unprovoked.
He did not anticipate what would happen after he left...
He did not witness what lead up to Cornelius' death, but his last note detailed the aftermath.
No!
Cornelius...
You...
I'll make you suffer for this, Boy!

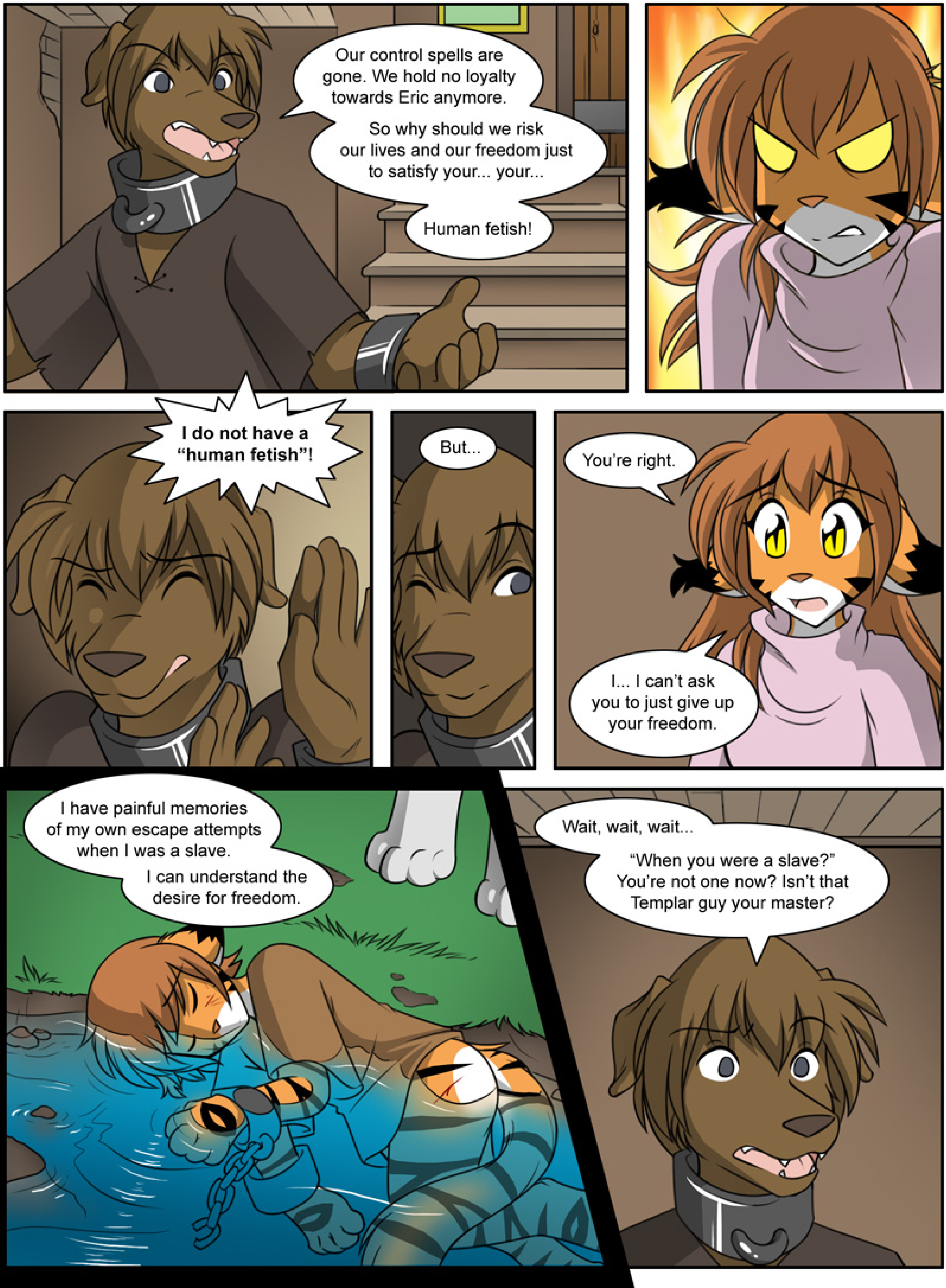

It wasn't my father...
So Keith Keiser is a Westerner, and Alabaster was responsible for what happened.
But what does that mean in regards to this trial?
It shows how Keith is able to act independently.
However...
It also gives motive behind my father's recent actions.
Manipulating Keith's orders, burning down a tavern...
My father hated Keith for what he was, and for killing Cornelius. He was willing to go to any lengths to get rid of him for good.
Keith, are you alright? What did they say?
I think we should recess.
Agreed. We will return after the counsel has had time to deliberate.

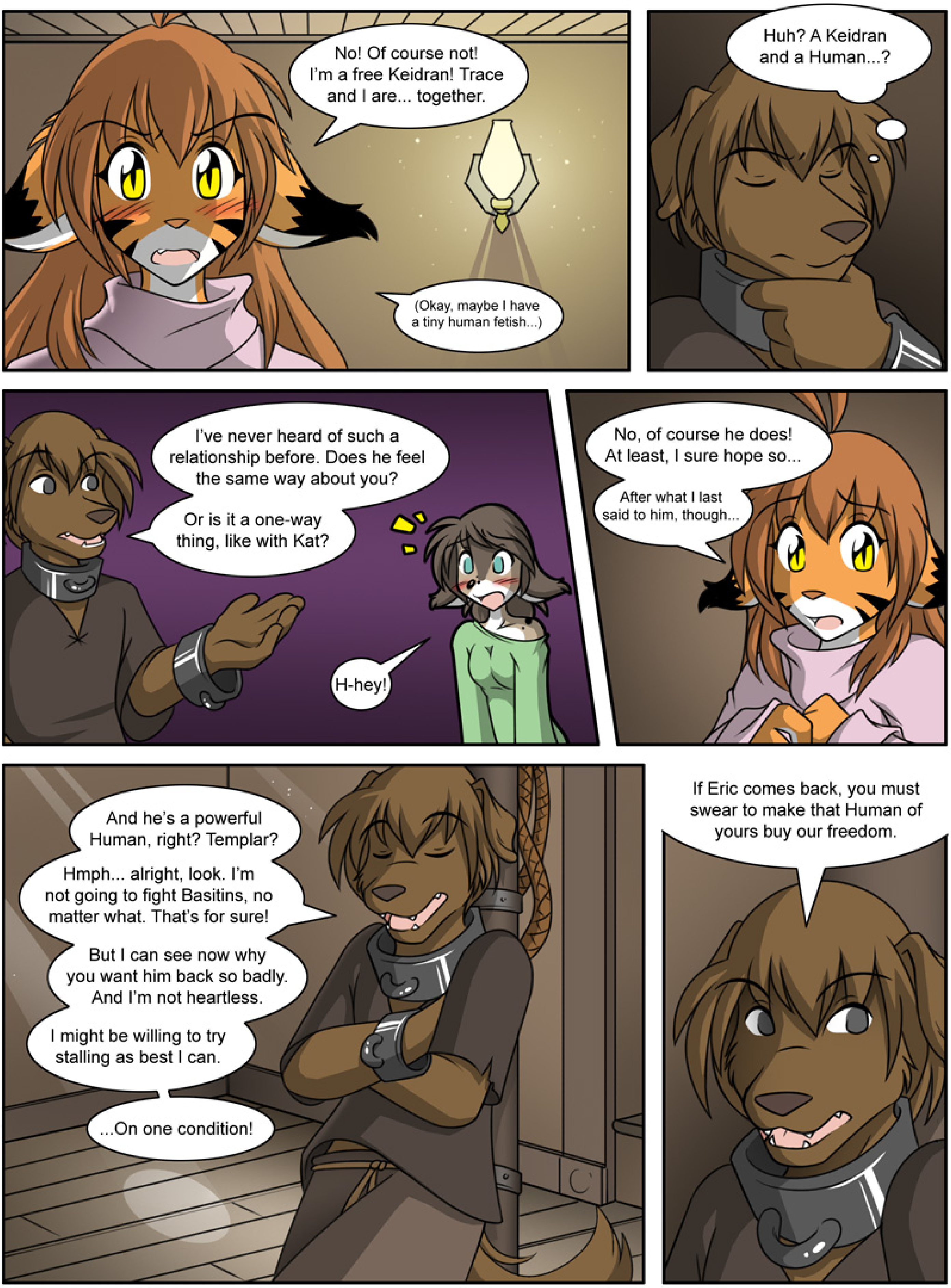

Meanwhile...
The whole ship is crawling with Basitins.
I told you we should have taken off when we had the chance!
What were we supposed to do?
It's a shame about Kat, I know. But...
The control spells are gone, I can feel it.
If we just took the ship and left... we could be free!
We couldn't just abandon everyone on the island...
Free...?
Did you check everywhere?
Yes, we've cleared the ship. Everything has been accounted for.
PHEW...
The only things left are those two Keidran talking under the floorboards.

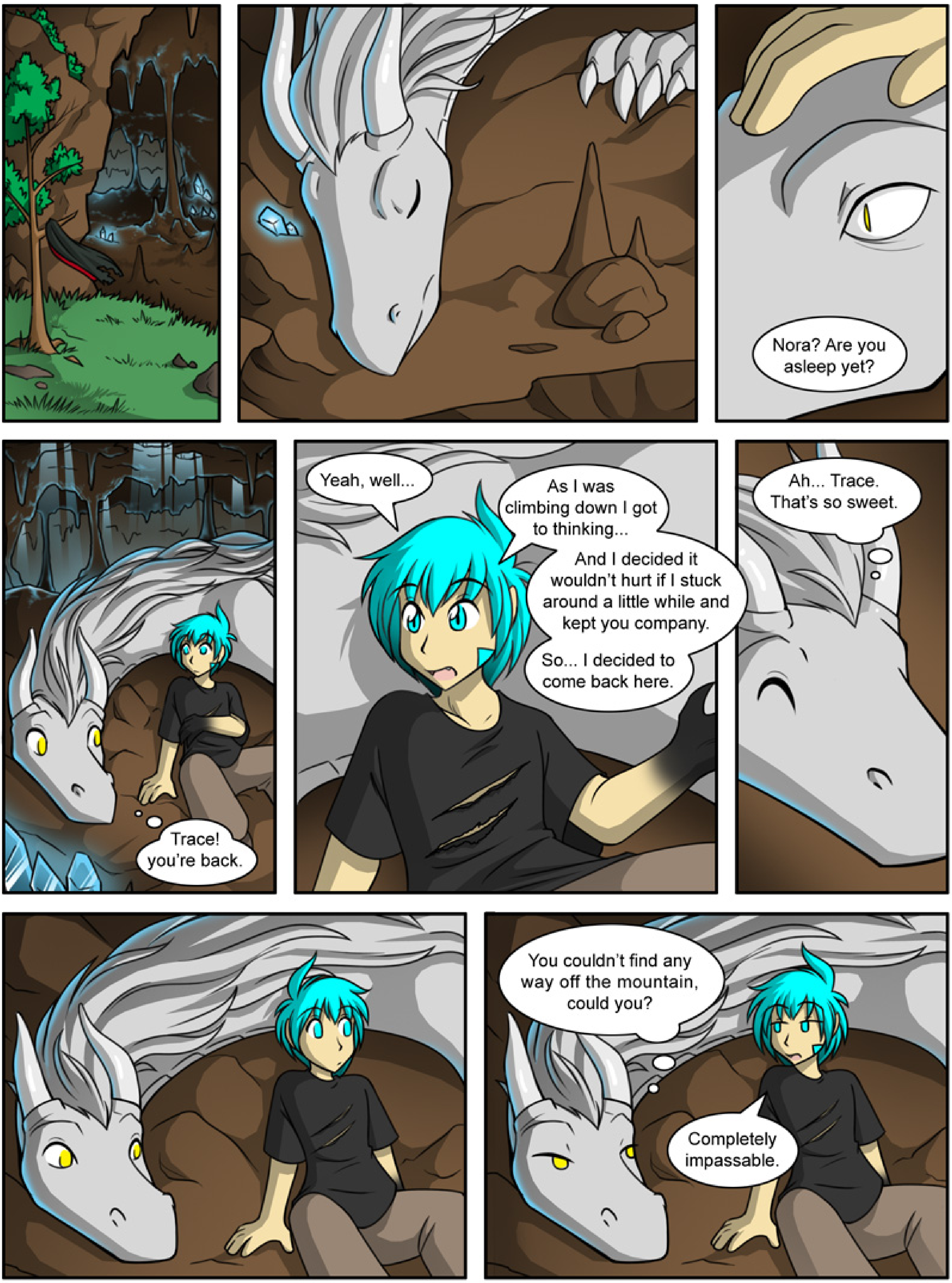

Alright, Mike. Here's the plan... we just play it cool, explain ourselves, and maybe they
Don't kill me!
I'm innocent, I swear!
Hiding in here was the dog's idea! Take him instead!
. . . . .
Bring the other two in here.
EHEH...
Let me go! I know you're holding Trace somewhere! Get off of me!
Eric?
Ahem...
The Basitin government has acknowledged your status as slaves, and has determined that you cannot be held responsible for actions forced upon you. You are therefore to be expelled from the island. You have one hour to make ready to leave. Your ship will be escorted out of Basitin territory, and then you will be free to go.

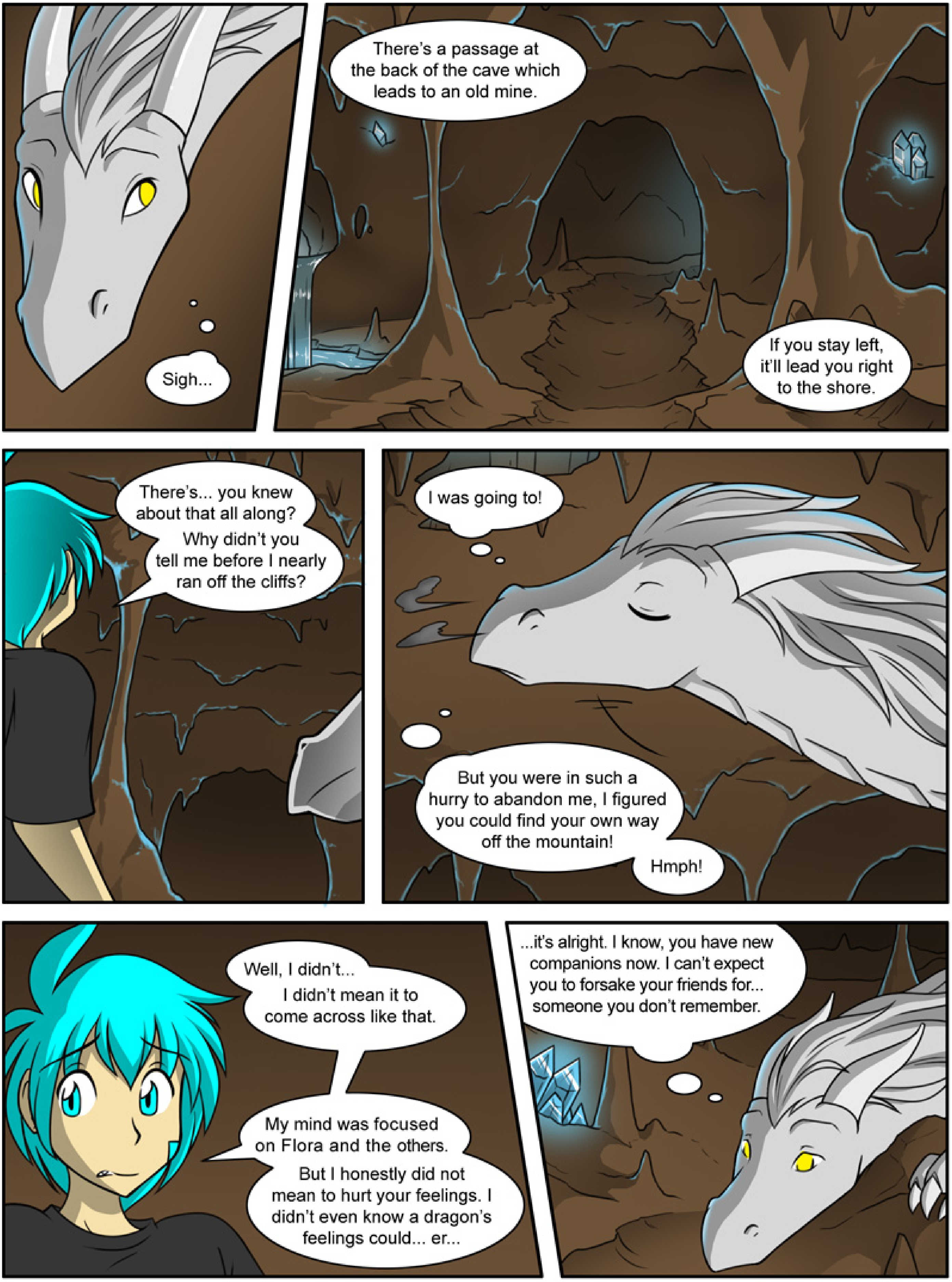

Did you hear that? We've been set free?
Just like that?
No way!
I'm not going anywhere without Trace!
...and those other guys too, I suppose.
If you refuse to leave, you will be trespassing and your lives will be forfeit.
. . .
Well, guess I'd better hoist the sails!
I'll raise the anchor!
Gerk!
What are you two doing?
Not going any-where, I hope?

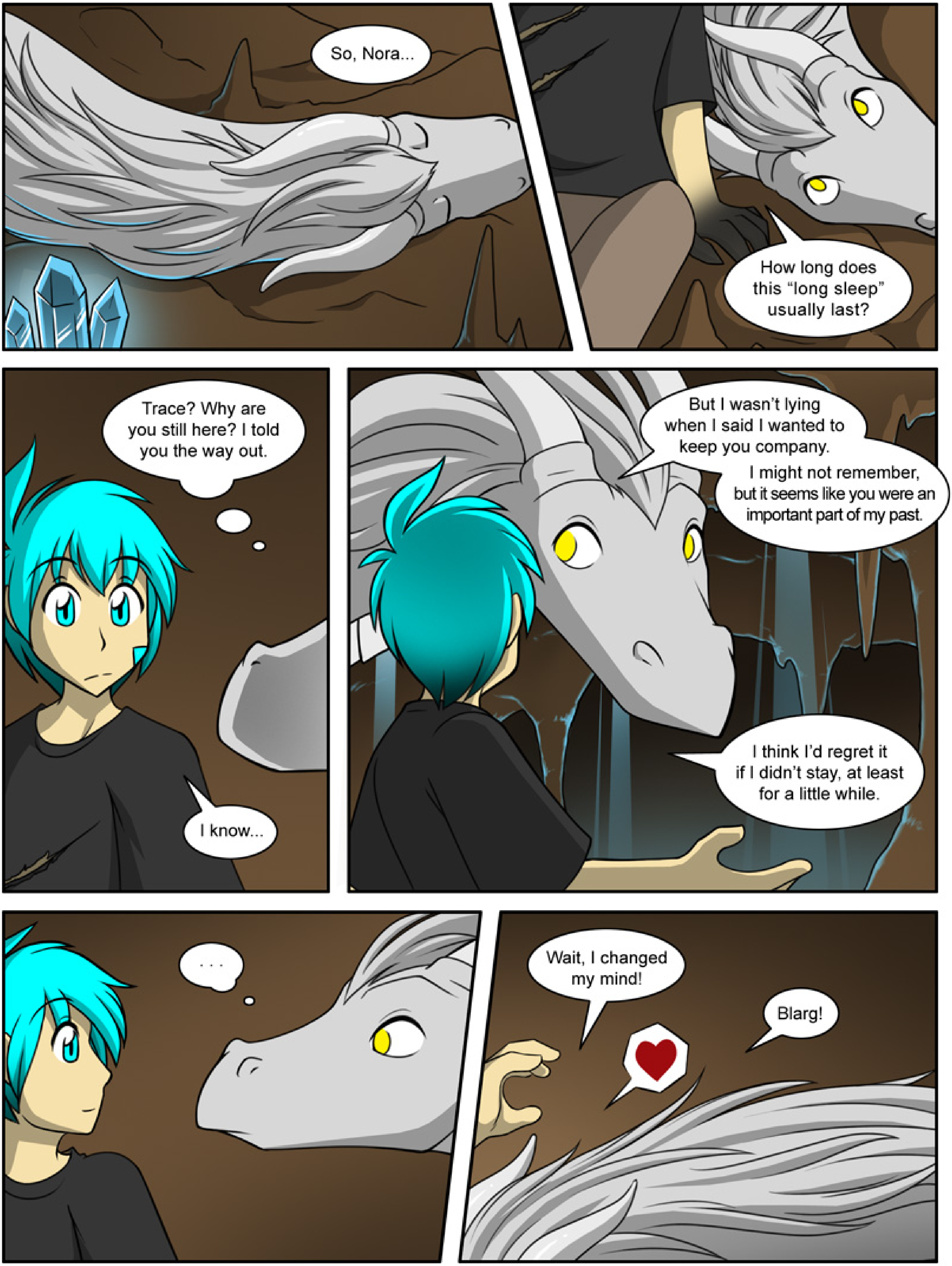

Well, what do you expect us to do? You heard him! They'll kill us!
Oh, come on! Aren't you two the men in this group? Man up!
Look, we're not cowards...
...okay, maybe a little...
...but fighting against the Basitins would be suicide!
Maybe they have a point, Flora... what can we do? None of us are fighters.
Well... I don't know... but the least we can do is buy some time...
And why should we?
We've got a chance for freedom, and I for one am not giving it up!

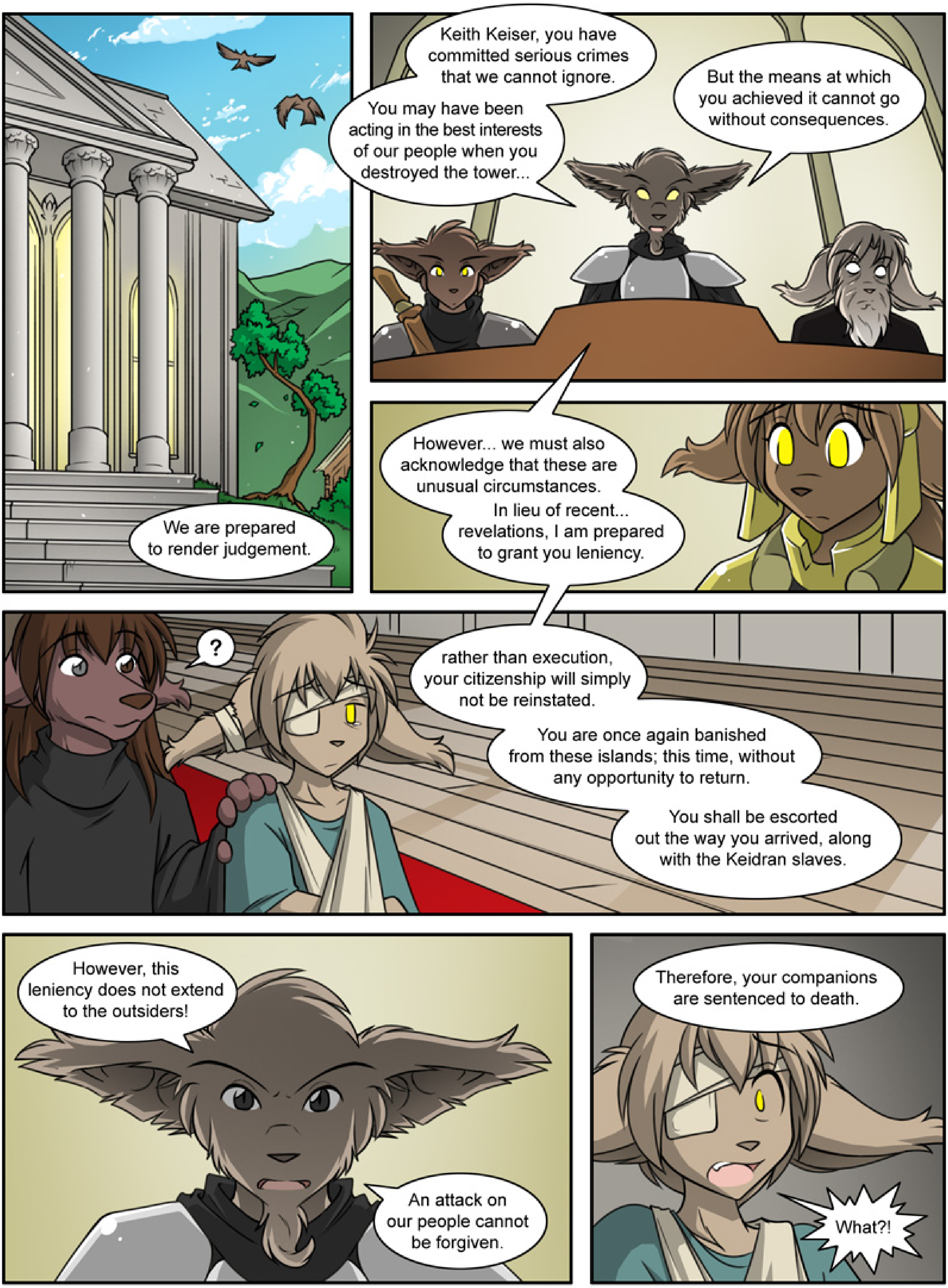

Our control spells are gone. We hold no loyalty towards Eric anymore.
So why should we risk our lives and our freedom just to satisfy your... your...
Human fetish!
I do not have a "human fetish"!
But...
You're right.
I... I can't ask you to just give up your freedom.
I have painful memories of my own escape attempts when I was a slave.
I can understand the desire for freedom.
Wait, wait, wait...
"When you were a slave?" You're not one now? Isn't that Templar guy your master?

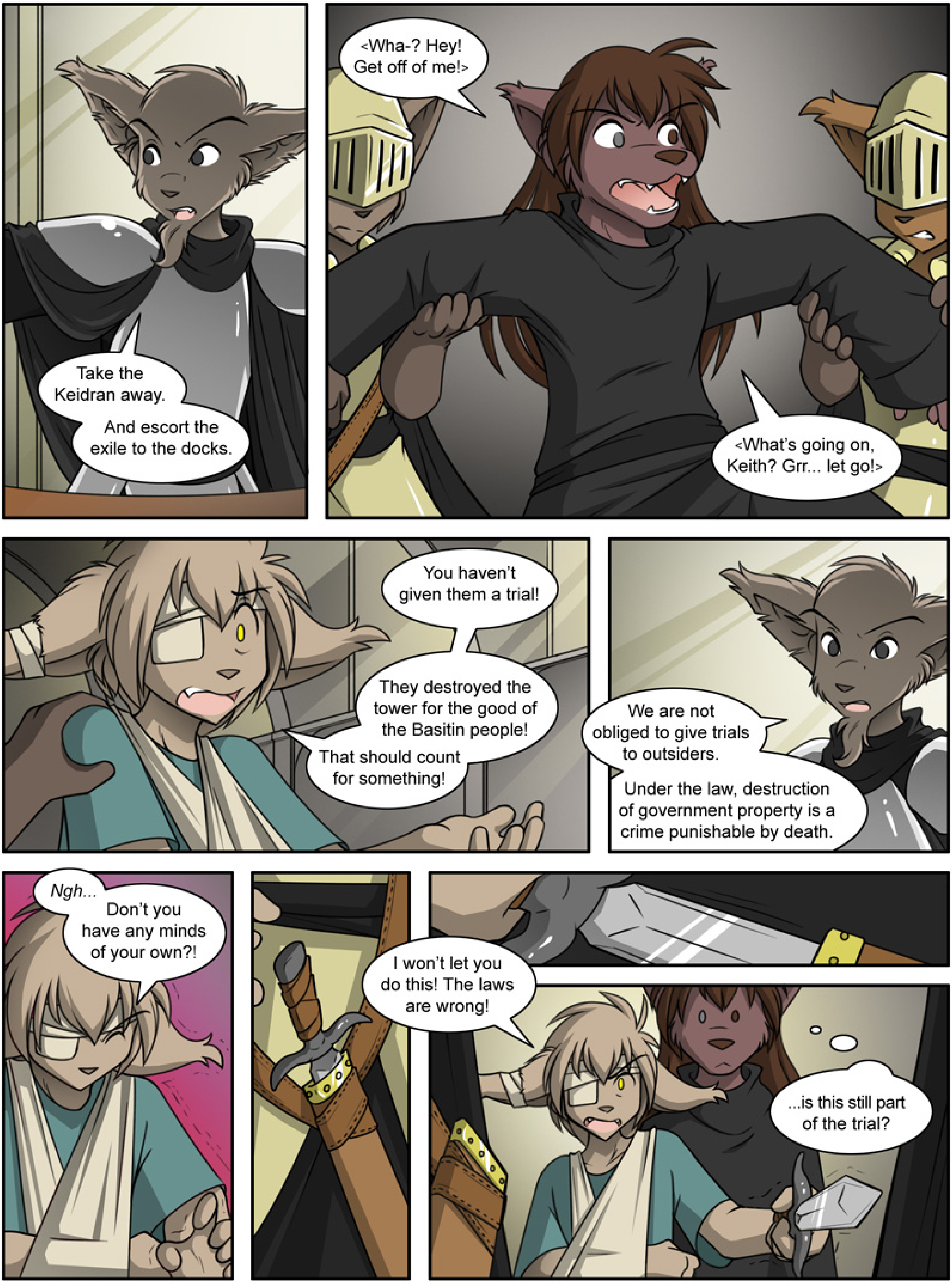

No! Of course not! I'm a free Keidran! Trace and I are... together.
(Okay, maybe I have a tiny human fetish...)
Huh? A Keidran and a Human...?
I've never heard of such a relationship before. Does he feel the same way about you?
Or is it a one-way thing, like with Kat?
H-hey!
No, of course he does! At least, I sure hope so...
After what I last said to him, though...
And he's a powerful Human, right? Templar?
Hmph... alright, look. I'm not going to fight Basitins, no matter what. That's for sure!
But I can see now why you want him back so badly. And I'm not heartless.
I might be willing to try stalling as best I can.
...On one condition!
If Eric comes back, you must swear to make that Human of yours buy our freedom.

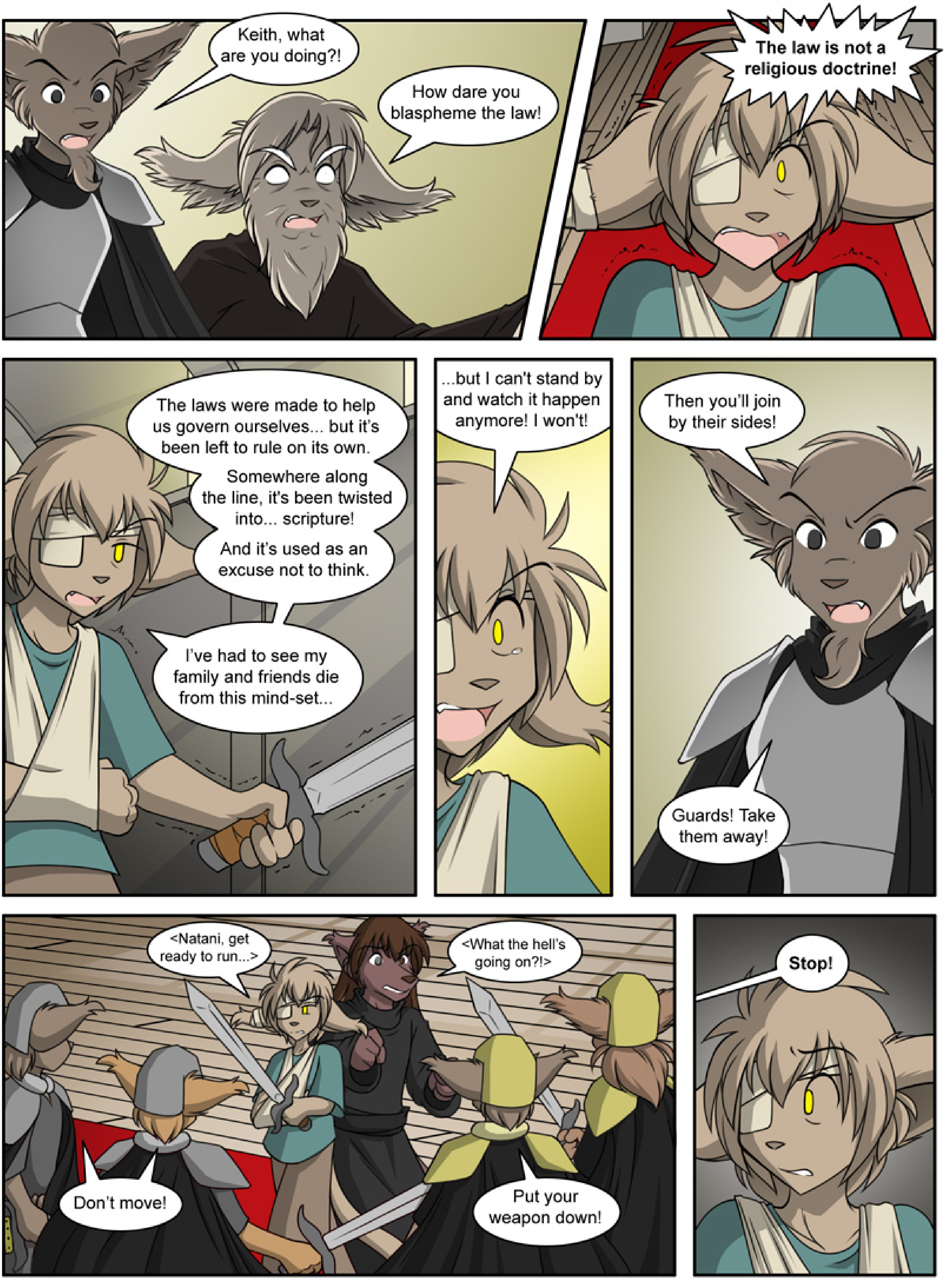

Nora? Are you asleep yet?
Trace! you're back.
Yeah, well...
As I was climbing down I got to thinking...
And I decided it wouldn't hurt if I stuck around a little while and kept you company.
So... I decided to come back here.
Ah... Trace. That's so sweet.
You couldn't find any way off the mountain, could you?
Completely impassable.

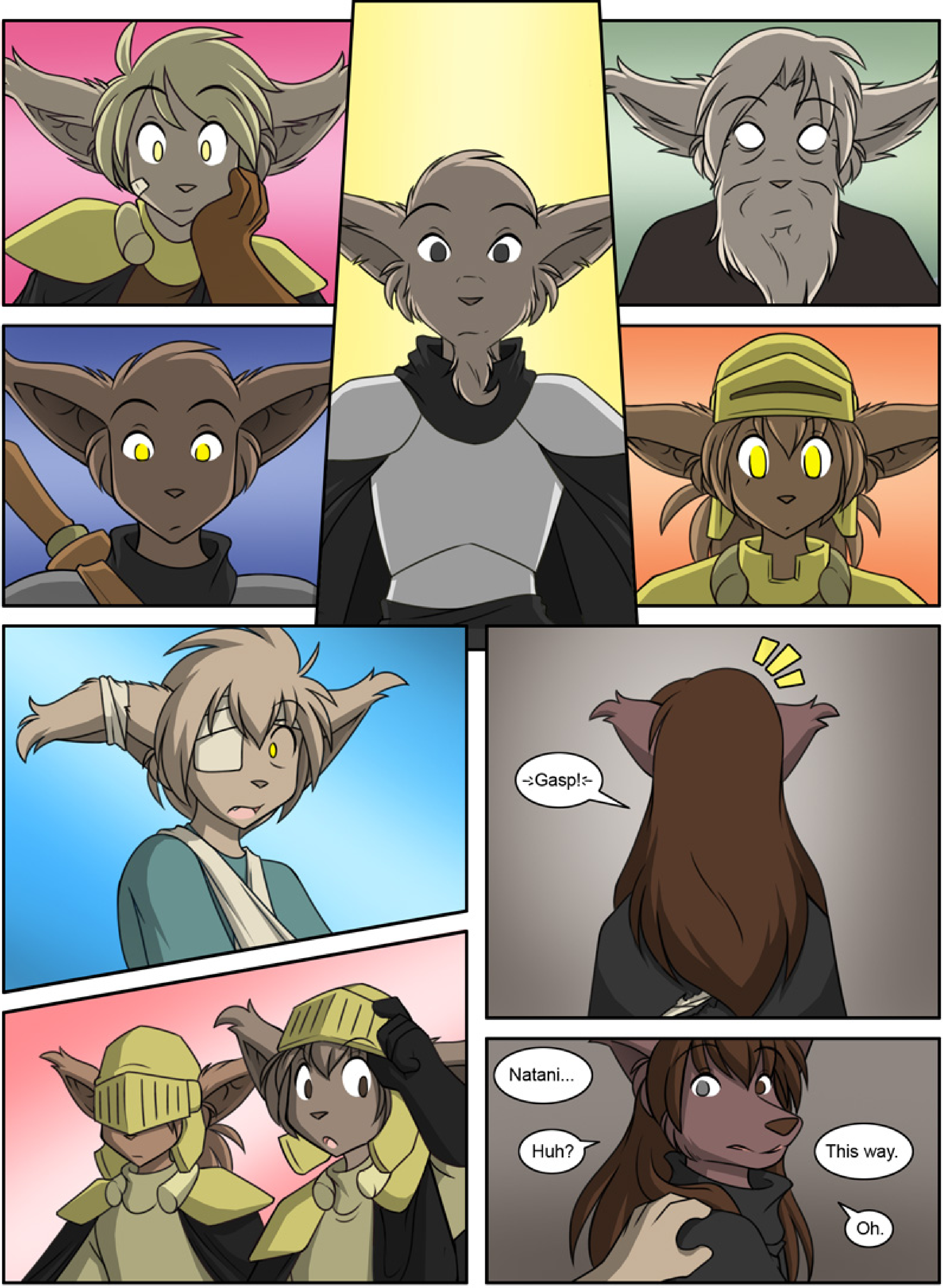

Sigh...
There's a passage at the back of the cave which leads to an old mine.
If you stay left, it'll lead you right to the shore.
There's... you knew about that all along?
Why didn't you tell me before I nearly ran off the cliffs?
I was going to!
But you were in such a hurry to abandon me, I figured you could find your own way off the mountain!
Hmph!
Well, I didn't...
I didn't mean it to come across like that.
My mind was focused on Flora and the others.
But I honestly did not mean to hurt your feelings. I didn't even know a dragon's feelings could... er...
...it's alright. I know, you have new companions now. I can't expect you to forsake your friends for... someone you don't remember.


So, Nora...
How long does this "long sleep" usually last?
Trace? Why are you still here? I told you the way out.
I know...
But I wasn't lying when I said I wanted to keep you company.
I might not remember, but it seems like you were an important part of my past.
I think I'd regret it if I didn't stay, at least for a little while.
. . .
Wait, I changed my mind!
♥
Blarg!

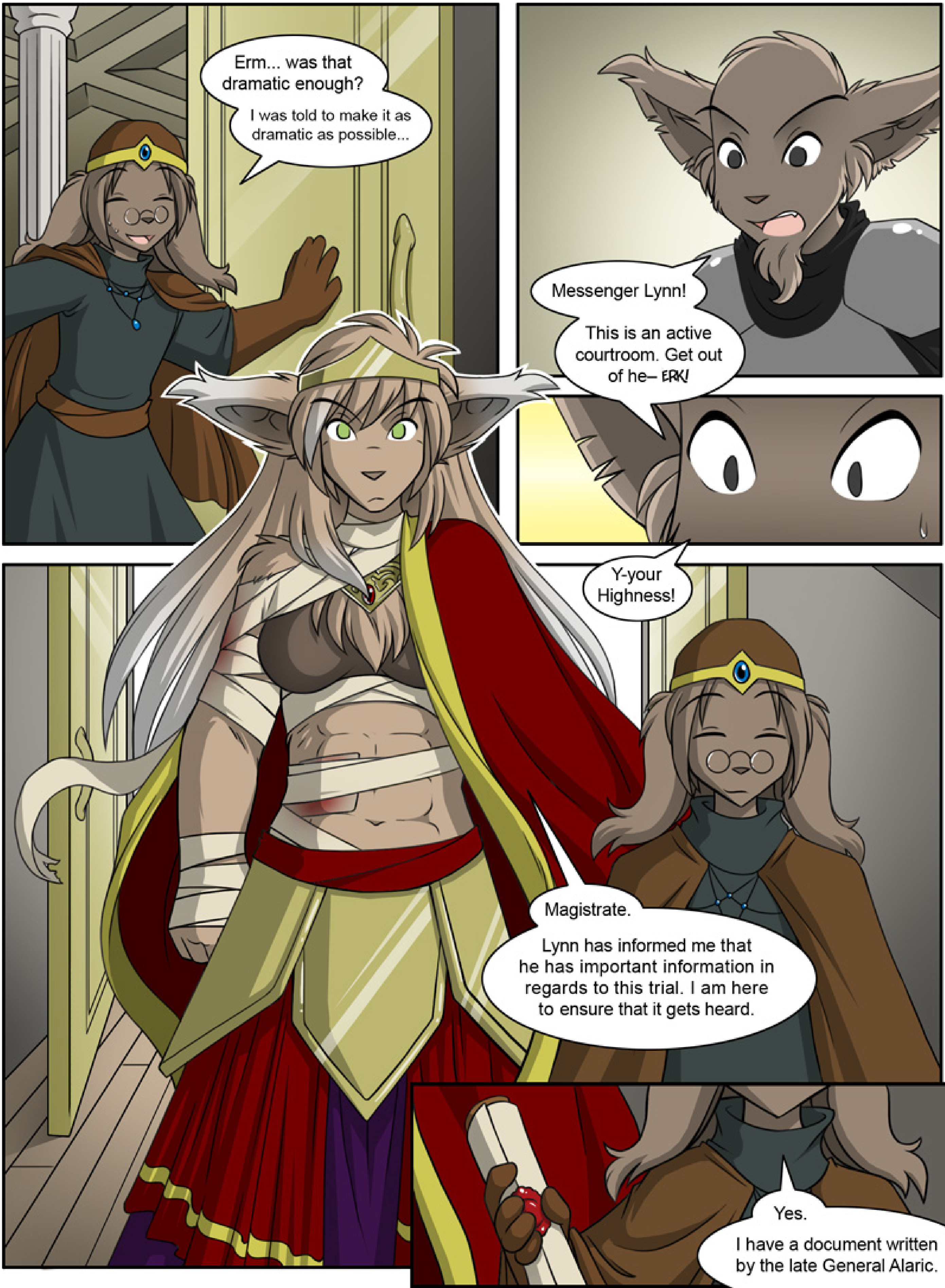

We are prepared to render judgement.
Keith Keiser, you have committed serious crimes that we cannot ignore.
You may have been acting in the best interests of our people when you destroyed the tower...
But the means at which you achieved it cannot go without consequences.
However... we must also acknowledge that these are unusual circumstances.
In lieu of recent... revelations, I am prepared to grant you leniency.
?
rather than execution, your citizenship will simply not be reinstated.
You are once again banished from these islands; this time, without any opportunity to return.
You shall be escorted out the way you arrived, along with the Keidran slaves.
However, this leniency does not extend to the outsiders!
An attack on our people cannot be forgiven.
Therefore, your companions are sentenced to death.
What?!

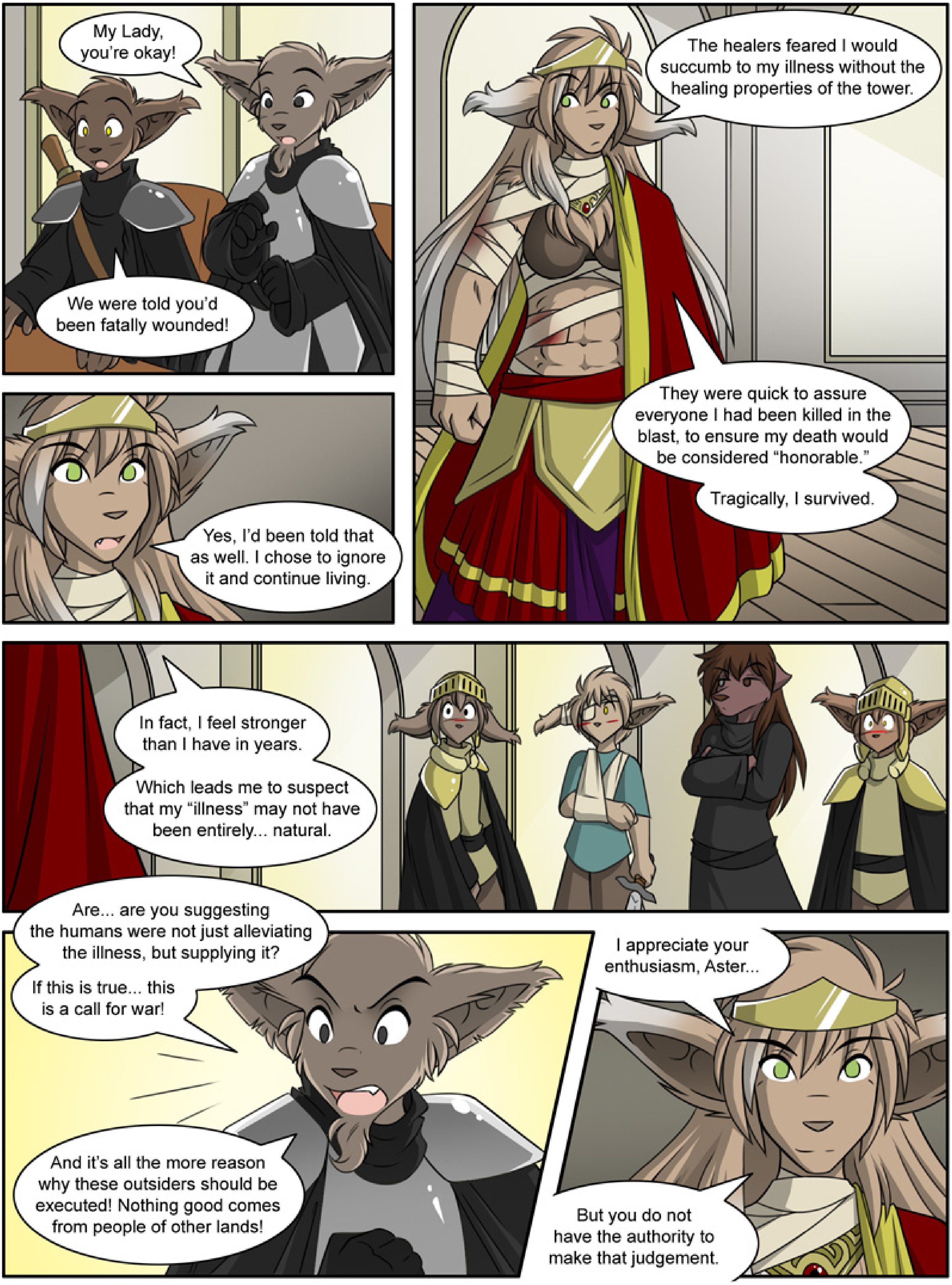

Take the Keidran away.
And escort the exile to the docks.
<Wha-? Hey! Get off of me!>
<What's going on, Keith? Grr... let go!>
You haven't given them a trial!
They destroyed the tower for the good of the Basitin people!
That should count for something!
We are not obliged to give trials to outsiders.
Under the law, destruction of government property is a crime punishable by death.
Ngh...
Don't you have any minds of your own?!
I won't let you do this! The laws are wrong!
...is this still part of the trial?

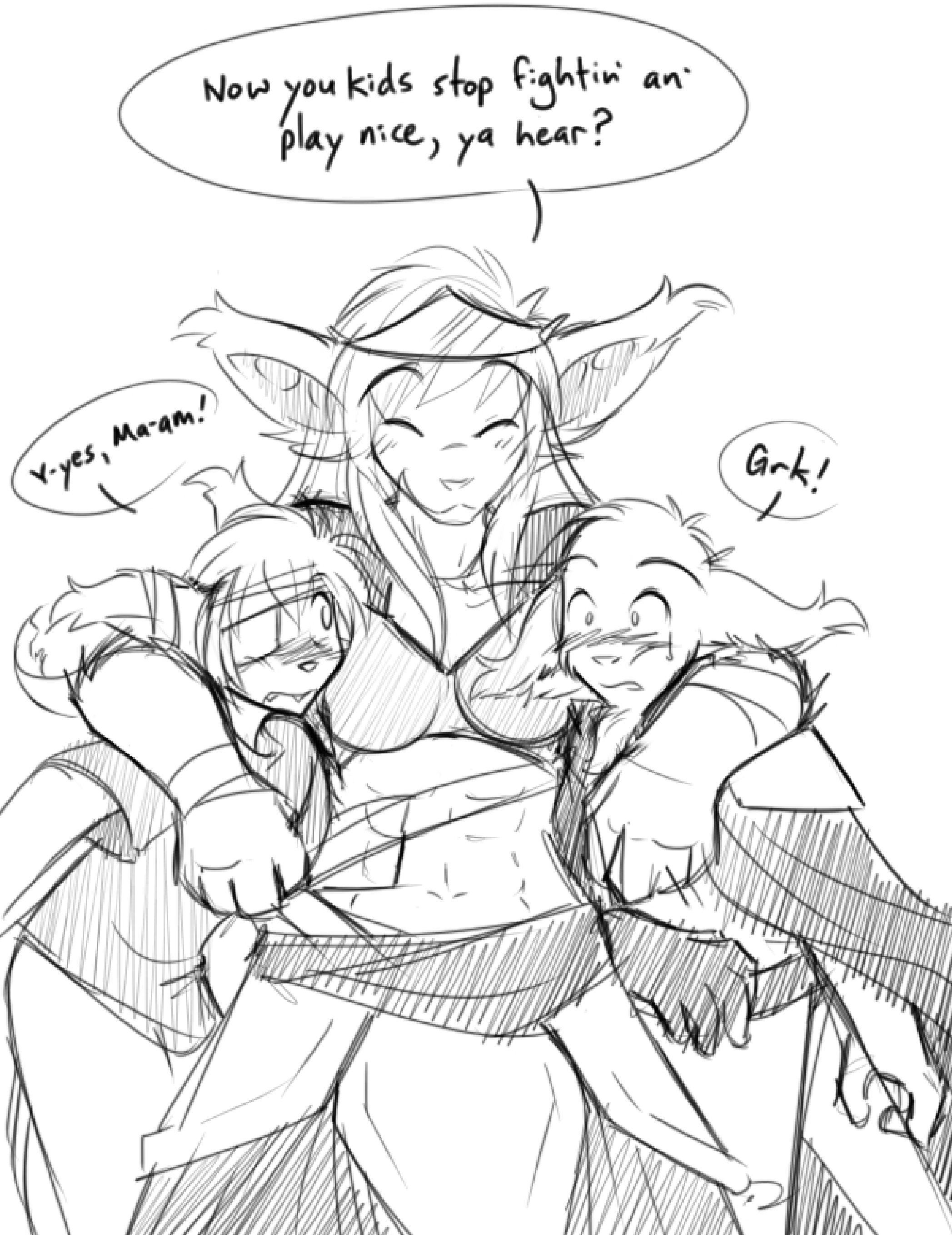

Keith, what are you doing?!
How dare you blaspheme the law!
The law is not a religious doctrine!
The laws were made to help us govern ourselves... but it's been left to rule on its own.
Somewhere along the line, it's been twisted into... scripture!
And it's used as an excuse not to think.
I've had to see my family and friends die from this mind-set...
...but I can't stand by and watch it happen anymore! I won't!
Then you'll join by their sides!
Guards! Take them away!
<Natani, get ready to run...>
<What the hell's going on?!>
Don't move!
Put your weapon down!
Stop!

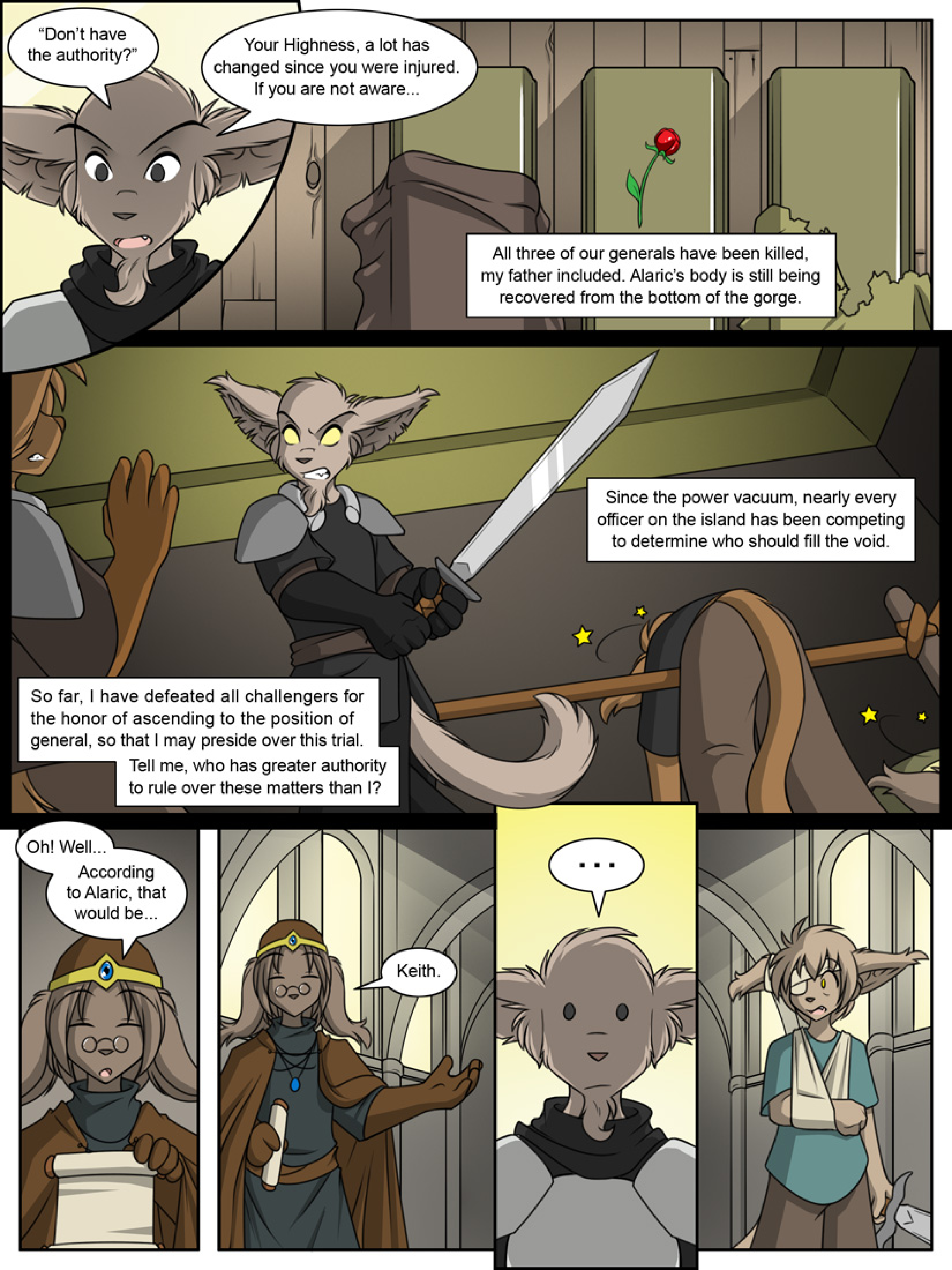


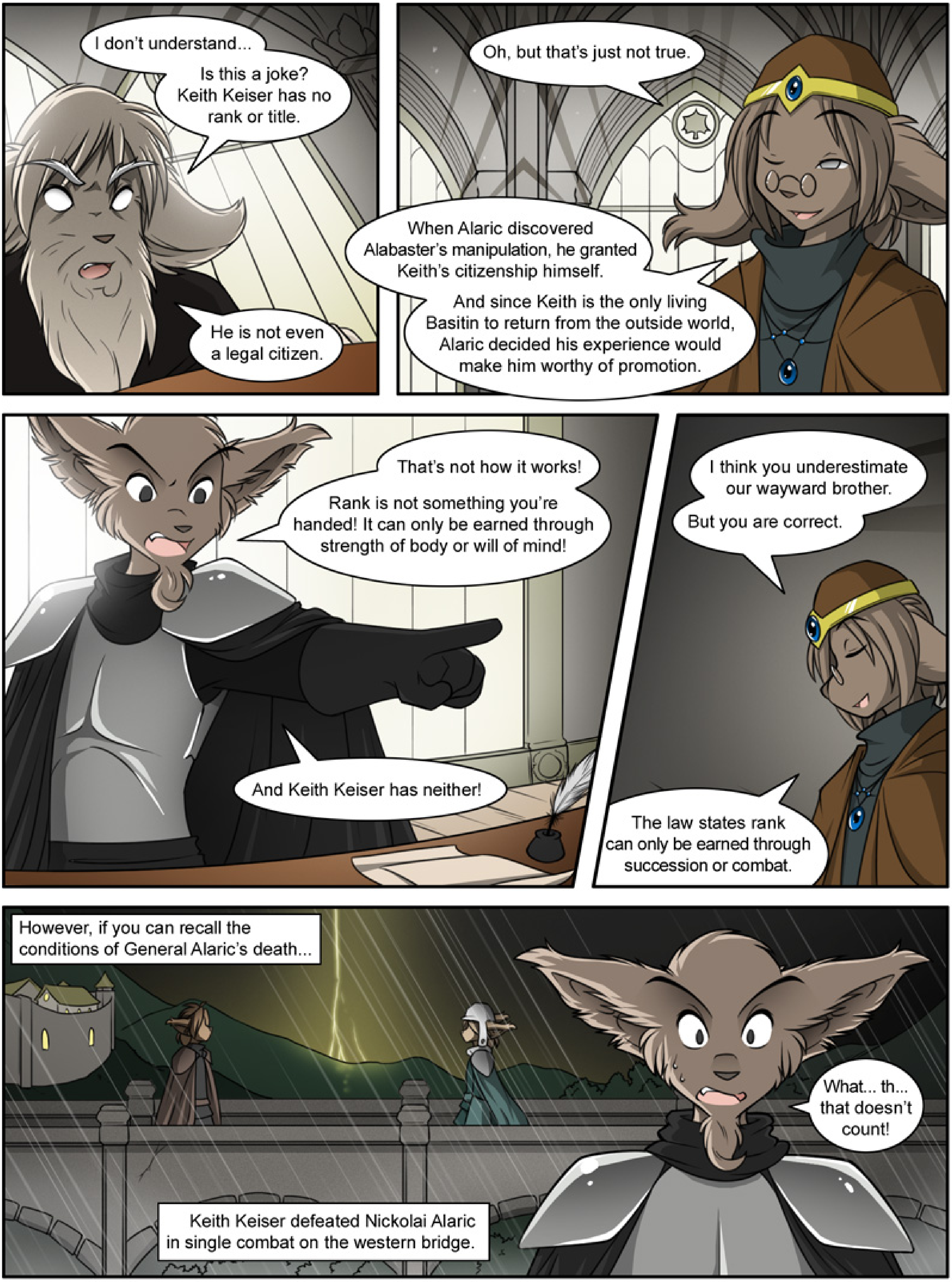
->Gasp!<-
Natani...
Huh?
This way.
Oh.

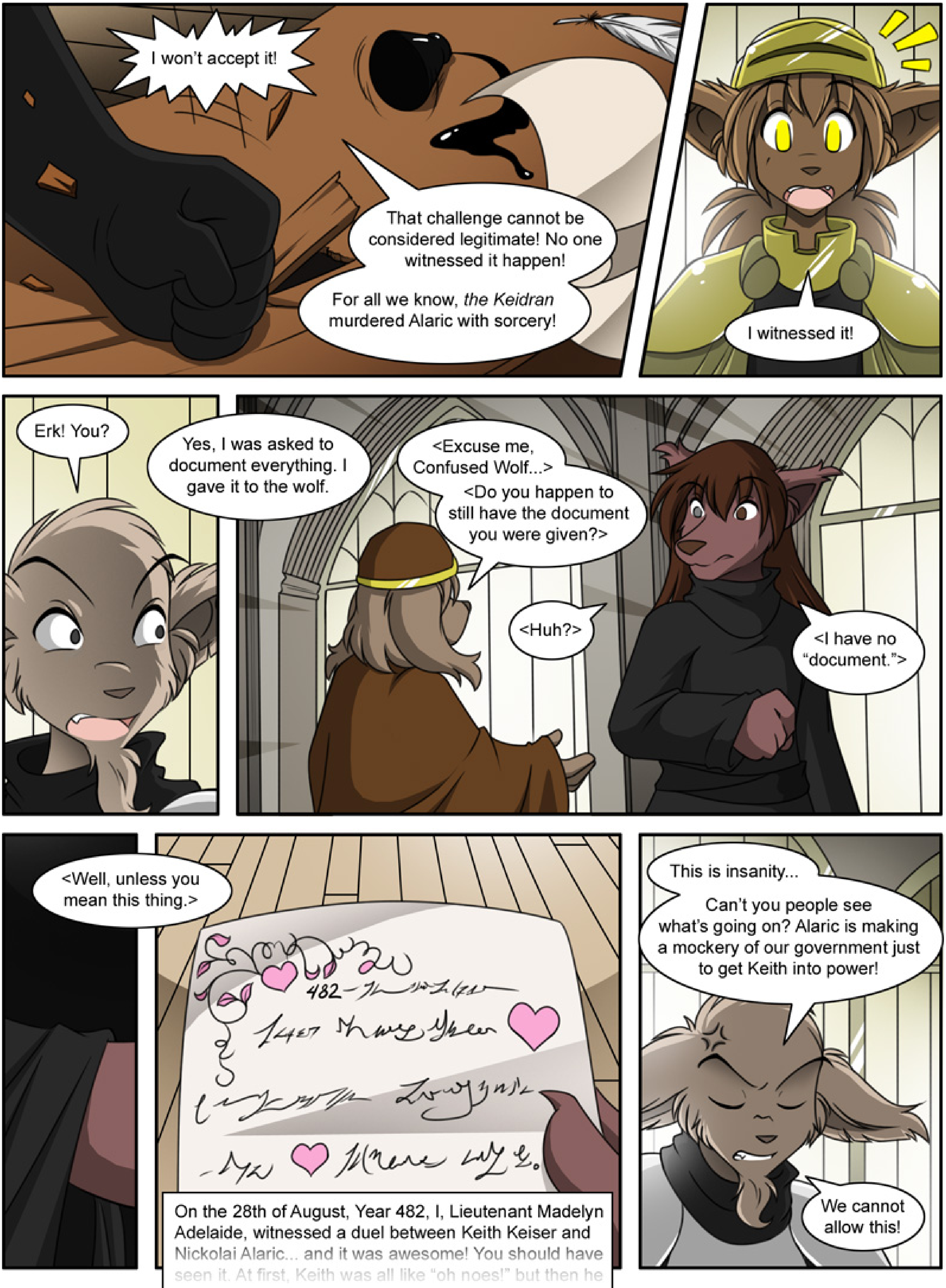

Erm... was that dramatic enough?
I was told to make it as dramatic as possible...
Messenger Lynn!
This is an active courtroom. Get out of he– ERK!
Y-your Highness!
Magistrate.
Lynn has informed me that he has important information in regards to this trial. I am here to ensure that it gets heard.
Yes.
I have a document written by the late General Alaric.

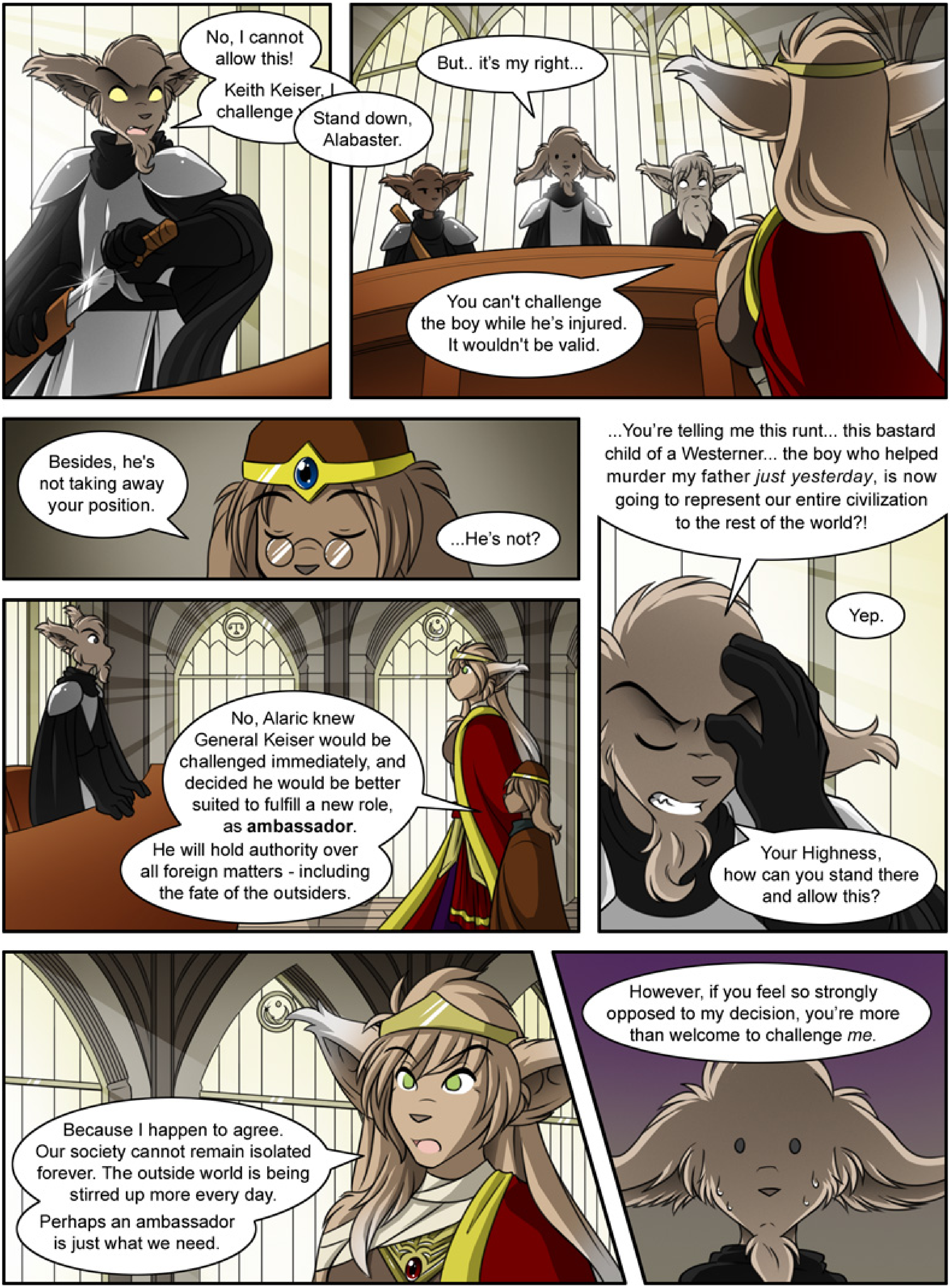

My Lady, you're okay!
We were told you'd been fatally wounded!
The healers feared I would succumb to my illness without the healing properties of the tower.
Yes, I'd been told that as well. I chose to ignore it and continue living.
They were quick to assure everyone I had been killed in the blast, to ensure my death would be considered "honorable."
Tragically, I survived.
In fact, I feel stronger than I have in years.
Which leads me to suspect that my "illness" may not have been entirely... natural.
Are... are you suggesting the humans were not just alleviating the illness, but supplying it?
If this is true... this is a call for war!
And it's all the more reason why these outsiders should be executed! Nothing good comes from people of other lands!
I appreciate your enthusiasm, Aster...
But you do not have the authority to make that judgement.

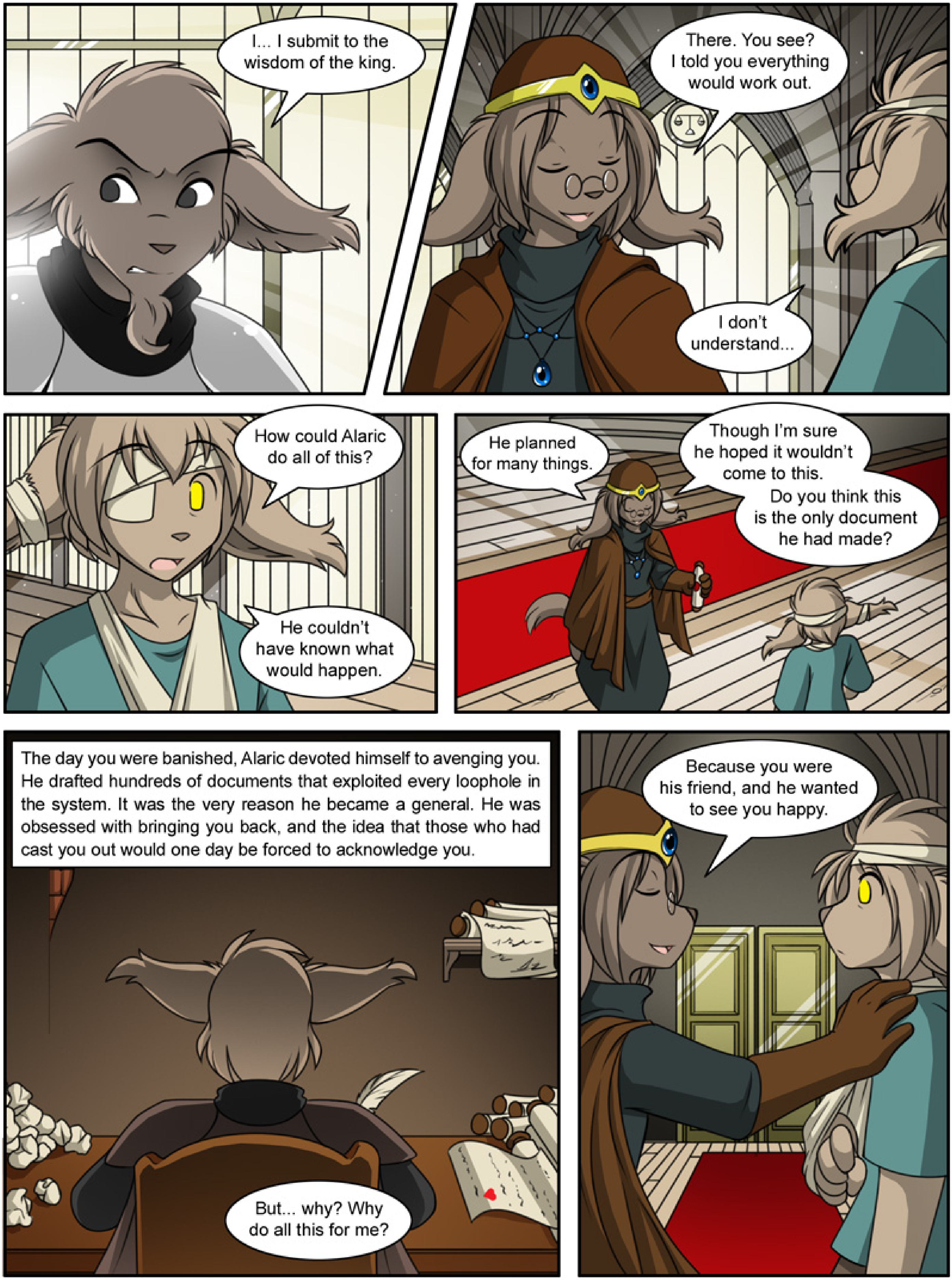

Now you kids stop fightin' an' play nice, ya hear?
Y-yes, Ma-am!
Grk!


"Don't have the authority?"
Your Highness, a lot has changed since you were injured. If you are not aware...
All three of our generals have been killed, my father included. Alaric's body is still being recovered from the bottom of the gorge.
Since the power vacuum, nearly every officer on the island has been competing to determine who should fill the void.
So far, I have defeated all challengers for the honor of ascending to the position of general, so that I may preside over this trial.
Tell me, who has greater authority to rule over these matters than I?
Oh! Well...
According to Alaric, that would be...
Keith.
. . .

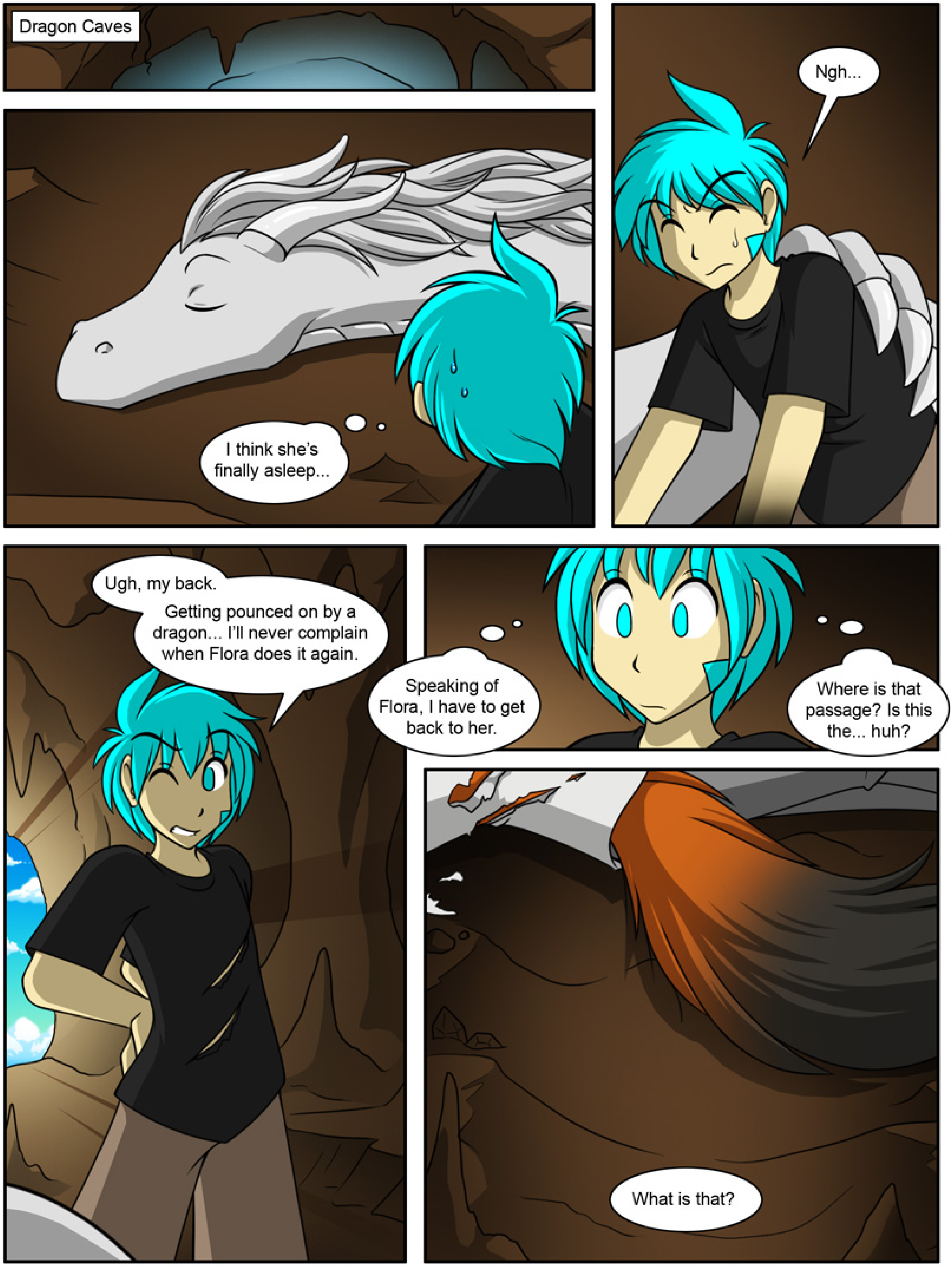

I don't understand...
Is this a joke? Keith Keiser has no rank or title.
He is not even a legal citizen.
Oh, but that's just not true.
When Alaric discovered Alabaster's manipulation, he granted Keith's citizenship himself.
And since Keith is the only living Basitin to return from the outside world, Alaric decided his experience would make him worthy of promotion.
That's not how it works!
Rank is not something you're handed! It can only be earned through strength of body or will of mind!
And Keith Keiser has neither!
I think you underestimate our wayward brother.
But you are correct.
The law states rank can only be earned through succession or combat.
However, if you can recall the conditions of General Alaric's death...
Keith Keiser defeated Nickolai Alaric in single combat on the western bridge.
What... th... that doesn't count!

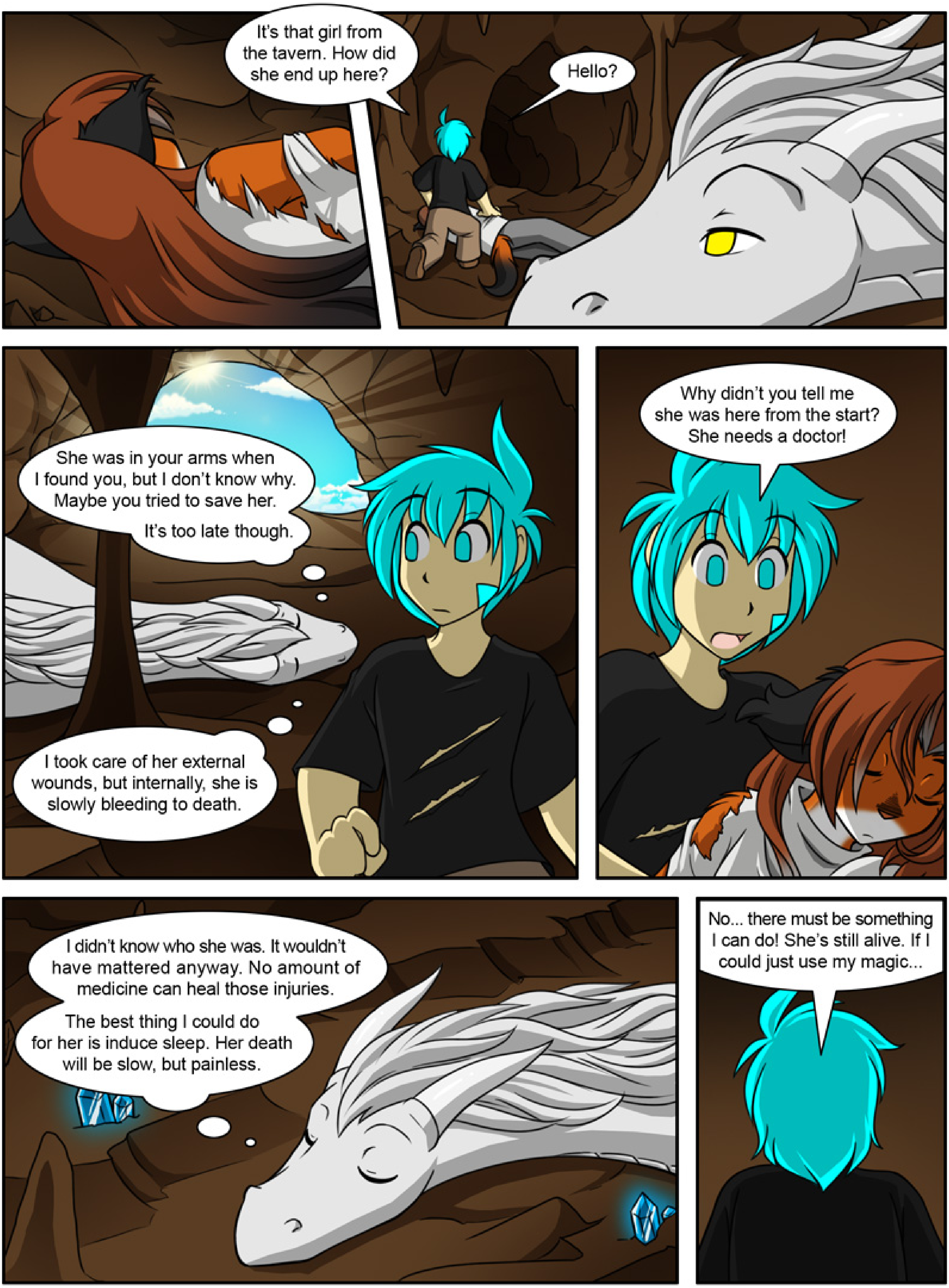

I won't accept it!
That challenge cannot be considered legitimate! No one witnessed it happen!
For all we know, *the Keidran* murdered Alaric with sorcery!
I witnessed it!
Erk! You?
Yes, I was asked to document everything. I gave it to the wolf.
<Excuse me, Confused Wolf...>
<Do you happen to still have the document you were given?>
<Huh?>
<I have no "document.">
<Well, unless you mean this thing.>
482
On the 28th of August, Year 482, I, Lieutenant Madelyn Adelaide, witnessed a duel between Keith Keiser and Nickolai Alaric... and it was awesome! You should have seen it. At first, Keith was all like "oh noes!" but then he
This is insanity...
Can't you people see what's going on? Alaric is making a mockery of our government just to get Keith into power!
We cannot allow this!

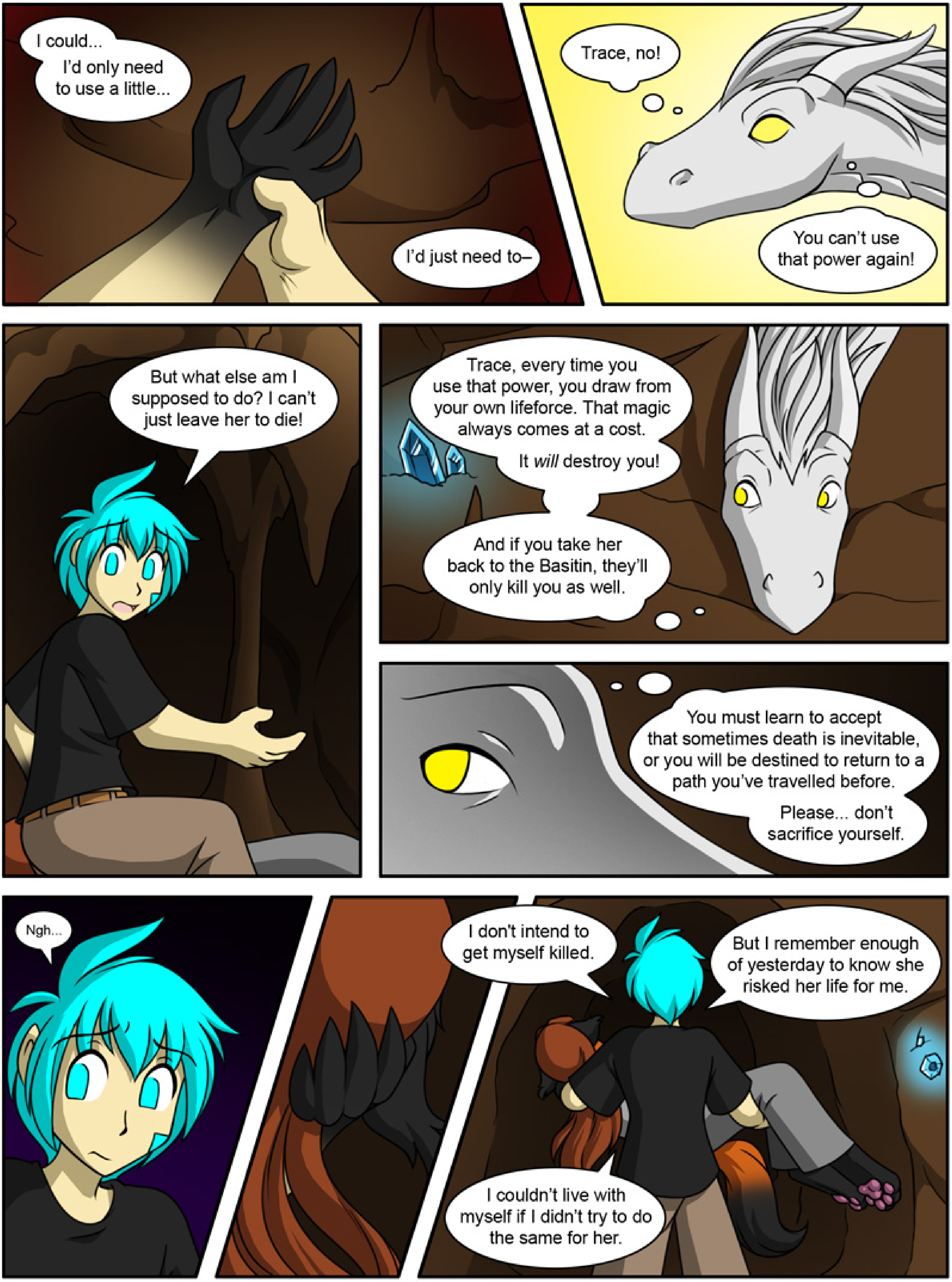

No, I cannot allow this!
Keith Keiser, I challenge
Stand down, Alabaster.
But.. it's my right...
You can't challenge the boy while he's injured. It wouldn't be valid.
Besides, he's not taking away your position.
...He's not?
...You're telling me this runt... this bastard child of a Westerner... the boy who helped murder my father *just yesterday*, is now going to represent our entire civilization to the rest of the world?!
Yep.
No, Alaric knew General Keiser would be challenged immediately, and decided he would be better suited to fulfill a new role, as **ambassador**.
He will hold authority over all foreign matters - including the fate of the outsiders.
Your Highness, how can you stand there and allow this?
Because I happen to agree. Our society cannot remain isolated forever. The outside world is being stirred up more every day.
Perhaps an ambassador is just what we need.
However, if you feel so strongly opposed to my decision, you're more than welcome to challenge *me*.

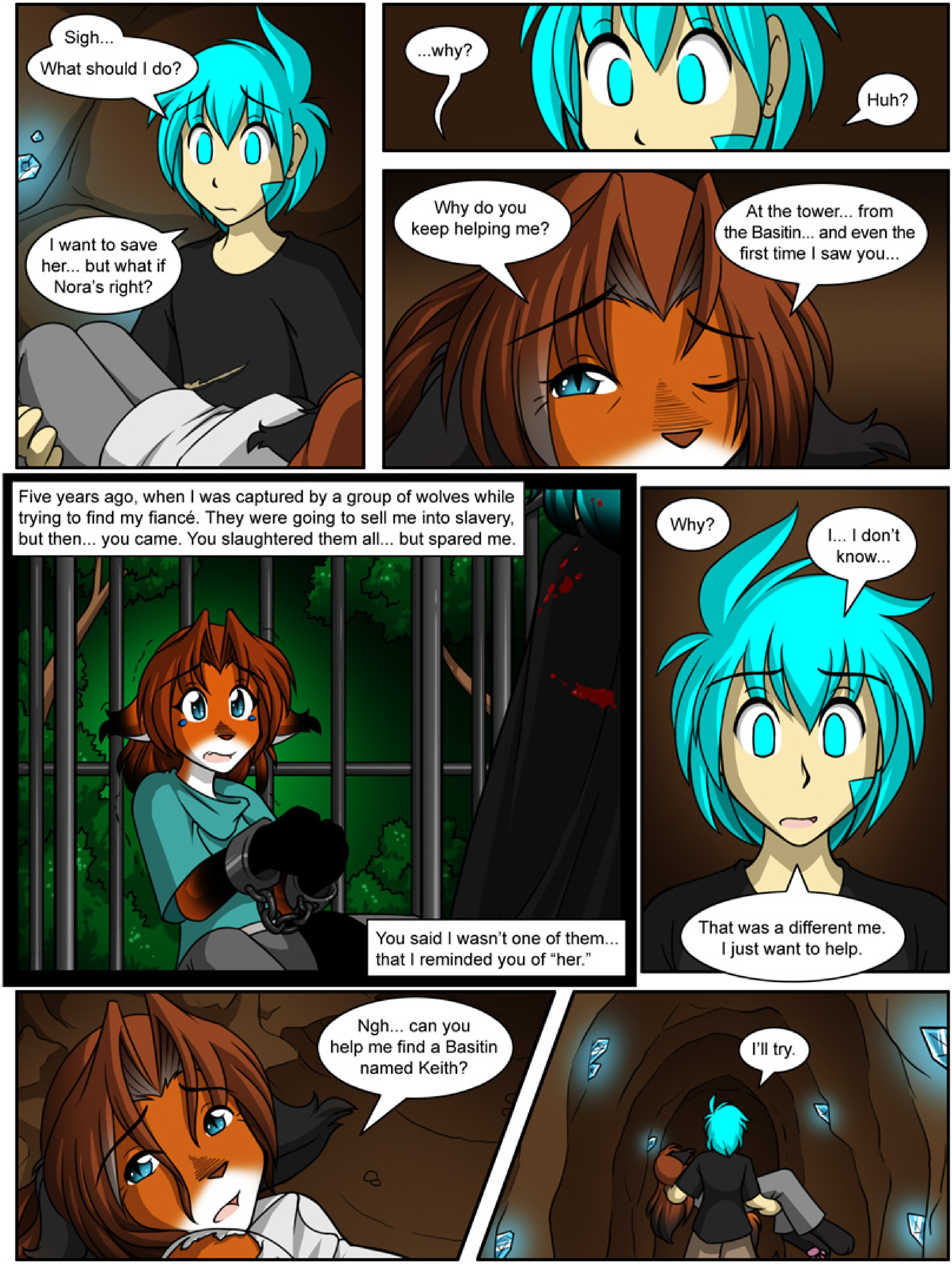

I... I submit to the wisdom of the king.
There. You see? I told you everything would work out.
I don't understand...
How could Alaric do all of this?
He couldn't have known what would happen.
He planned for many things.
Though I'm sure he hoped it wouldn't come to this.
Do you think this is the only document he had made?
The day you were banished, Alaric devoted himself to avenging you. He drafted hundreds of documents that exploited every loophole in the system. It was the very reason he became a general. He was obsessed with bringing you back, and the idea that those who had cast you out would one day be forced to acknowledge you.
But... why? Why do all this for me?
Because you were his friend, and he wanted to see you happy.

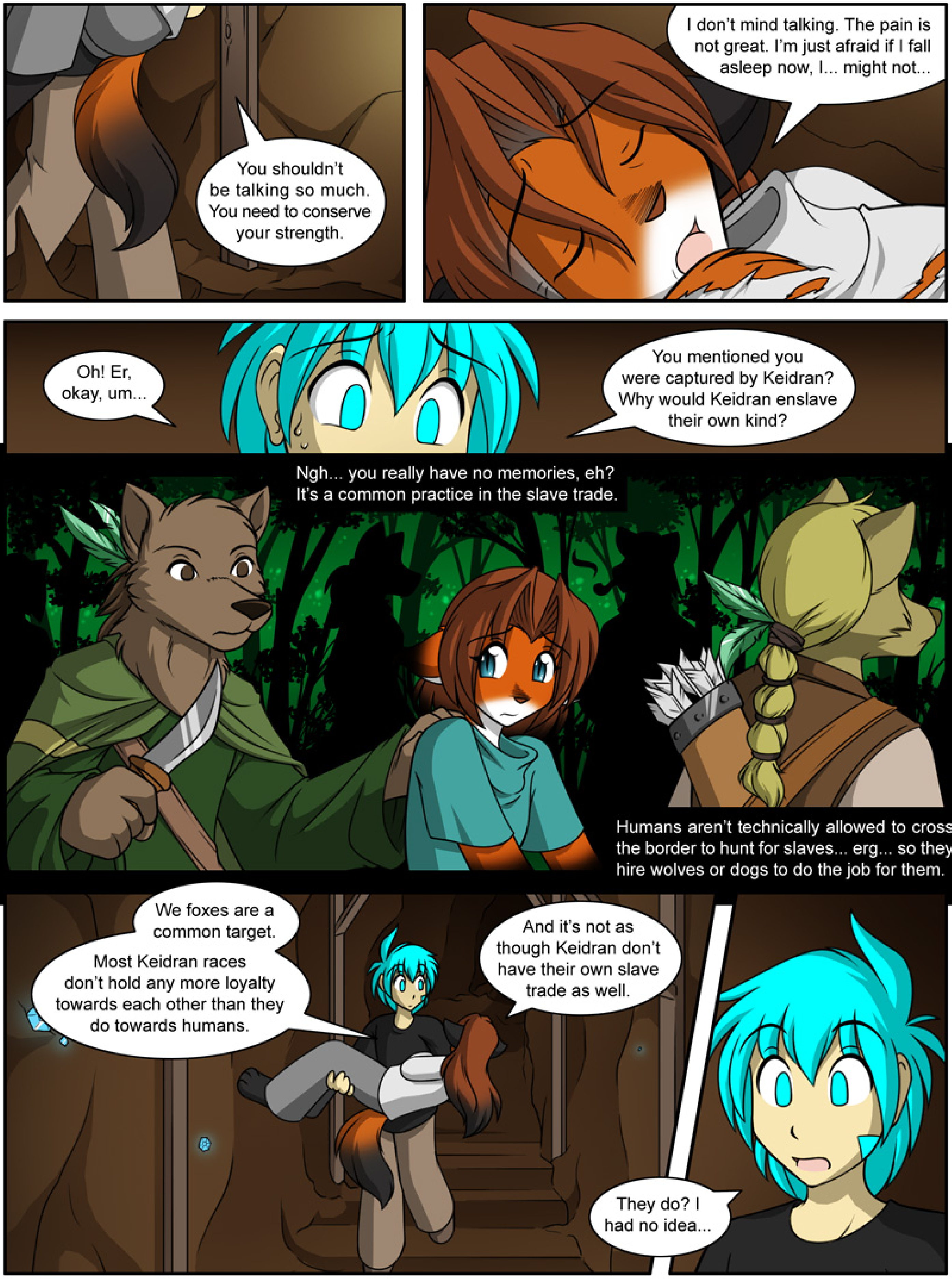
MERRY CHRISTMAS
&
HAPPY NEW YEAR

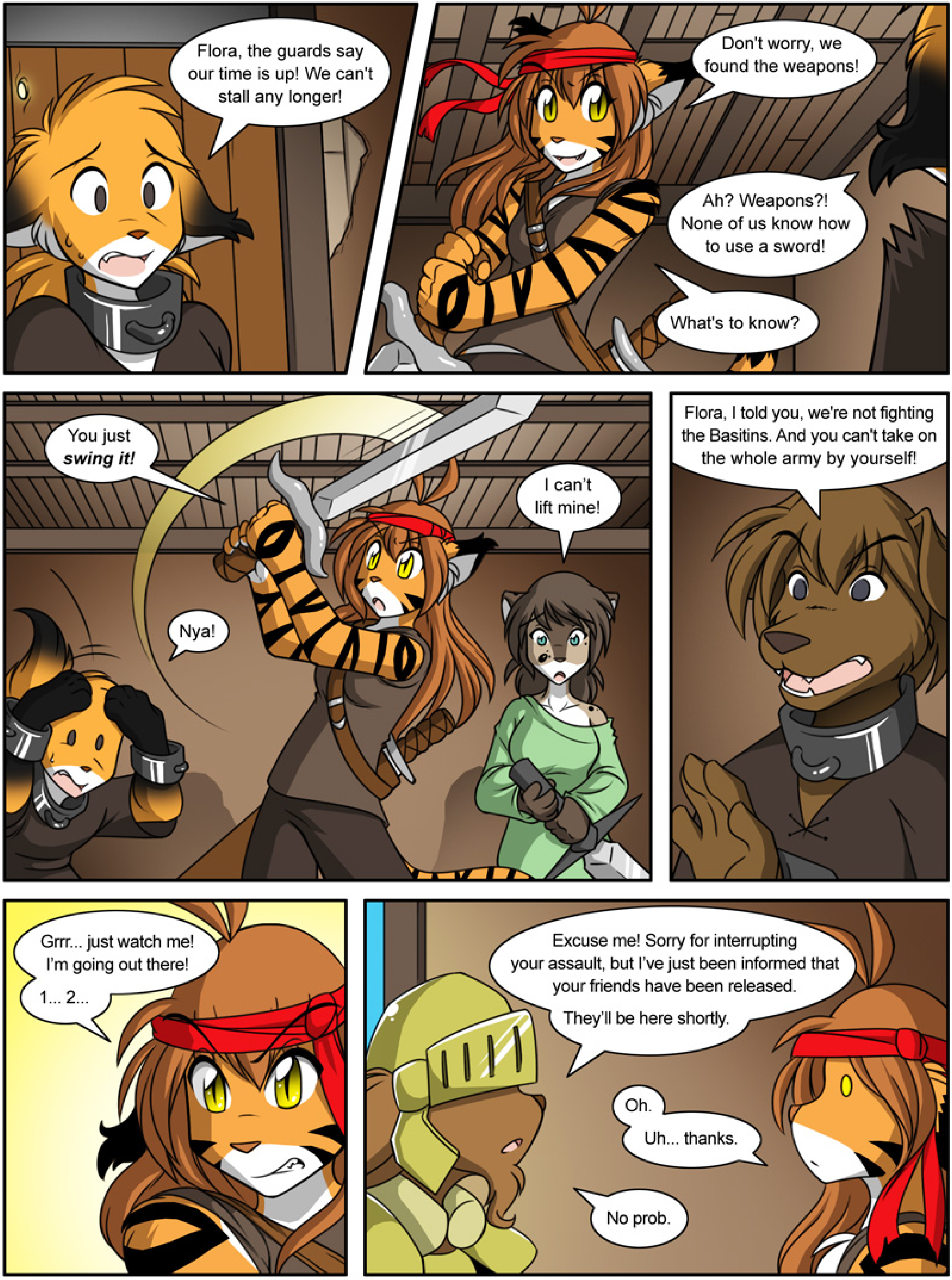

Dragon Caves
I think she's finally asleep...
Ngh...
Ugh, my back.
Getting pounced on by a dragon... I'll never complain when Flora does it again.
Speaking of Flora, I have to get back to her.
Where is that passage? Is this the... huh?
What is that?

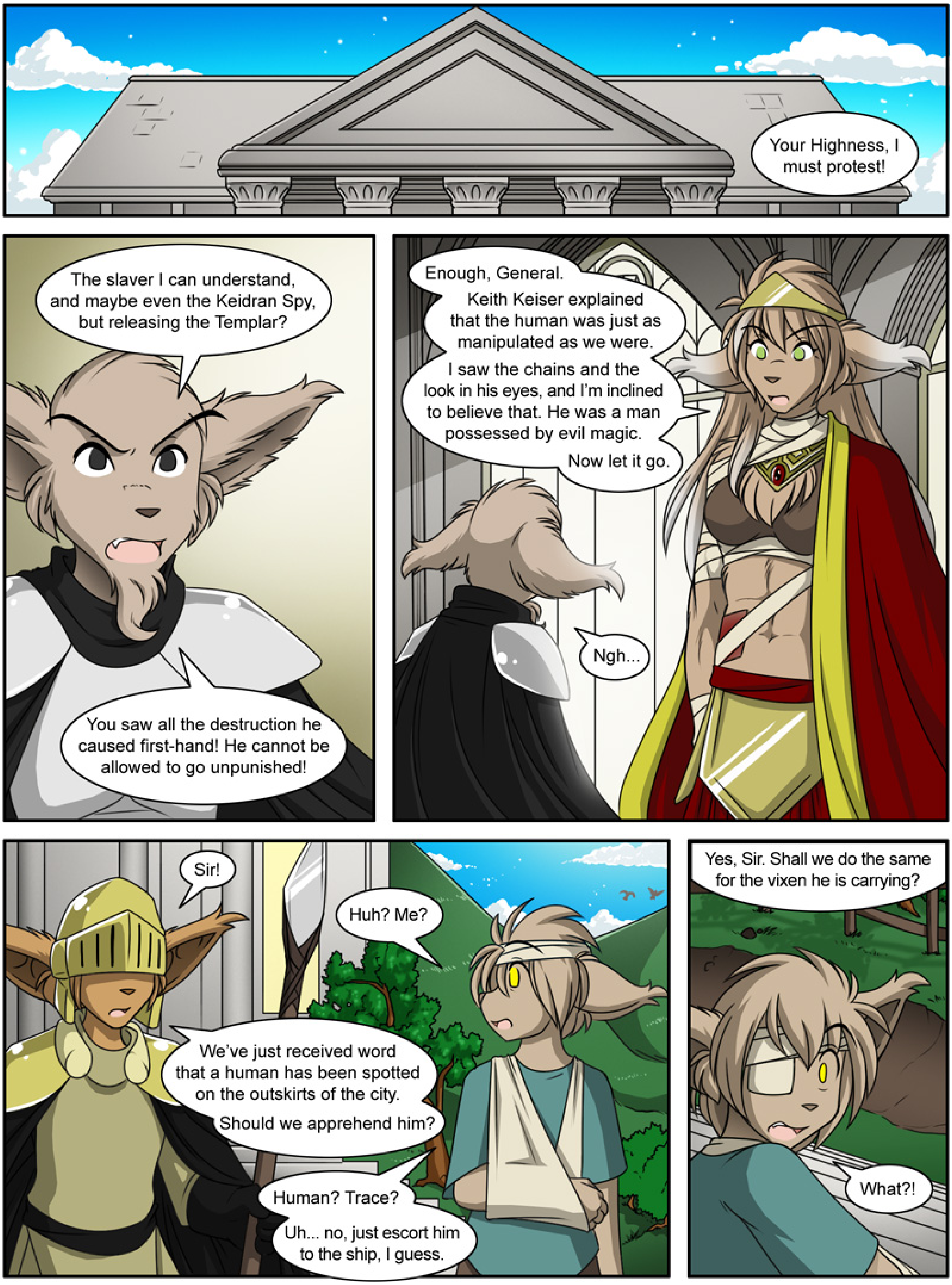

It's that girl from the tavern. How did she end up here?
Hello?
She was in your arms when I found you, but I don't know why. Maybe you tried to save her.
It's too late though.
I took care of her external wounds, but internally, she is slowly bleeding to death.
Why didn't you tell me she was here from the start? She needs a doctor!
I didn't know who she was. It wouldn't have mattered anyway. No amount of medicine can heal those injuries.
The best thing I could do for her is induce sleep. Her death will be slow, but painless.
No... there must be something I can do! She's still alive. If I could just use my magic...

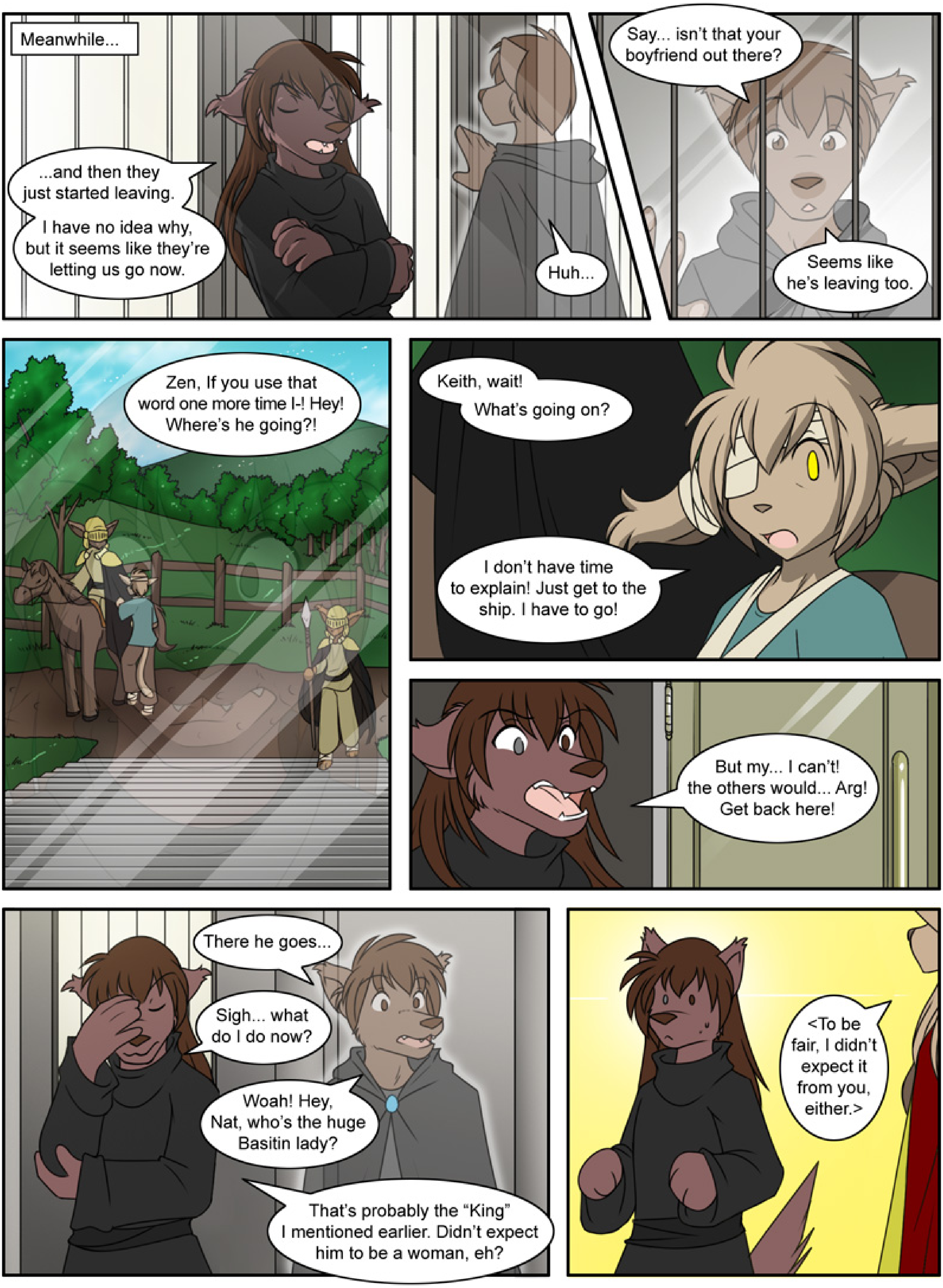

I could...
I'd only need to use a little...
I'd just need to–
Trace, no!
You can't use that power again!
But what else am I supposed to do? I can't just leave her to die!
Trace, every time you use that power, you draw from your own lifeforce. That magic always comes at a cost.
It *will* destroy you!
And if you take her back to the Basitin, they'll only kill you as well.
You must learn to accept that sometimes death is inevitable, or you will be destined to return to a path you've travelled before.
Please... don't sacrifice yourself.
Ngh...
I don't intend to get myself killed.
But I remember enough of yesterday to know she risked her life for me.
I couldn't live with myself if I didn't try to do the same for her.

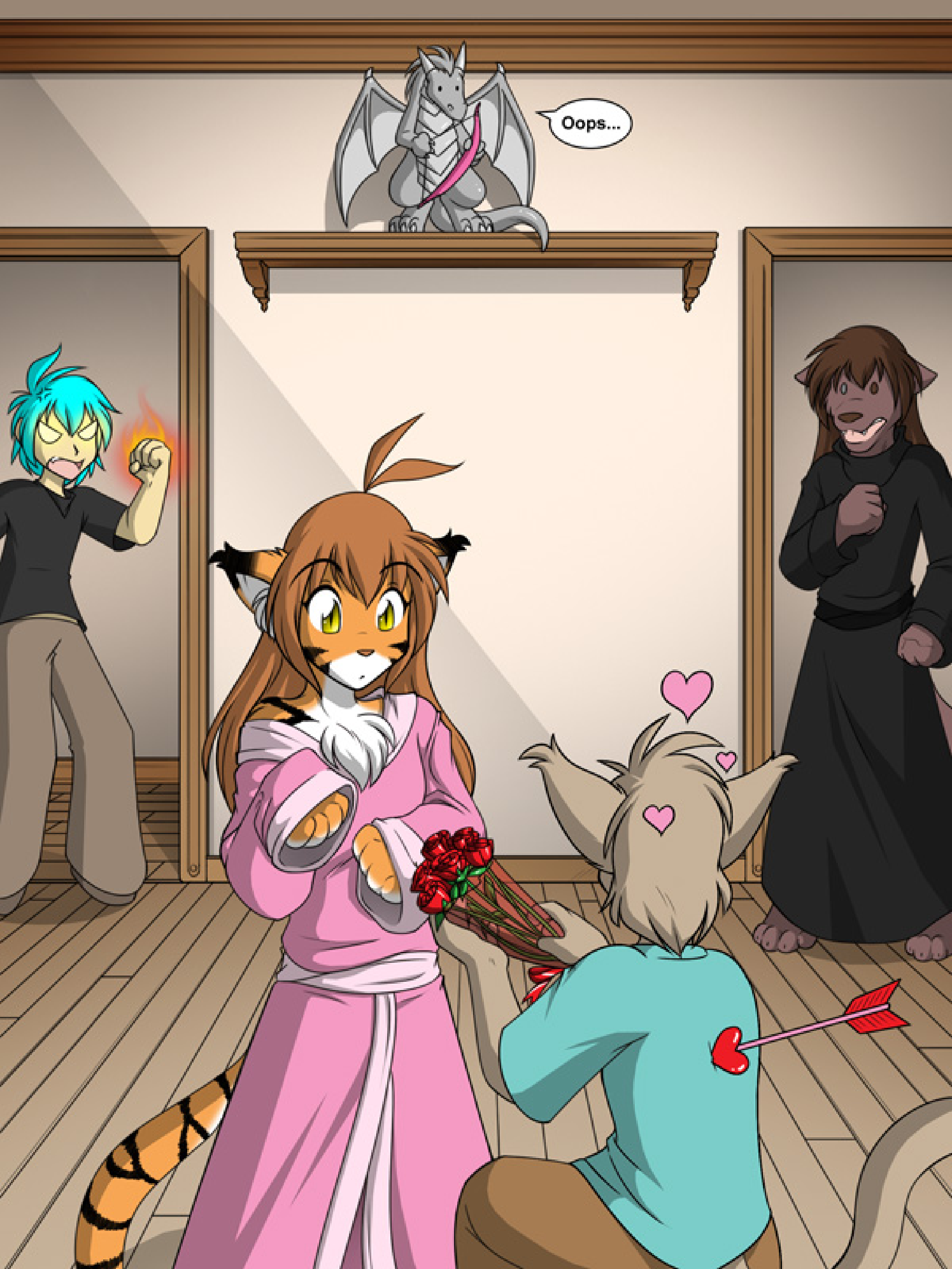

Sigh...
What should I do?
I want to save her... but what if Nora's right?
...why?
Huh?
Why do you keep helping me?
At the tower... from the Basitin... and even the first time I saw you...
Five years ago, when I was captured by a group of wolves while trying to find my fiancé. They were going to sell me into slavery, but then... you came. You slaughtered them all... but spared me.
You said I wasn't one of them... that I reminded you of "her."
Why?
I... I don't know...
That was a different me. I just want to help.
Ngh... can you help me find a Basitin named Keith?
I'll try.

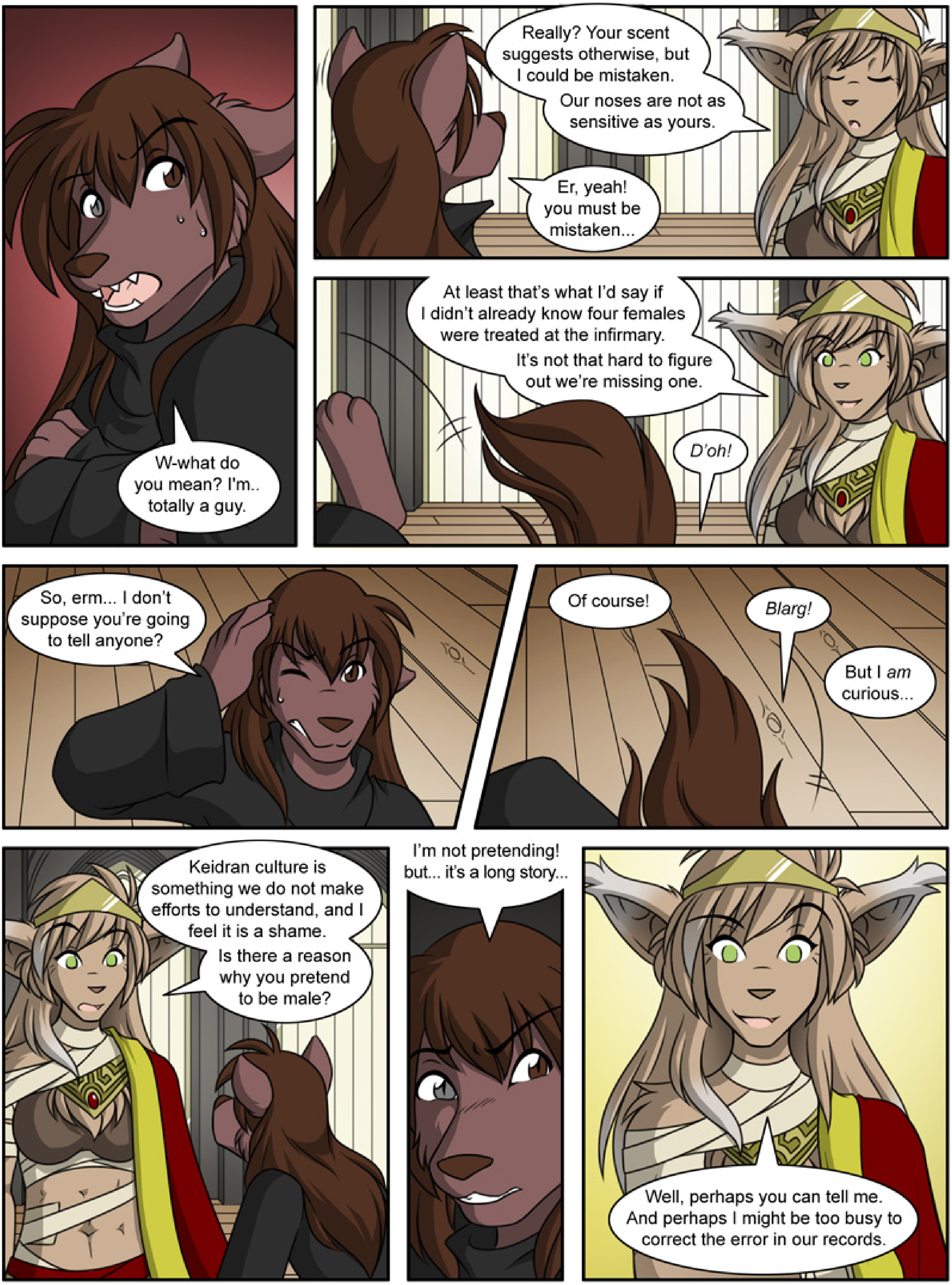

You shouldn't be talking so much. You need to conserve your strength.
I don't mind talking. The pain is not great. I'm just afraid if I fall asleep now, I... might not...
Oh! Er, okay, um...
You mentioned you were captured by Keidran? Why would Keidran enslave their own kind?
Ngh... you really have no memories, eh? It's a common practice in the slave trade.
Humans aren't technically allowed to cross the border to hunt for slaves... erg... so they hire wolves or dogs to do the job for them.
We foxes are a common target.
Most Keidran races don't hold any more loyalty towards each other than they do towards humans.
And it's not as though Keidran don't have their own slave trade as well.
They do? I had no idea...

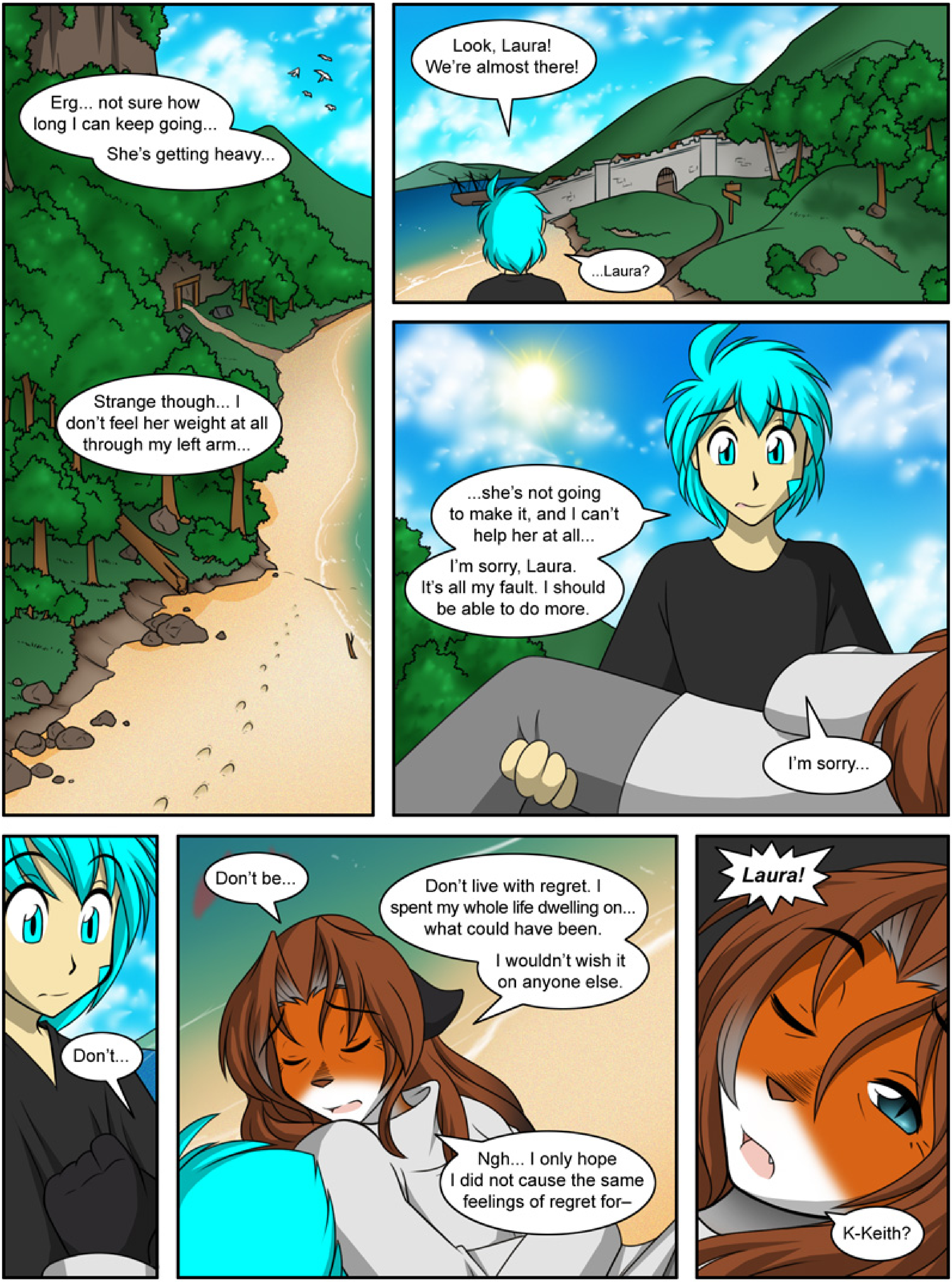

Flora, the guards say our time is up! We can't stall any longer!
Don't worry, we found the weapons!
Ah? Weapons?! None of us know how to use a sword!
What's to know?
You just *swing it!*
I can't lift mine!
Nya!
Flora, I told you, we're not fighting the Basitins. And you can't take on the whole army by yourself!
Grrr... just watch me! I'm going out there!
1... 2...
Excuse me! Sorry for interrupting your assault, but I've just been informed that your friends have been released.
They'll be here shortly.
Oh.
Uh... thanks.
No prob.

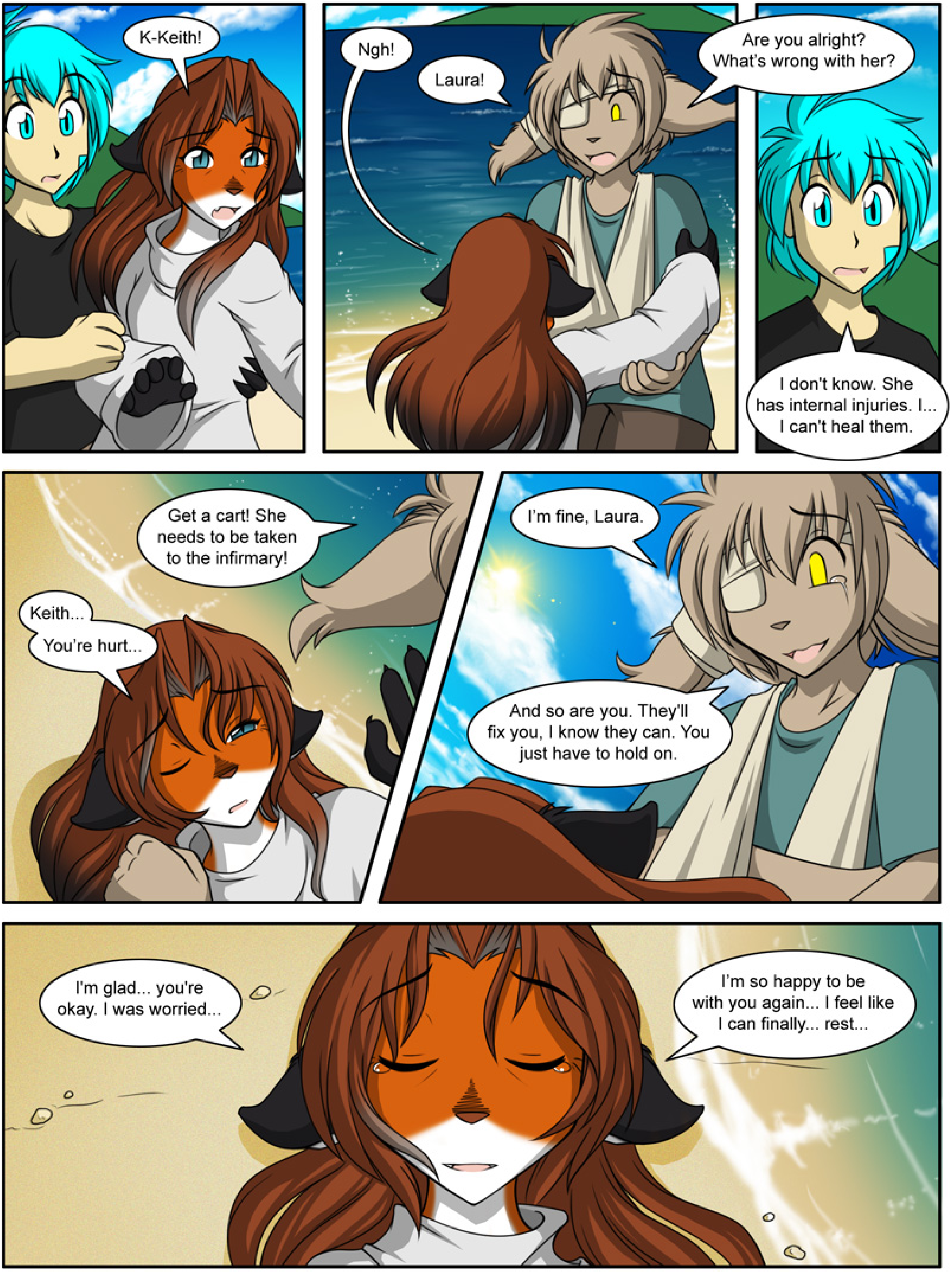

Your Highness, I must protest!
The slaver I can understand, and maybe even the Keidran Spy, but releasing the Templar?
You saw all the destruction he caused first-hand! He cannot be allowed to go unpunished!
Enough, General.
Keith Keiser explained that the human was just as manipulated as we were.
I saw the chains and the look in his eyes, and I'm inclined to believe that. He was a man possessed by evil magic.
Now let it go.
Ngh...
Sir!
Huh? Me?
We've just received word that a human has been spotted on the outskirts of the city.
Should we apprehend him?
Human? Trace?
Uh... no, just escort him to the ship, I guess.
Yes, Sir. Shall we do the same for the vixen he is carrying?
What?!

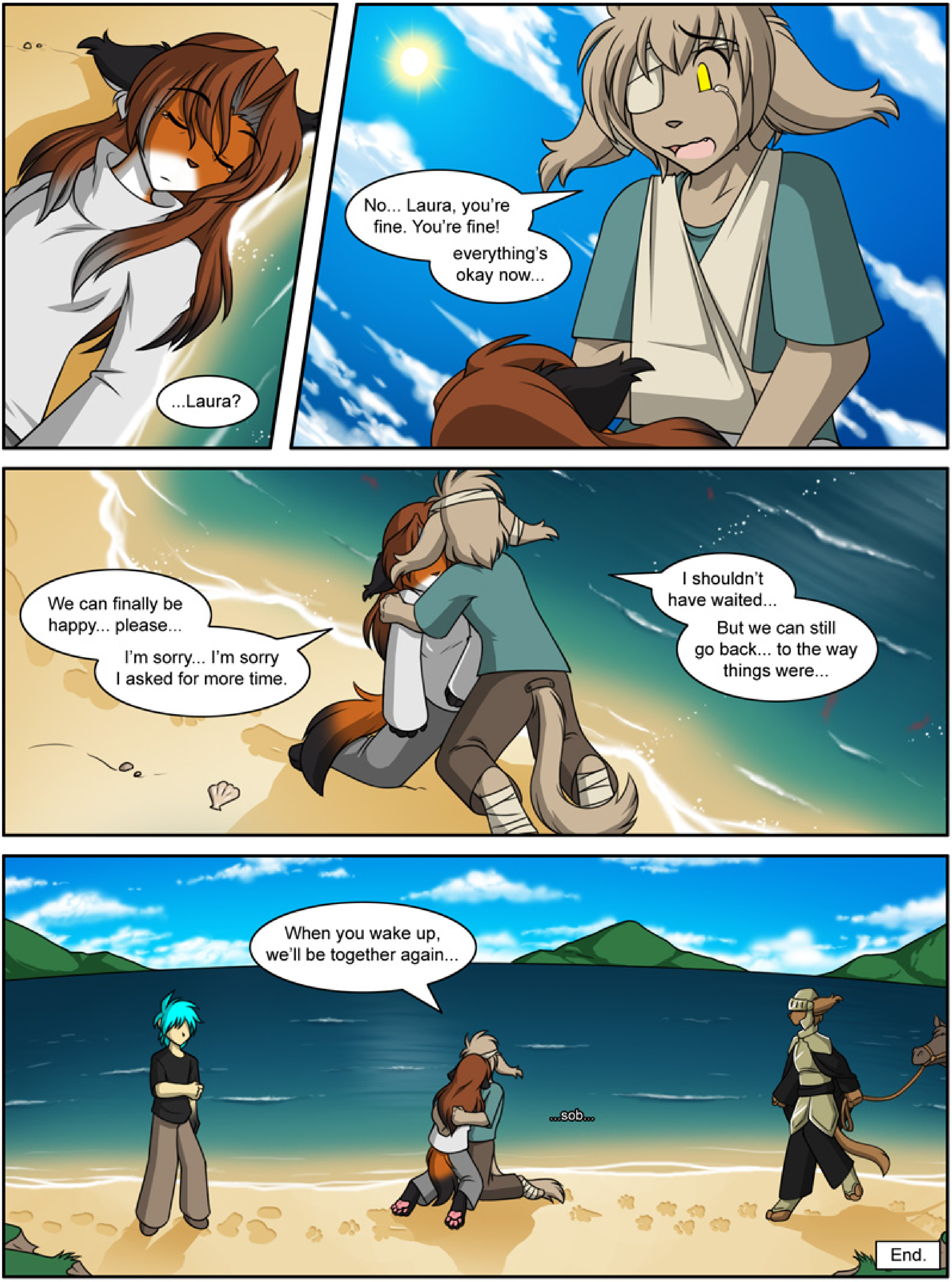

Meanwhile...
...and then they just started leaving.
I have no idea why, but it seems like they're letting us go now.
Huh...
Say... isn't that your boyfriend out there?
Seems like he's leaving too.
Zen, If you use that word one more time I-! Hey! Where's he going?!
Keith, wait! What's going on?
I don't have time to explain! Just get to the ship. I have to go!
But my... I can't! the others would... Arg! Get back here!
There he goes...
Sigh... what do I do now?
Woah! Hey, Nat, who's the huge Basitin lady?
That's probably the "King" I mentioned earlier. Didn't expect him to be a woman, eh?
<To be fair, I didn't expect it from you, either.>


Oops...

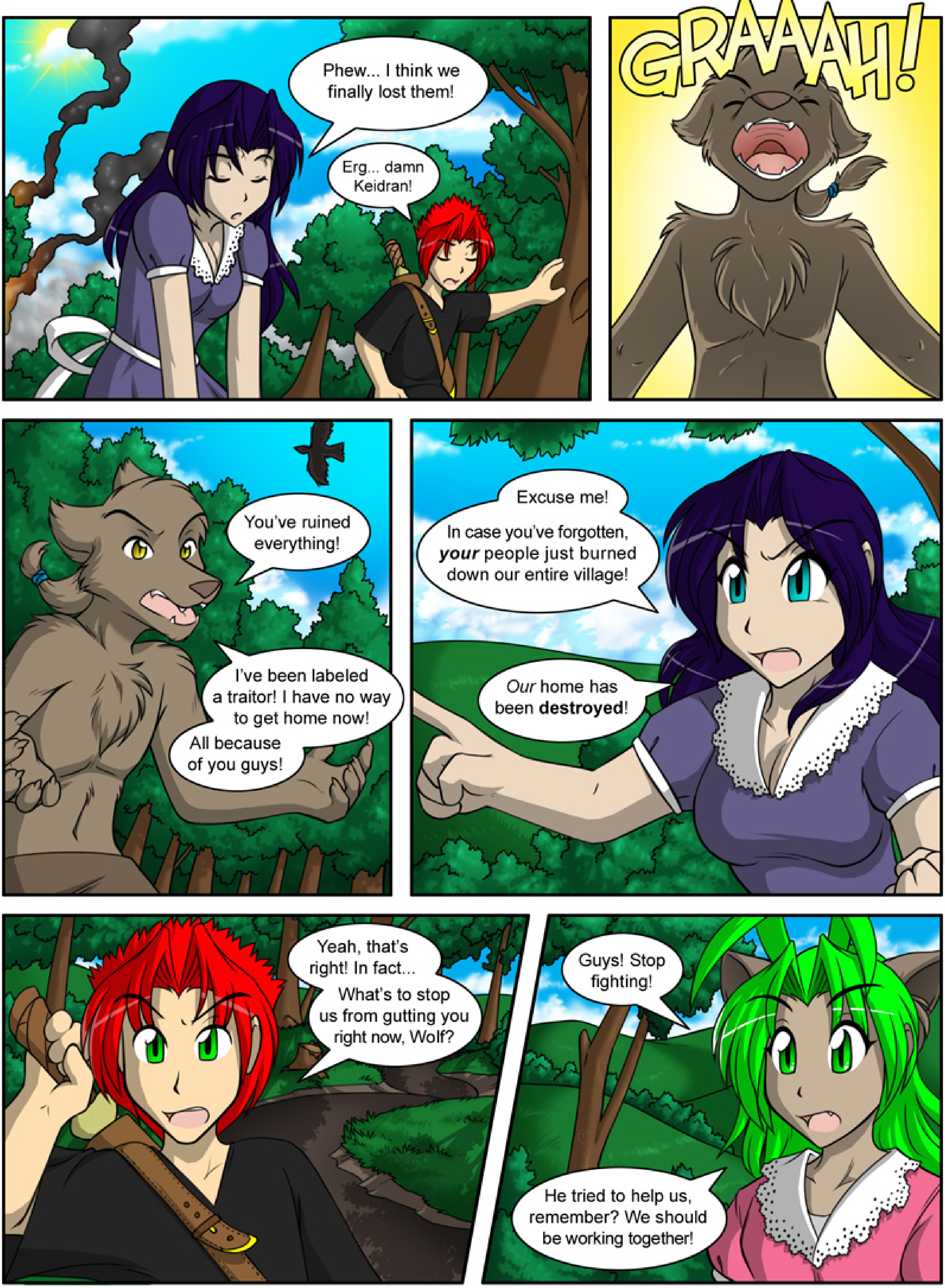

W-what do you mean? I'm.. totally a guy.
Really? Your scent suggests otherwise, but I could be mistaken.
Our noses are not as sensitive as yours.
Er, yeah! you must be mistaken...
At least that's what I'd say if I didn't already know four females were treated at the infirmary.
It's not that hard to figure out we're missing one.
D'oh!
So, erm... I don't suppose you're going to tell anyone?
Of course!
Blarg!
But I *am* curious...
Keidran culture is something we do not make efforts to understand, and I feel it is a shame.
Is there a reason why you pretend to be male?
I'm not pretending! but... it's a long story...
Well, perhaps you can tell me. And perhaps I might be too busy to correct the error in our records.

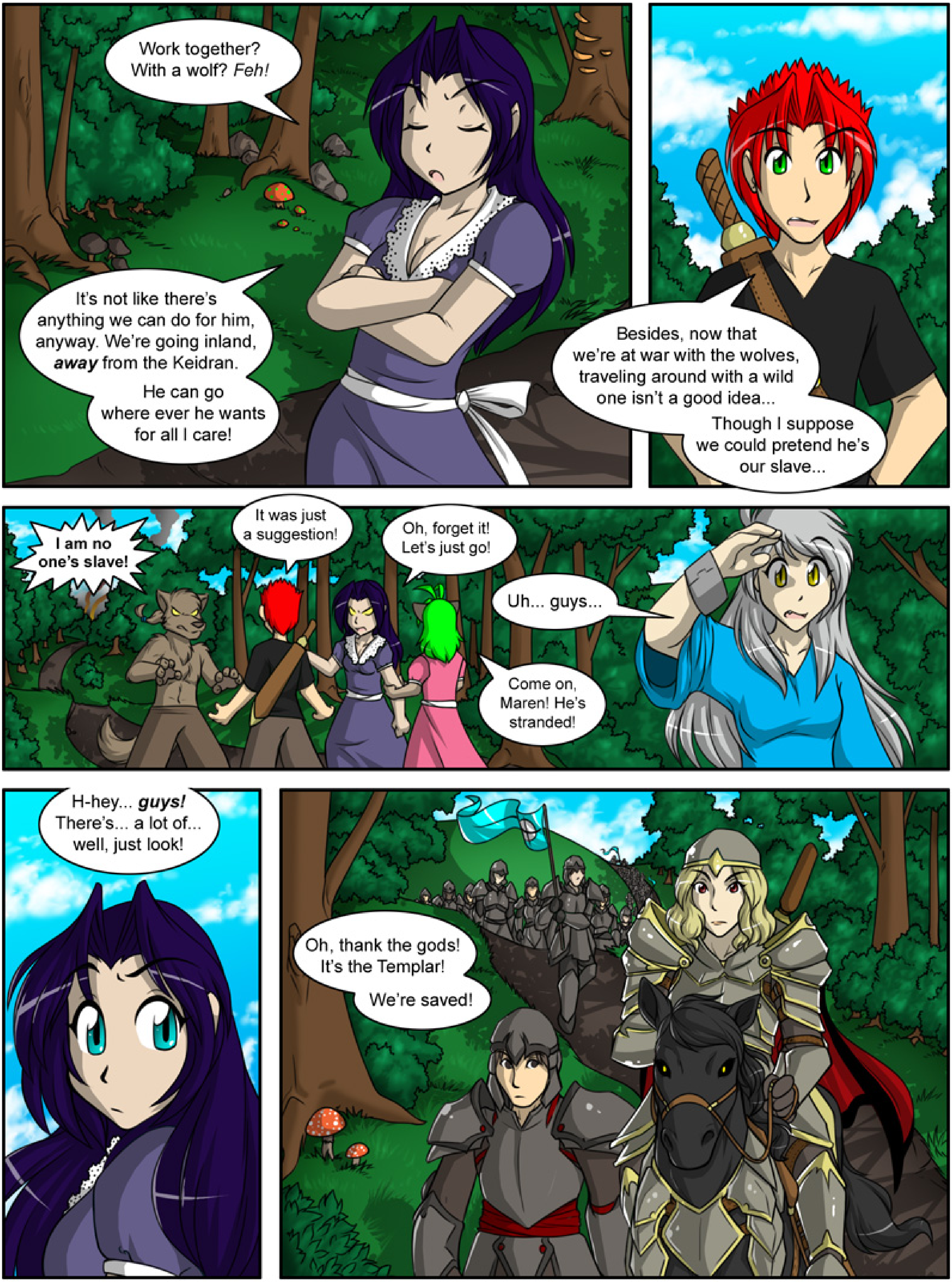

Erg... not sure how long I can keep going...
She's getting heavy...
Strange though... I don't feel her weight at all through my left arm...
Look, Laura! We're almost there!
...Laura?
...she's not going to make it, and I can't help her at all...
I'm sorry, Laura. It's all my fault. I should be able to do more.
I'm sorry...
Don't...
Don't be...
Don't live with regret. I spent my whole life dwelling on... what could have been.
I wouldn't wish it on anyone else.
Ngh... I only hope I did not cause the same feelings of regret for–
Laura!
K-Keith?

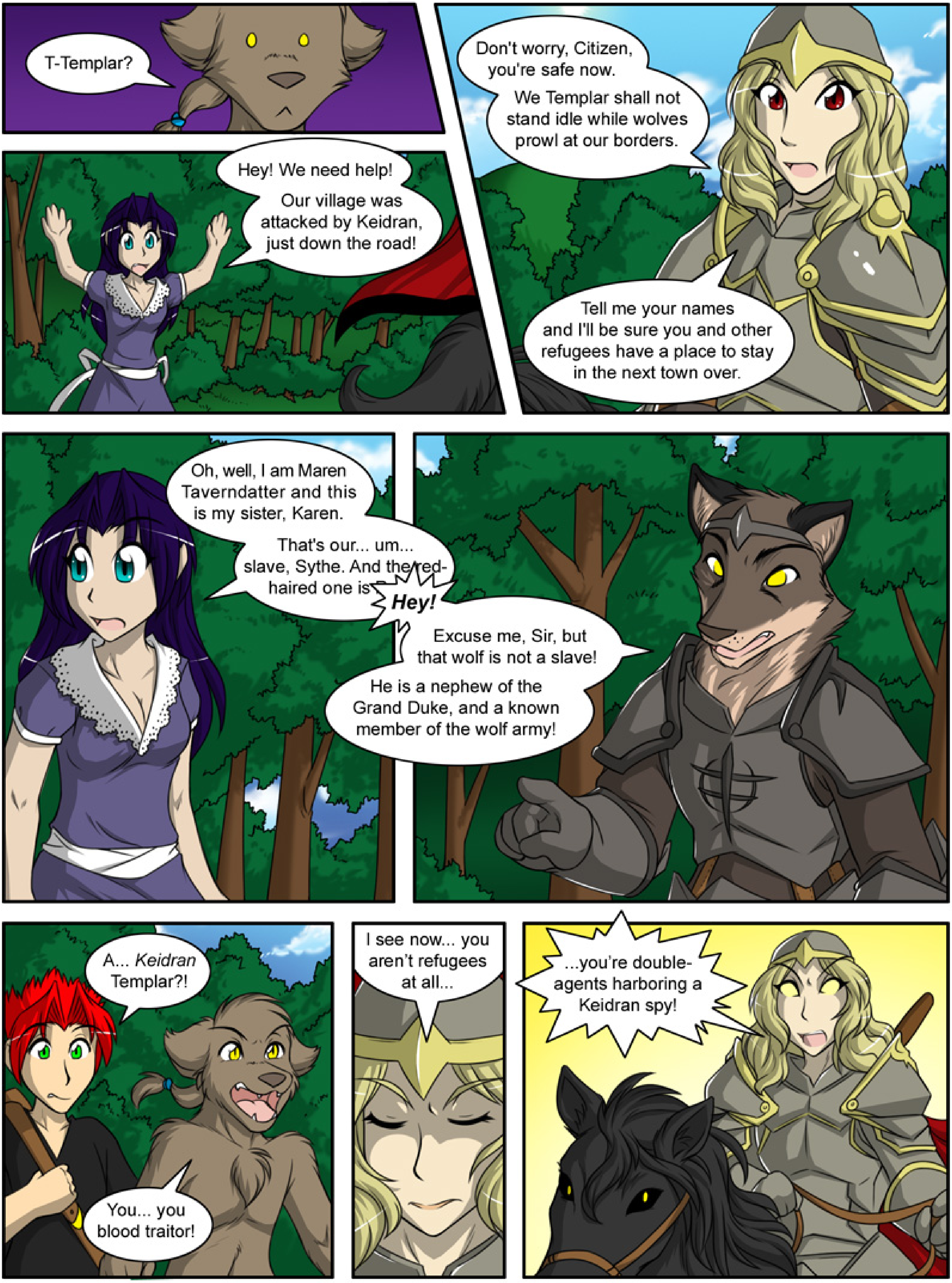

K-Keith!
Ngh!
Laura!
Are you alright? What's wrong with her?
I don't know. She has internal injuries. I... I can't heal them.
Get a cart! She needs to be taken to the infirmary!
Keith...
You're hurt...
I'm fine, Laura.
And so are you. They'll fix you, I know they can. You just have to hold on.
I'm glad... you're okay. I was worried...
I'm so happy to be with you again... I feel like I can finally... rest...

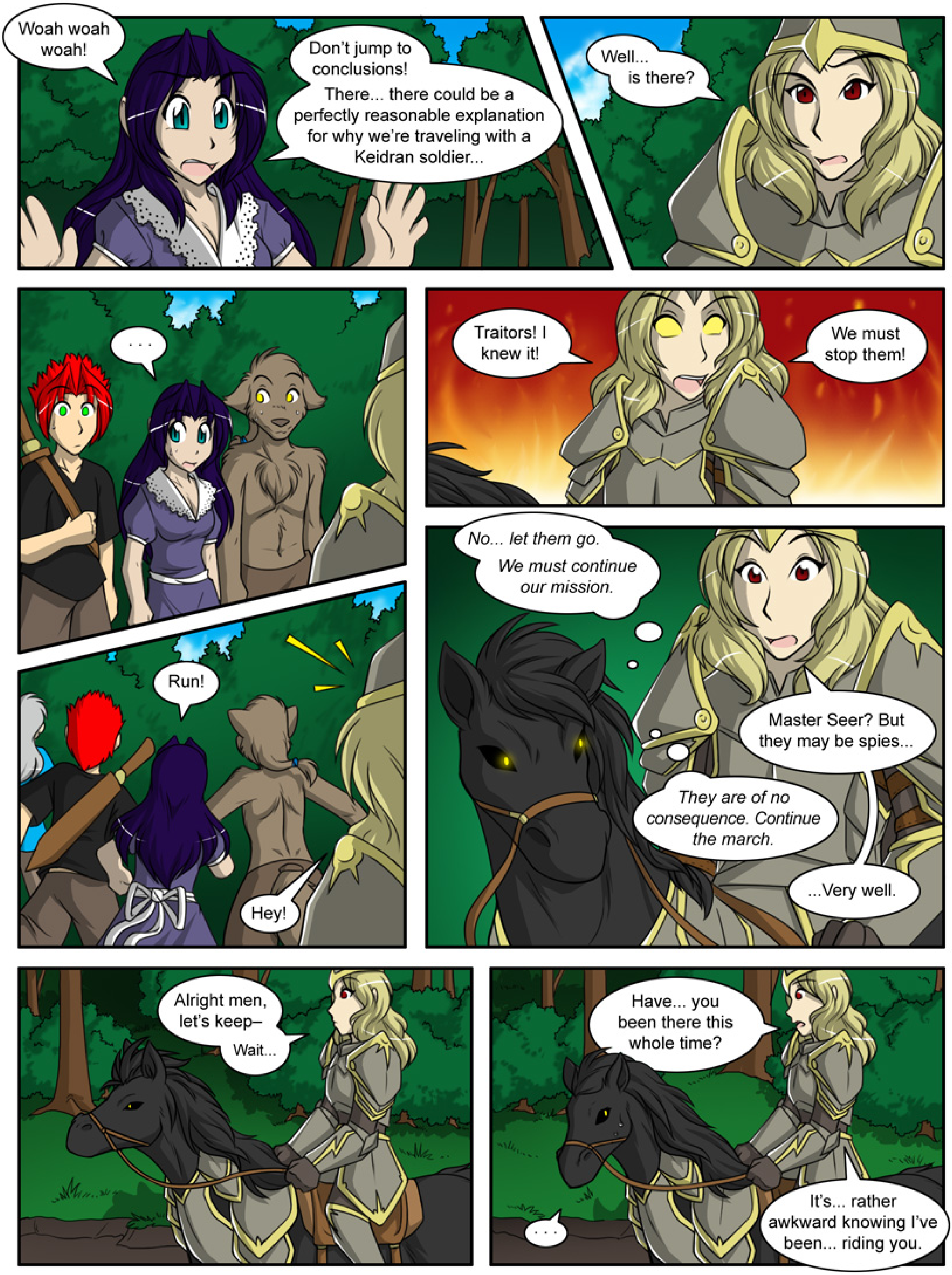

...Laura?
No... Laura, you're fine. You're fine!
everything's okay now...
We can finally be happy... please...
I'm sorry... I'm sorry I asked for more time.
I shouldn't have waited...
But we can still go back... to the way things were...
When you wake up, we'll be together again...
...sob...
End.

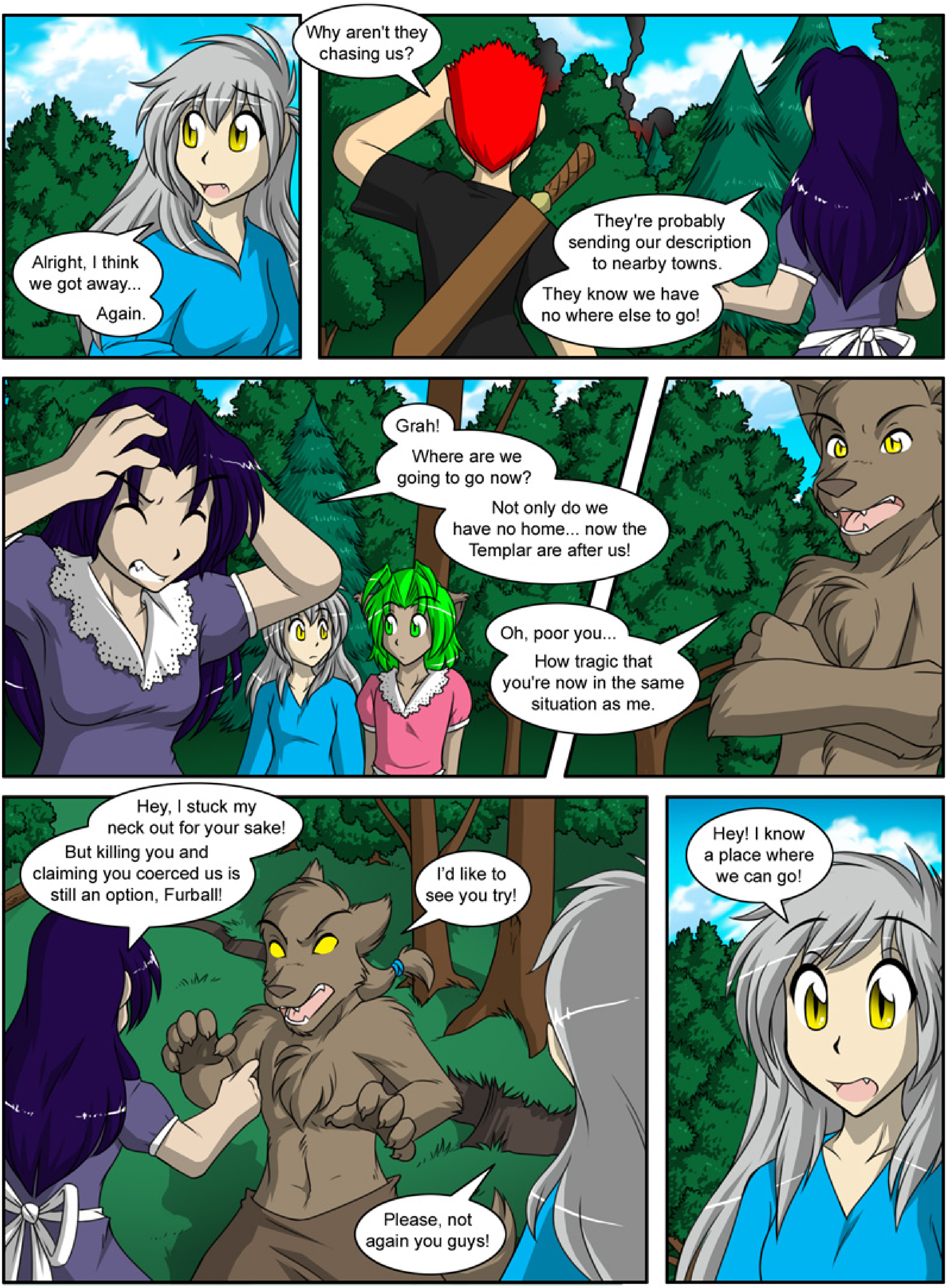
TwoKinds
Chapter Thirteen
Embarking Again

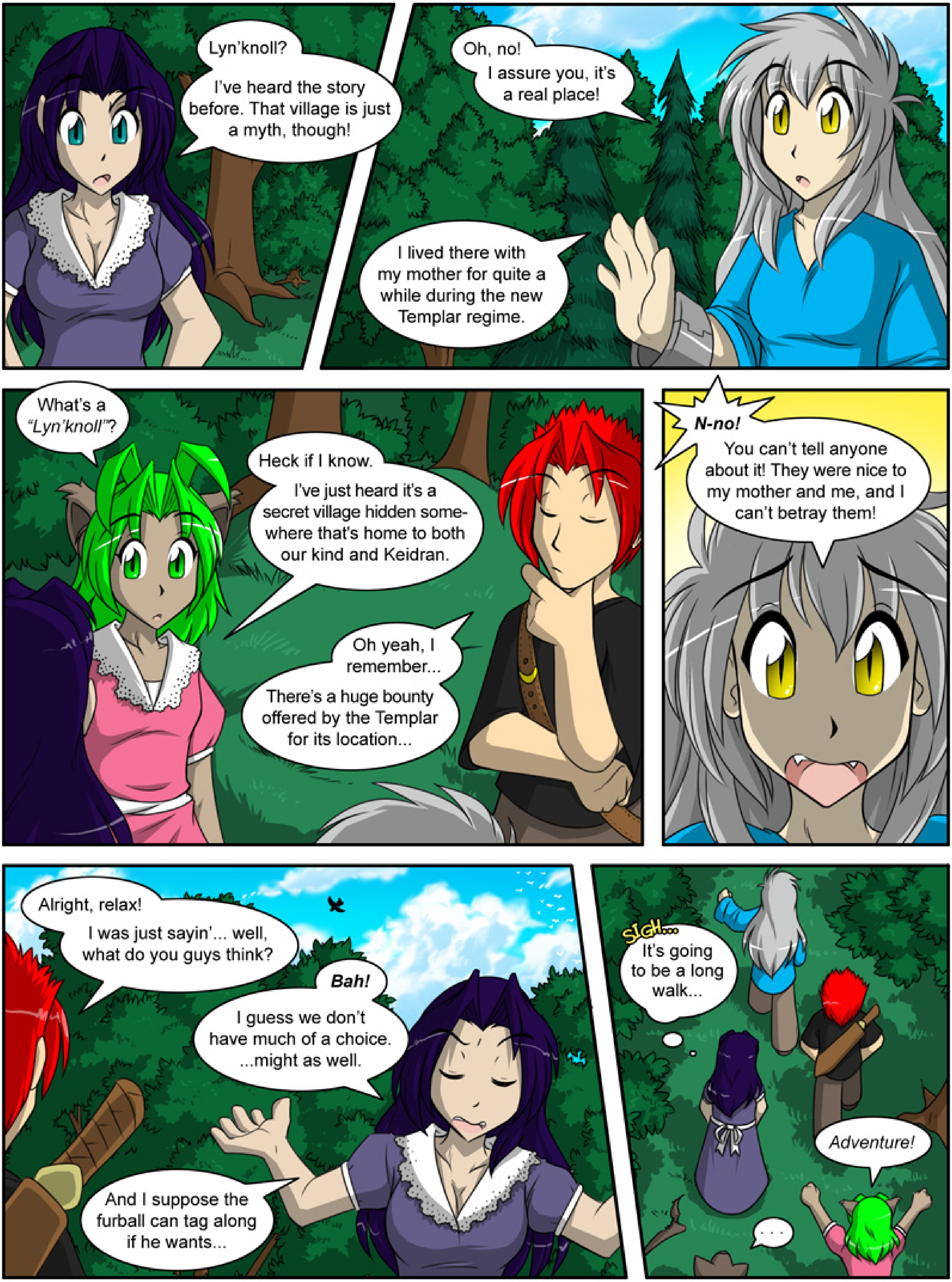

Phew... I think we finally lost them!
Erg... damn Keidran!
GRAAAH!
You've ruined everything!
I've been labeled a traitor! I have no way to get home now!
All because of you guys!
Excuse me!
In case you've forgotten, ***your*** people just burned down our entire village!
Our home has been **destroyed**!
Yeah, that's right! In fact...
What's to stop us from gutting you right now, Wolf?
Guys! Stop fighting!
He tried to help us, remember? We should be working together!

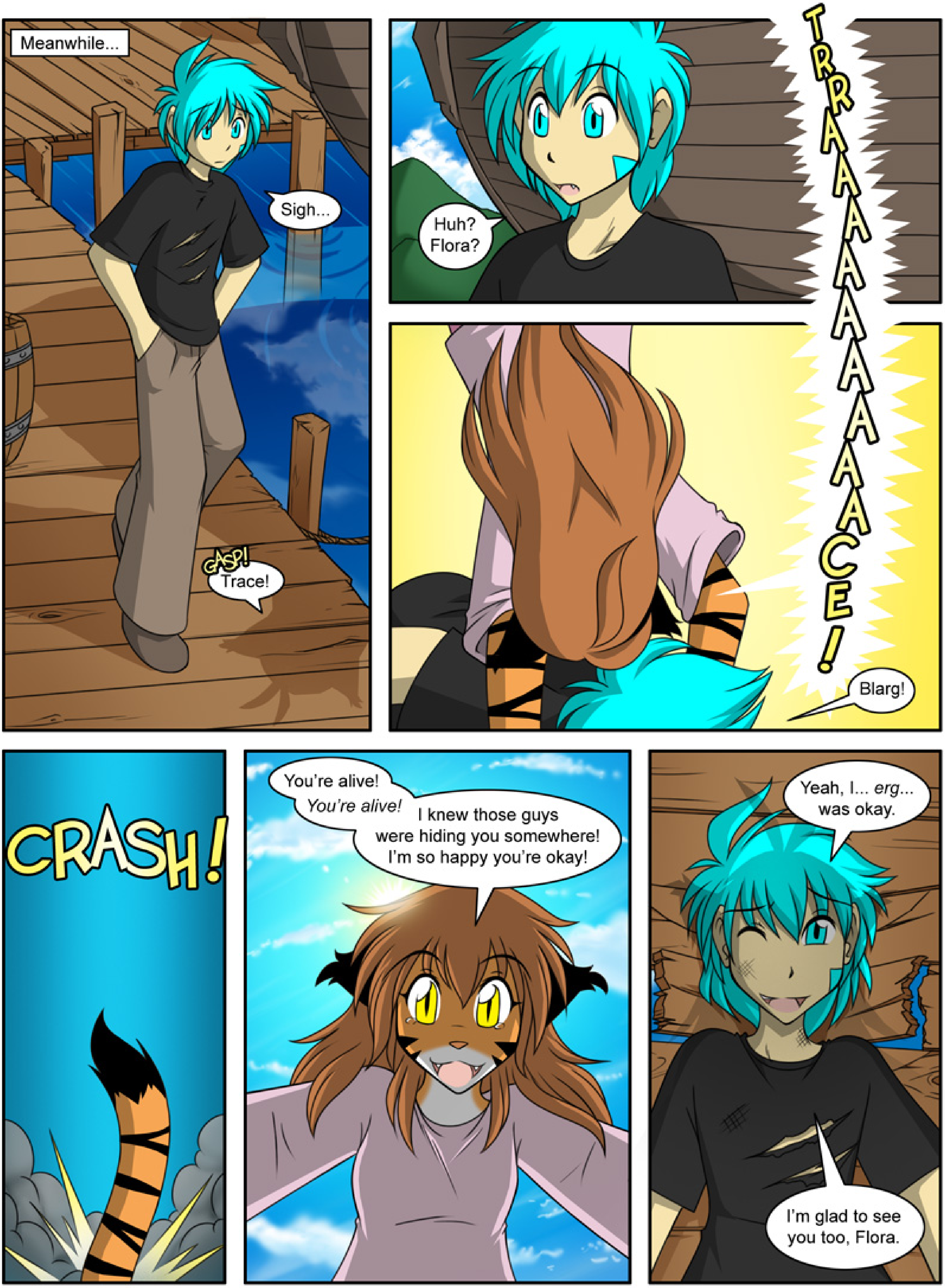

Work together? With a wolf? *Feh!*
It's not like there's anything we can do for him, anyway. We're going inland, ***away*** from the Keidran.
He can go where ever he wants for all I care!
Besides, now that we're at war with the wolves, traveling around with a wild one isn't a good idea...
Though I suppose we could pretend he's our slave...
I am no one's slave!
It was just a suggestion!
Oh, forget it! Let's just go!
Come on, Maren! He's stranded!
Uh... guys...
H-hey... ***guys!*** There's... a lot of... well, just look!
Oh, thank the gods! It's the Templar!
We're saved!

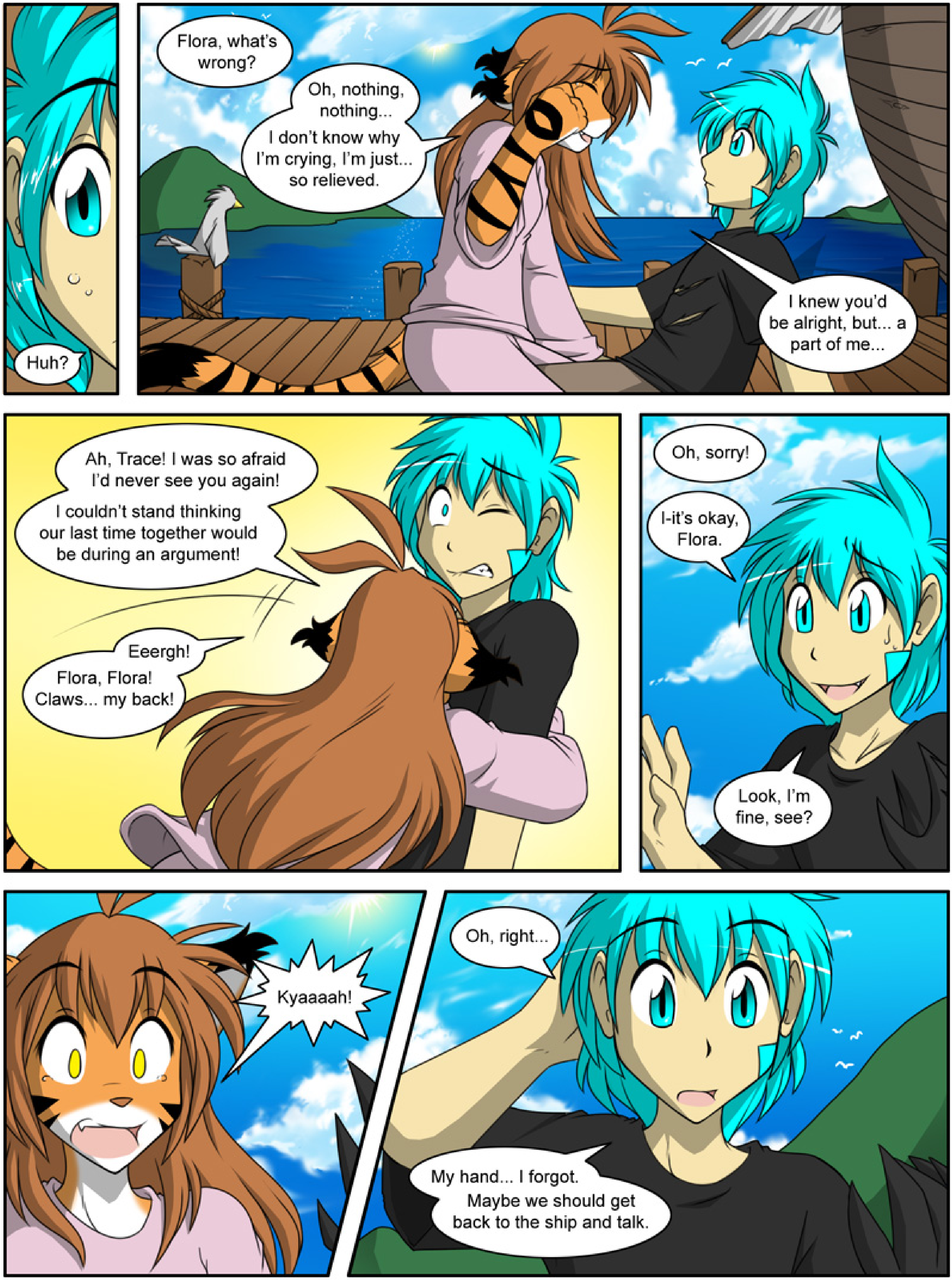

T-Templar?
Don't worry, Citizen, you're safe now.
We Templar shall not stand idle while wolves prowl at our borders.
Hey! We need help!
Our village was attacked by Keidran, just down the road!
Tell me your names and I'll be sure you and other refugees have a place to stay in the next town over.
Oh, well, I am Maren Taverndatter and this is my sister, Karen.
That's our... um... slave, Sythe. And the red-haired one is
Hey!
Excuse me, Sir, but that wolf is not a slave!
He is a nephew of the Grand Duke, and a known member of the wolf army!
A... *Keidran* Templar?!
You... you blood traitor!
I see now... you aren't refugees at all...
...you're double-agents harboring a Keidran spy!

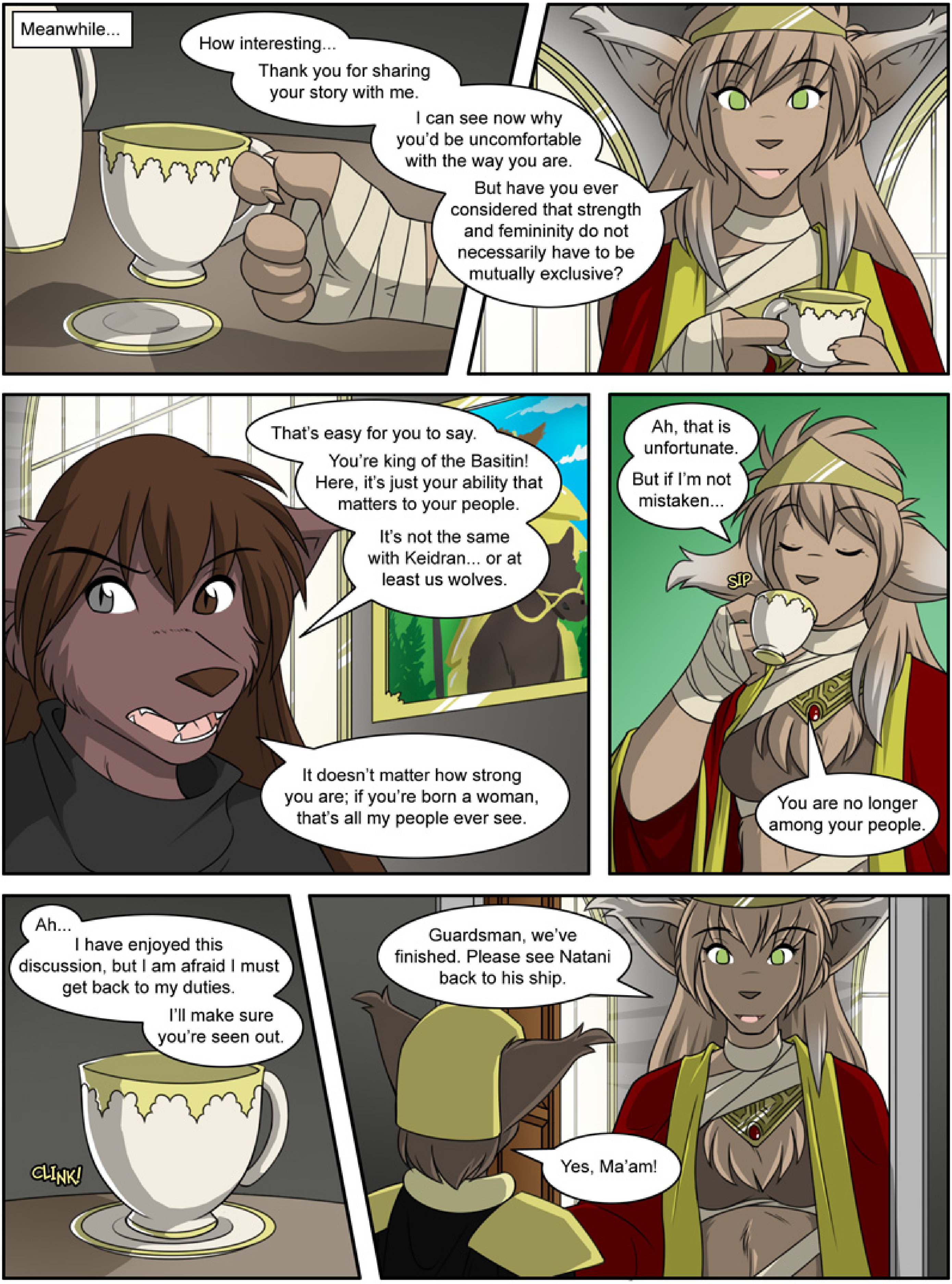

Woah woah woah!
Don't jump to conclusions!
There... there could be a perfectly reasonable explanation for why we're traveling with a Keidran soldier...
Well... is there?
. . .
Traitors! I knew it!
We must stop them!
Run!
Hey!
No... let them go.
We must continue our mission.
Master Seer? But they may be spies...
They are of no consequence. Continue the march.
...Very well.
Alright men, let's keep–
Wait...
Have... you been there this whole time?
. . .
It's... rather awkward knowing I've been... riding you.

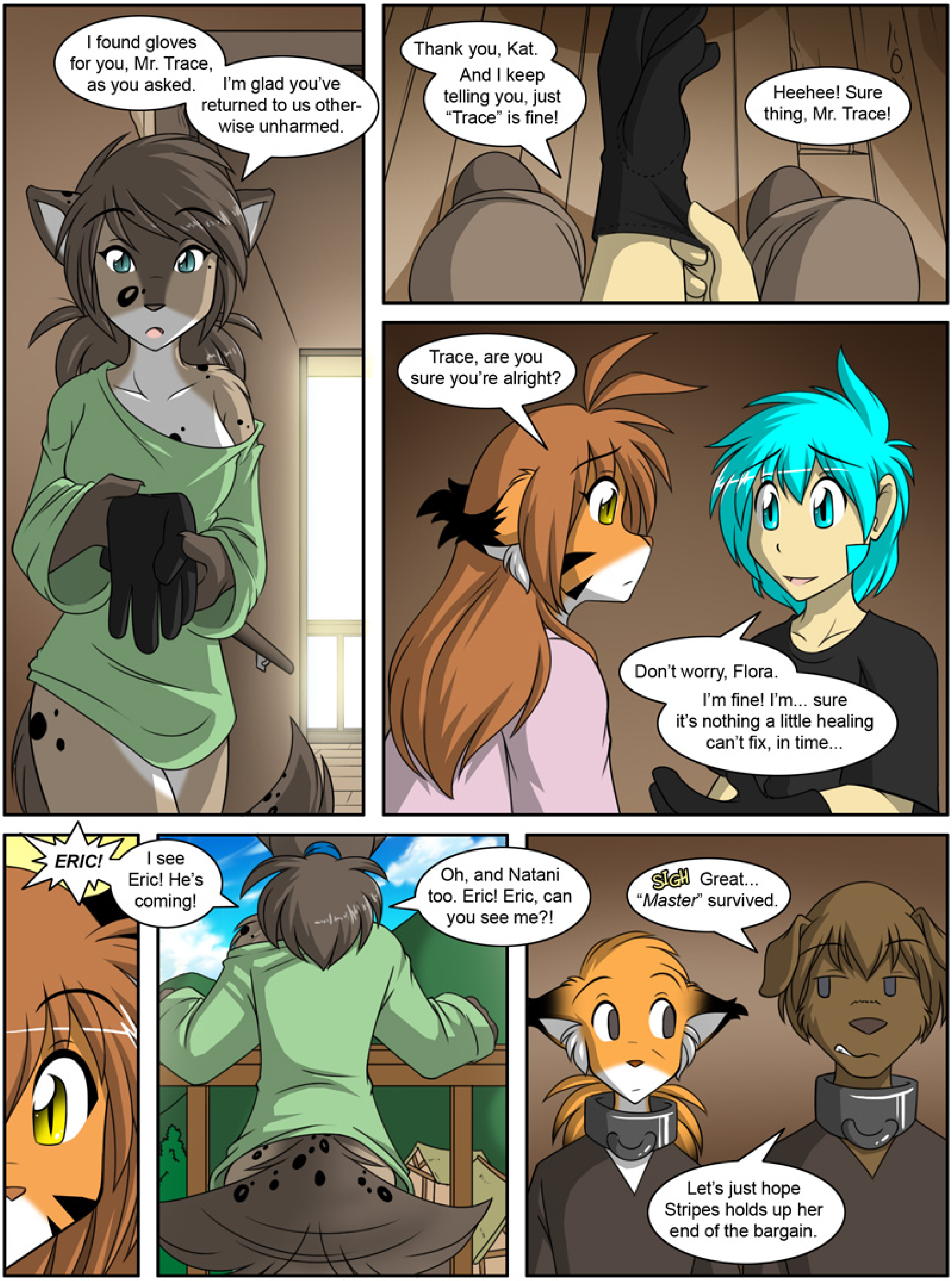

Alright, I think we got away...
Again.
Why aren't they chasing us?
They're probably sending our description to nearby towns.
They know we have no where else to go!
Grah!
Where are we going to go now?
Not only do we have no home... now the Templar are after us!
Oh, poor you...
How tragic that you're now in the same situation as me.
Hey, I stuck my neck out for your sake!
But killing you and claiming you coerced us is still an option, Furball!
I'd like to see you try!
Please, not again you guys!
Hey! I know a place where we can go!

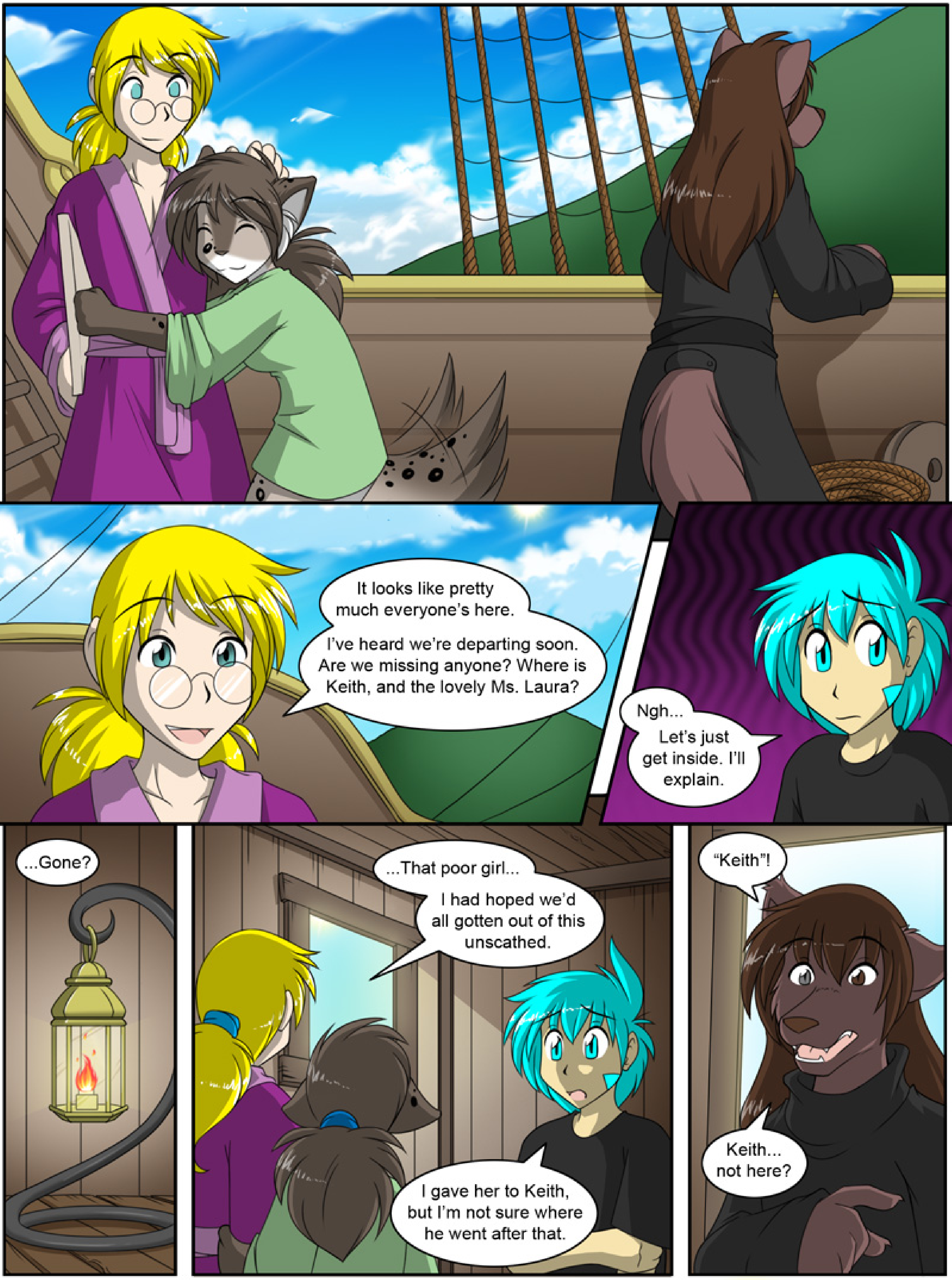

Lyn'knoll?
I've heard the story before. That village is just a myth, though!
Oh, no!
I assure you, it's a real place!
I lived there with my mother for quite a while during the new Templar regime.
What's a *"Lyn'knoll"*?
Heck if I know.
I've just heard it's a secret village hidden somewhere that's home to both our kind and Keidran.
Oh yeah, I remember...
There's a huge bounty offered by the Templar for its location...
N-no!
You can't tell anyone about it! They were nice to my mother and me, and I can't betray them!
Alright, relax!
I was just sayin'... well, what do you guys think?
Bah!
I guess we don't have much of a choice. ...might as well.
And I suppose the furball can tag along if he wants...
SIGH...
It's going to be a long walk...
Adventure!
. . .

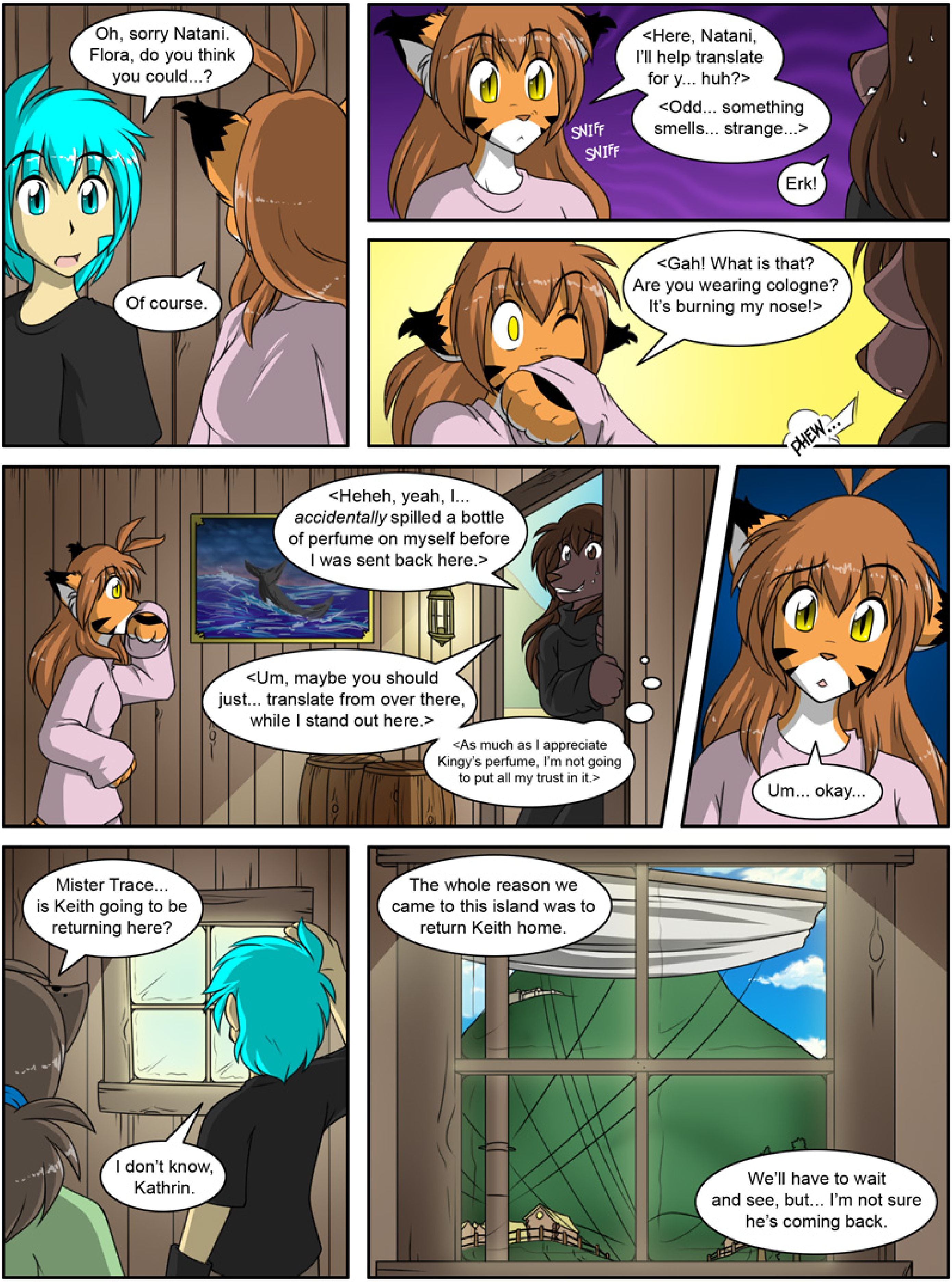

Meanwhile...
Sigh...
GASP!
Trace!
Huh? Flora?
TRRAAAAAAAAAACE!
Blarg!
CRASH!
You're alive! *You're alive!*
I knew those guys were hiding you somewhere! I'm so happy you're okay!
Yeah, I... *erg*... was okay.
I'm glad to see you too, Flora.

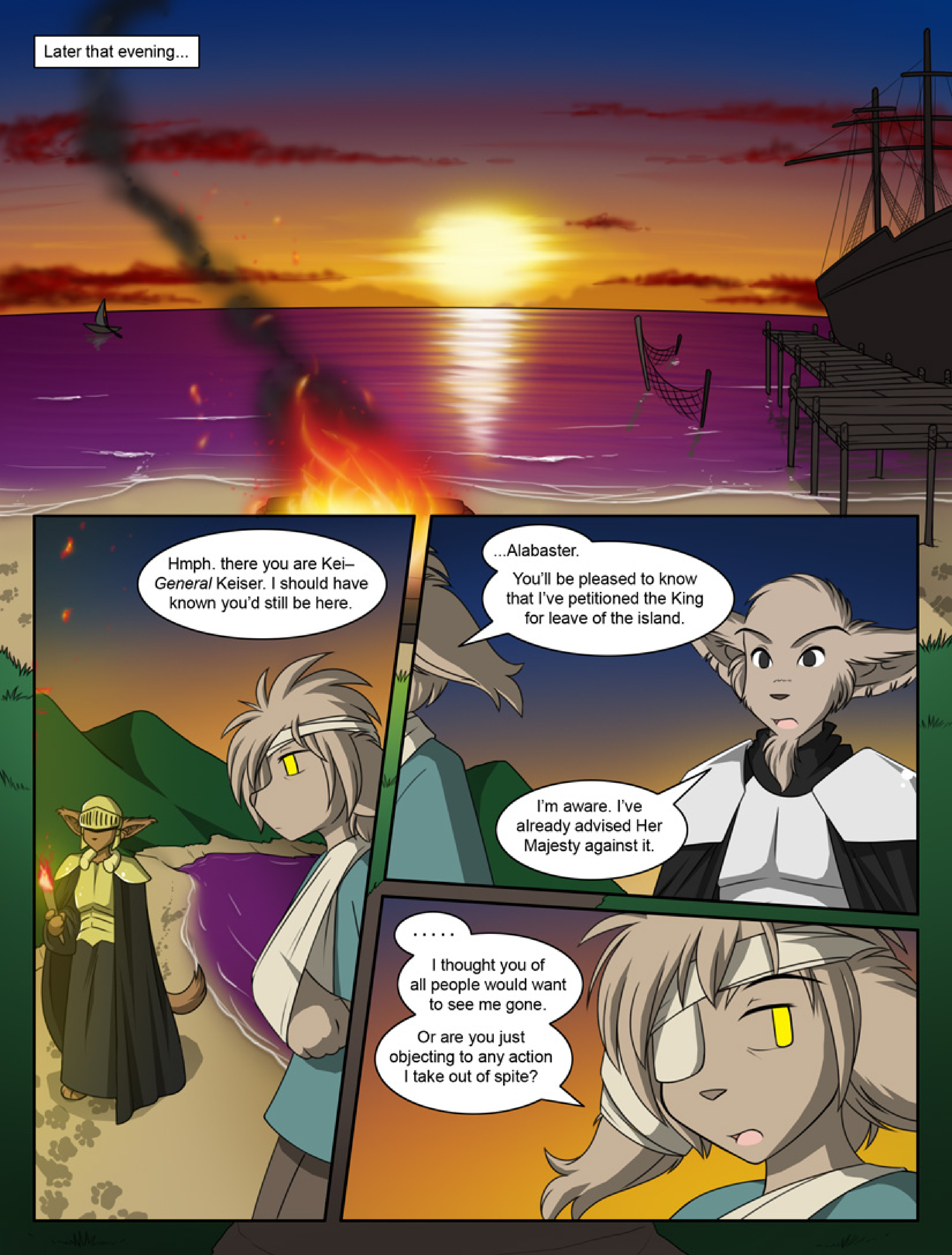

Huh?
Flora, what's wrong?
Oh, nothing, nothing...
I don't know why I'm crying, I'm just... so relieved.
I knew you'd be alright, but... a part of me...
Ah, Trace! I was so afraid I'd never see you again!
I couldn't stand thinking our last time together would be during an argument!
Eeergh!
Flora, Flora! Claws... my back!
Oh, sorry!
I-it's okay, Flora.
Look, I'm fine, see?
Kyaaaah!
Oh, right...
My hand... I forgot.
Maybe we should get back to the ship and talk.

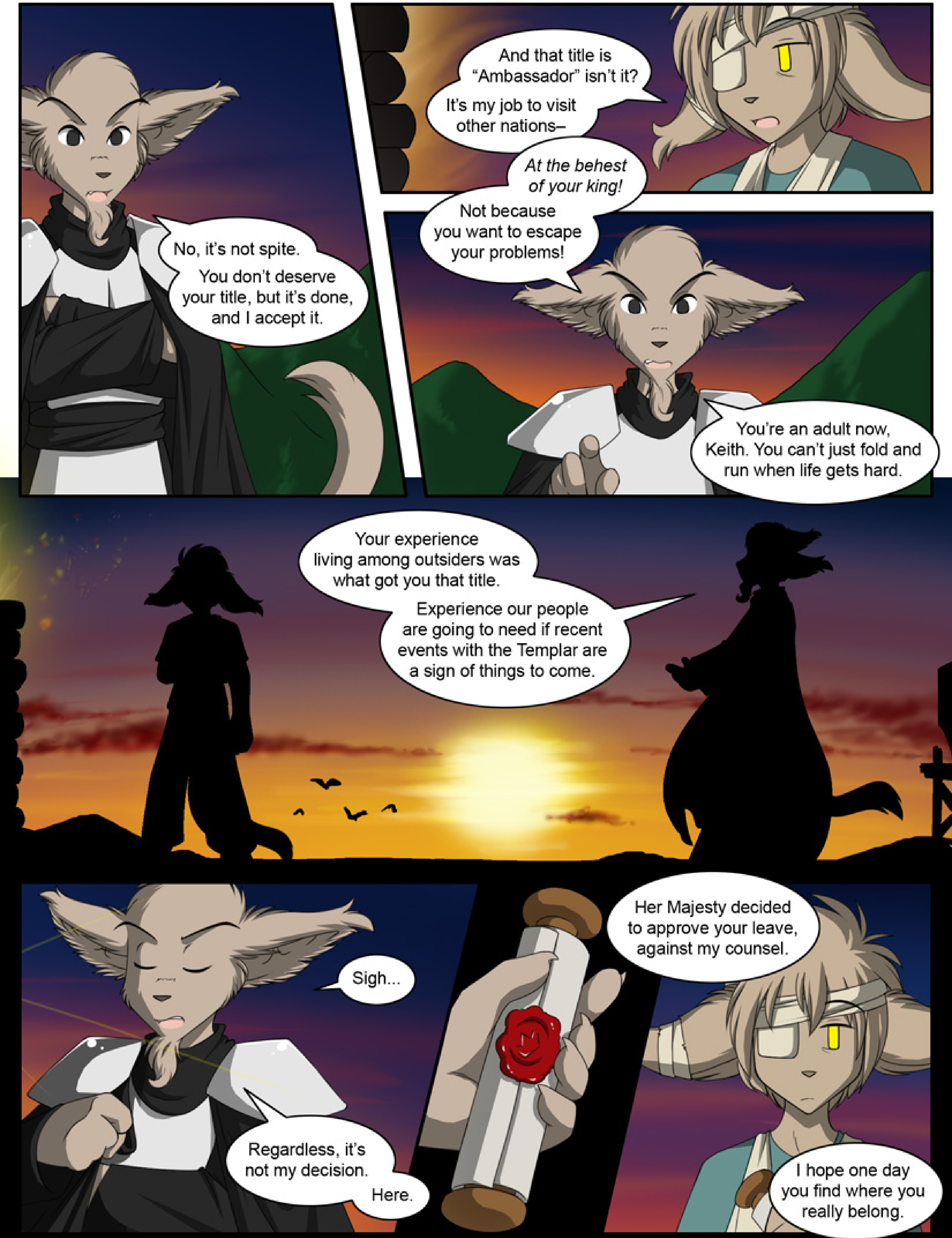

Meanwhile...
How interesting... Thank you for sharing your story with me.
I can see now why you'd be uncomfortable with the way you are.
But have you ever considered that strength and femininity do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive?
That's easy for you to say.
You're king of the Basitin! Here, it's just your ability that matters to your people.
It's not the same with Keidran... or at least us wolves.
It doesn't matter how strong you are; if you're born a woman, that's all my people ever see.
Ah, that is unfortunate.
But if I'm not mistaken...
SIP
You are no longer among your people.
Ah... I have enjoyed this discussion, but I am afraid I must get back to my duties.
I'll make sure you're seen out.
CLINK!
Guardsman, we've finished. Please see Natani back to his ship.
Yes, Ma'am!

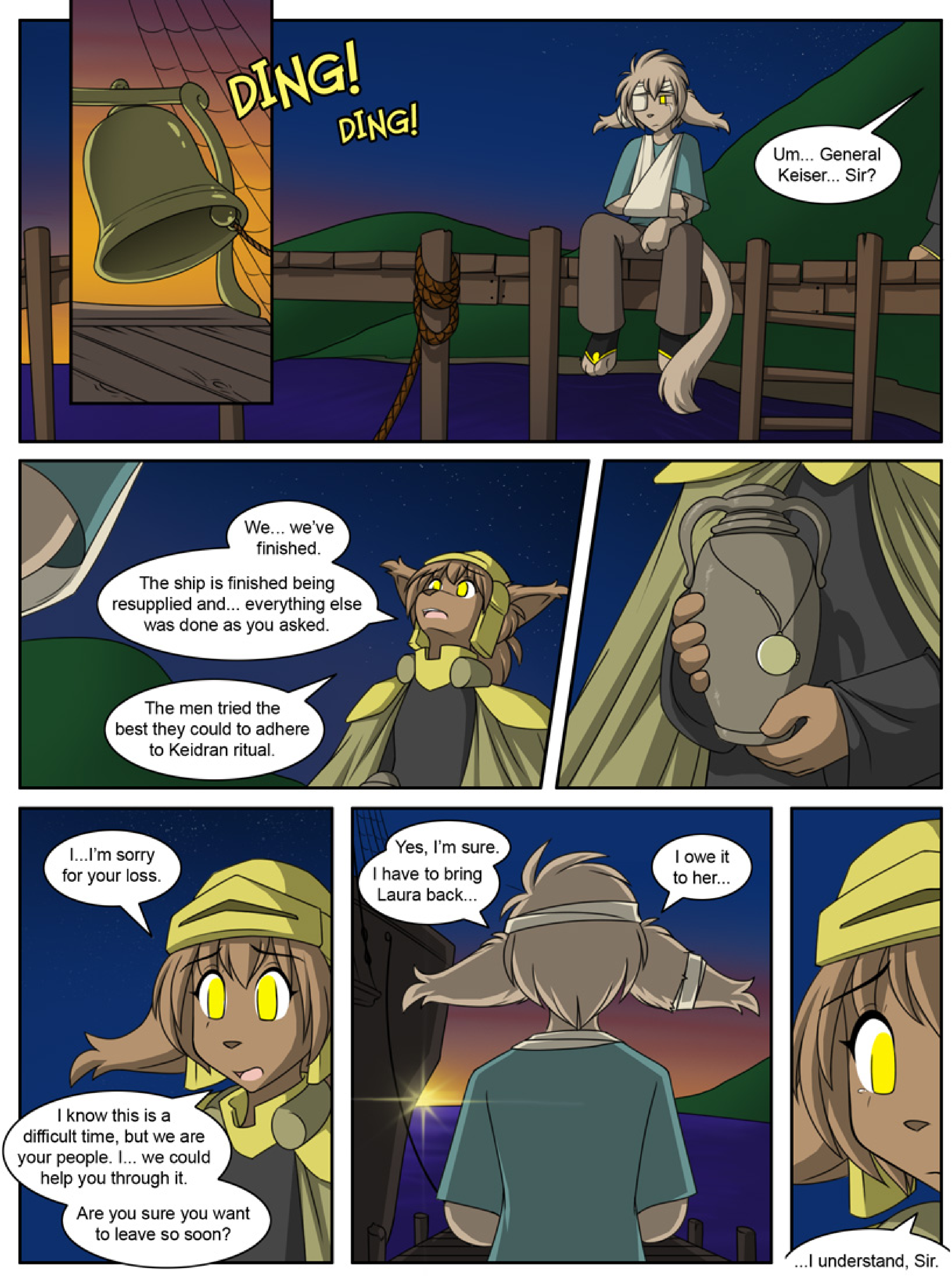

I found gloves for you, Mr. Trace, as you asked.
I'm glad you've returned to us otherwise unharmed.
Thank you, Kat.
And I keep telling you, just "Trace" is fine!
Heehee! Sure thing, Mr. Trace!
Trace, are you sure you're alright?
Don't worry, Flora.
I'm fine! I'm... sure it's nothing a little healing can't fix, in time...
ERIC!
I see Eric! He's coming!
Oh, and Natani too. Eric! Eric, can you see me?!
SIGH Great... "*Master*" survived.
Let's just hope Stripes holds up her end of the bargain.

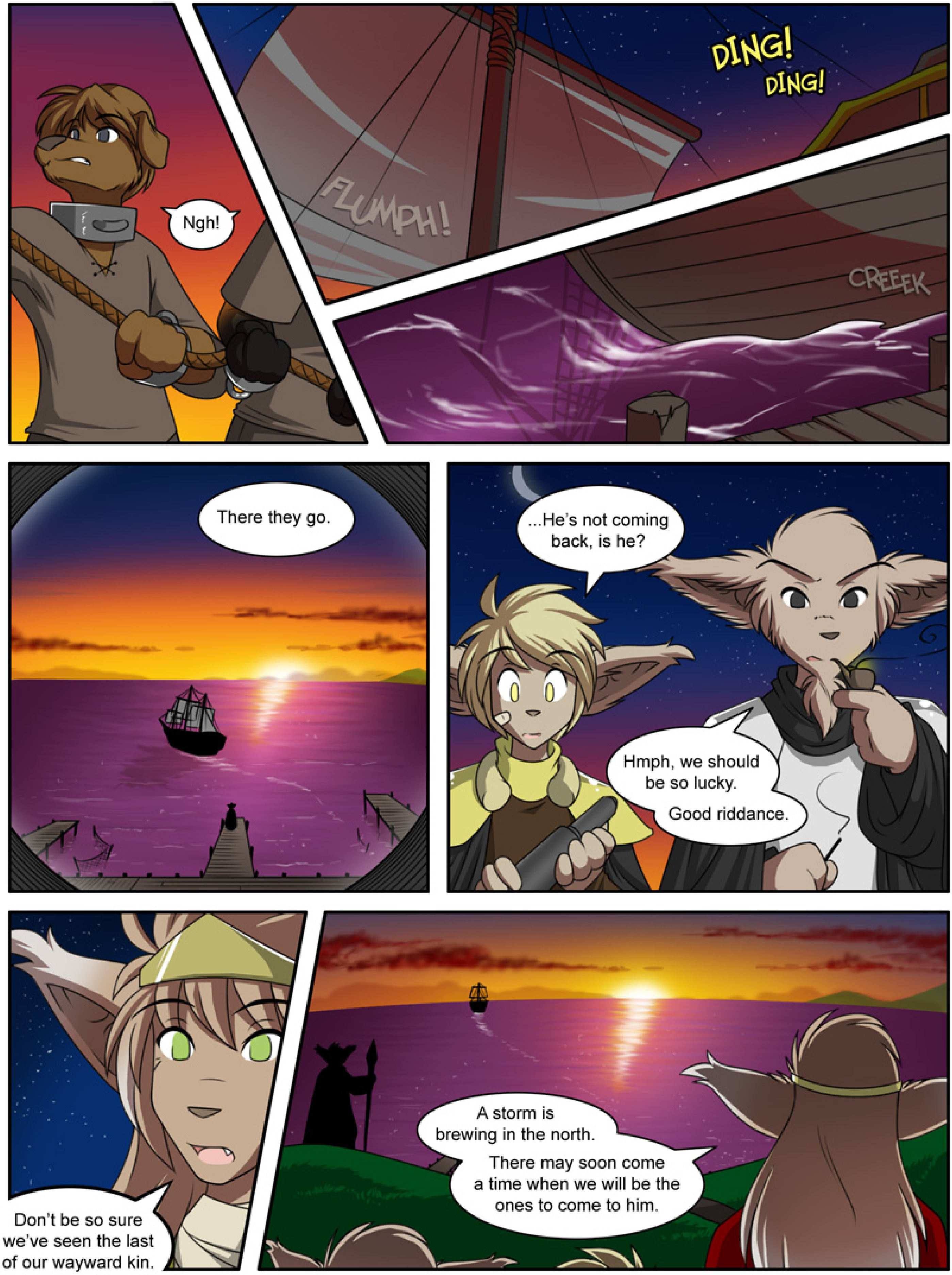

It looks like pretty much everyone's here.
I've heard we're departing soon. Are we missing anyone? Where is Keith, and the lovely Ms. Laura?
Ngh... Let's just get inside. I'll explain.
...Gone?
...That poor girl...
I had hoped we'd all gotten out of this unscathed.
I gave her to Keith, but I'm not sure where he went after that.
"Keith"!
Keith... not here?

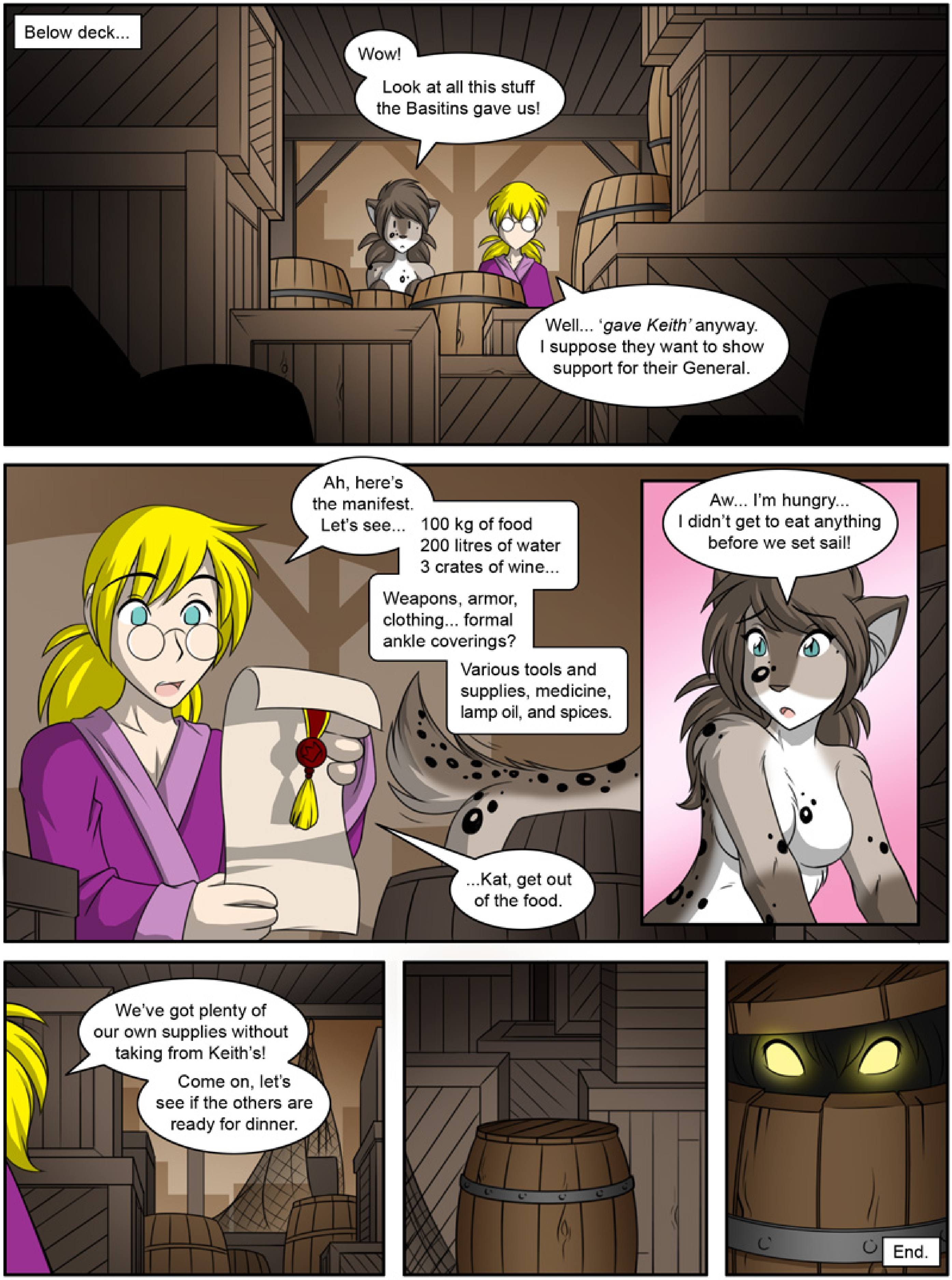

Oh, sorry Natani. Flora, do you think you could...?
Of course.
<Here, Natani, I'll help translate for y... huh?>
SNIFF SNIFF
<Odd... something smells... strange...>
Erk!
<Gah! What is that? Are you wearing cologne? It's burning my nose!>
PHEW...
<Heheh, yeah, I... *accidentally* spilled a bottle of perfume on myself before I was sent back here.>
<Um, maybe you should just... translate from over there, while I stand out here.>
<As much as I appreciate Kingy's perfume, I'm not going to put all my trust in it.>
Um... okay...
Mister Trace... is Keith going to be returning here?
I don't know, Kathrin.
The whole reason we came to this island was to return Keith home.
We'll have to wait and see, but... I'm not sure he's coming back.


Later that evening...
Hmph. there you are Kei– *General* Keiser. I should have known you'd still be here.
...Alabaster.
You'll be pleased to know that I've petitioned the King for leave of the island.
I'm aware. I've already advised Her Majesty against it.
.....
I thought you of all people would want to see me gone.
Or are you just objecting to any action I take out of spite?


No, it's not spite.
You don't deserve your title, but it's done, and I accept it.
And that title is "Ambassador" isn't it?
It's my job to visit other nations–
At the behest of your king!
Not because you want to escape your problems!
You're an adult now, Keith. You can't just fold and run when life gets hard.
Your experience living among outsiders was what got you that title.
Experience our people are going to need if recent events with the Templar are a sign of things to come.
Sigh...
Regardless, it's not my decision.
Here.
Her Majesty decided to approve your leave, against my counsel.
I hope one day you find where you really belong.


DING!
DING!
Um... General Keiser... Sir?
We... we've finished.
The ship is finished being resupplied and... everything else was done as you asked.
The men tried the best they could to adhere to Keidran ritual.
I...I'm sorry for your loss.
I know this is a difficult time, but we are your people. I... we could help you through it.
Are you sure you want to leave so soon?
Yes, I'm sure.
I have to bring Laura back...
I owe it to her...
...I understand, Sir.

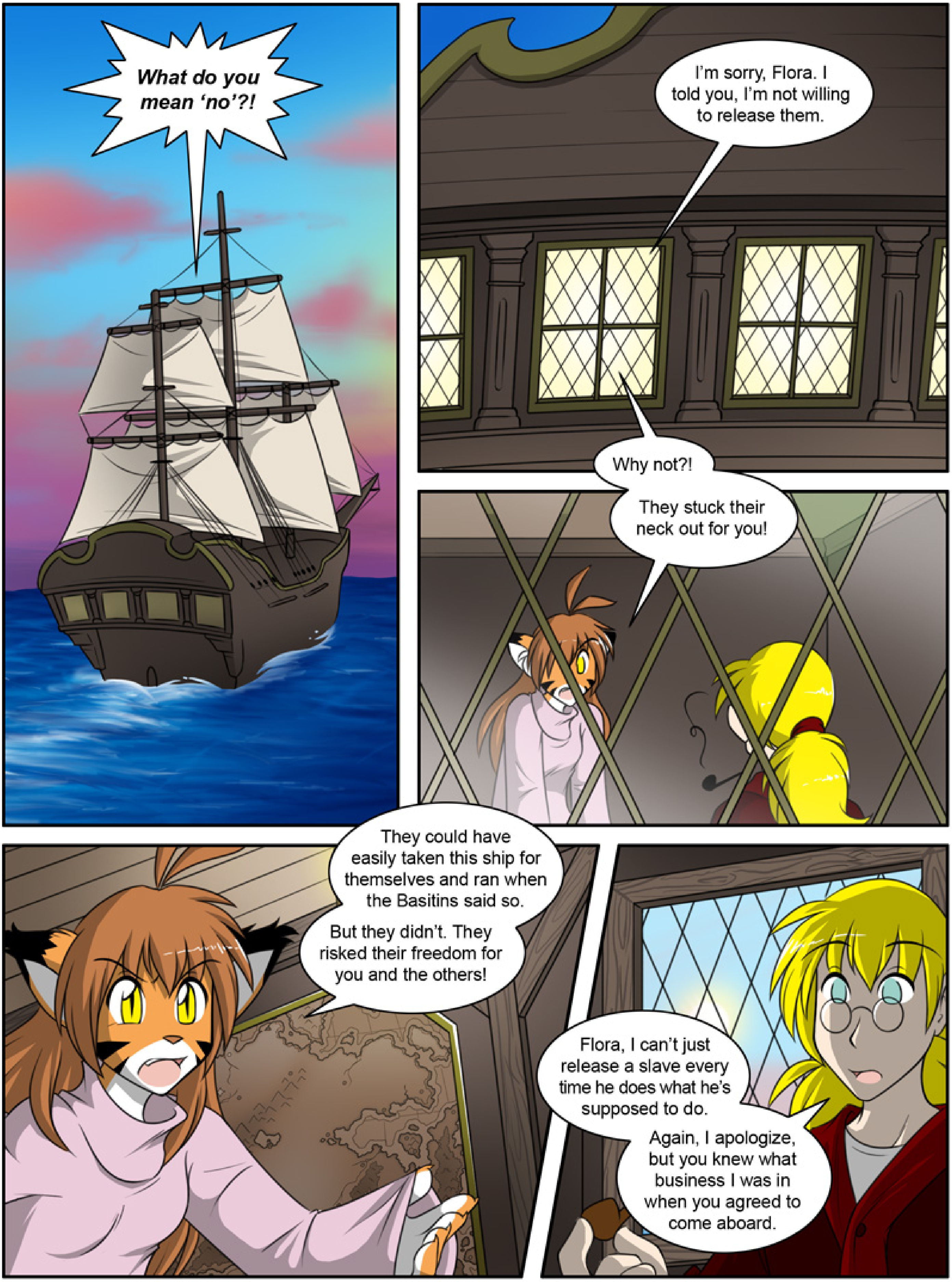

Ngh!
FLUMPH!
DING!
DING!
CREEEK
There they go.
...He's not coming back, is he?
Hmph, we should be so lucky.
Good riddance.
Don't be so sure we've seen the last of our wayward kin.
A storm is brewing in the north.
There may soon come a time when we will be the ones to come to him.

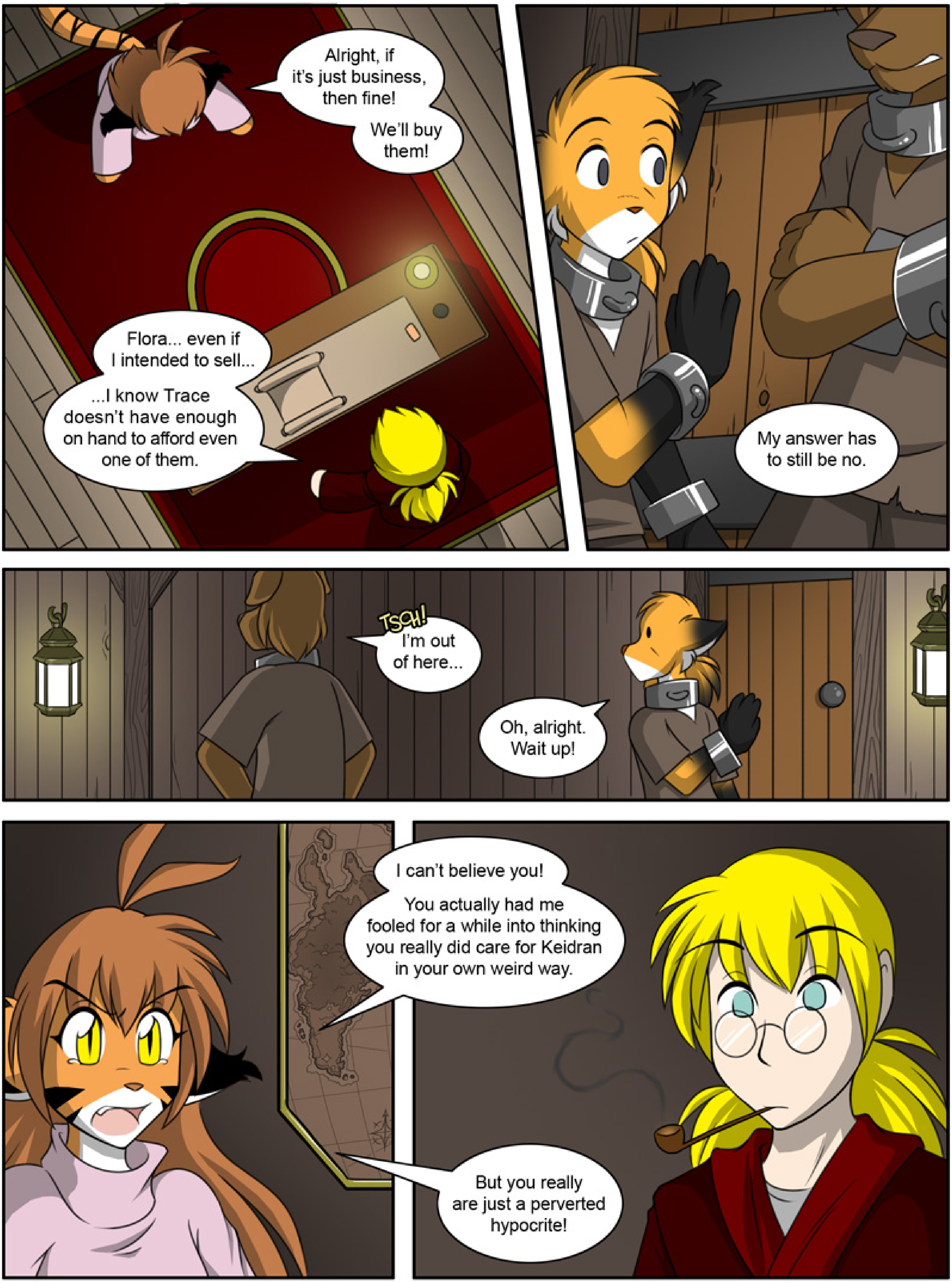

Below deck...
Wow!
Look at all this stuff the Basitins gave us!
Well... *'gave Keith'* anyway. I suppose they want to show support for their General.
Ah, here's the manifest. Let's see...
100 kg of food
200 litres of water
3 crates of wine...
Weapons, armor, clothing... formal ankle coverings?
Various tools and supplies, medicine, lamp oil, and spices.
Aw... I'm hungry... I didn't get to eat anything before we set sail!
...Kat, get out of the food.
We've got plenty of our own supplies without taking from Keith's!
Come on, let's see if the others are ready for dinner.
End.

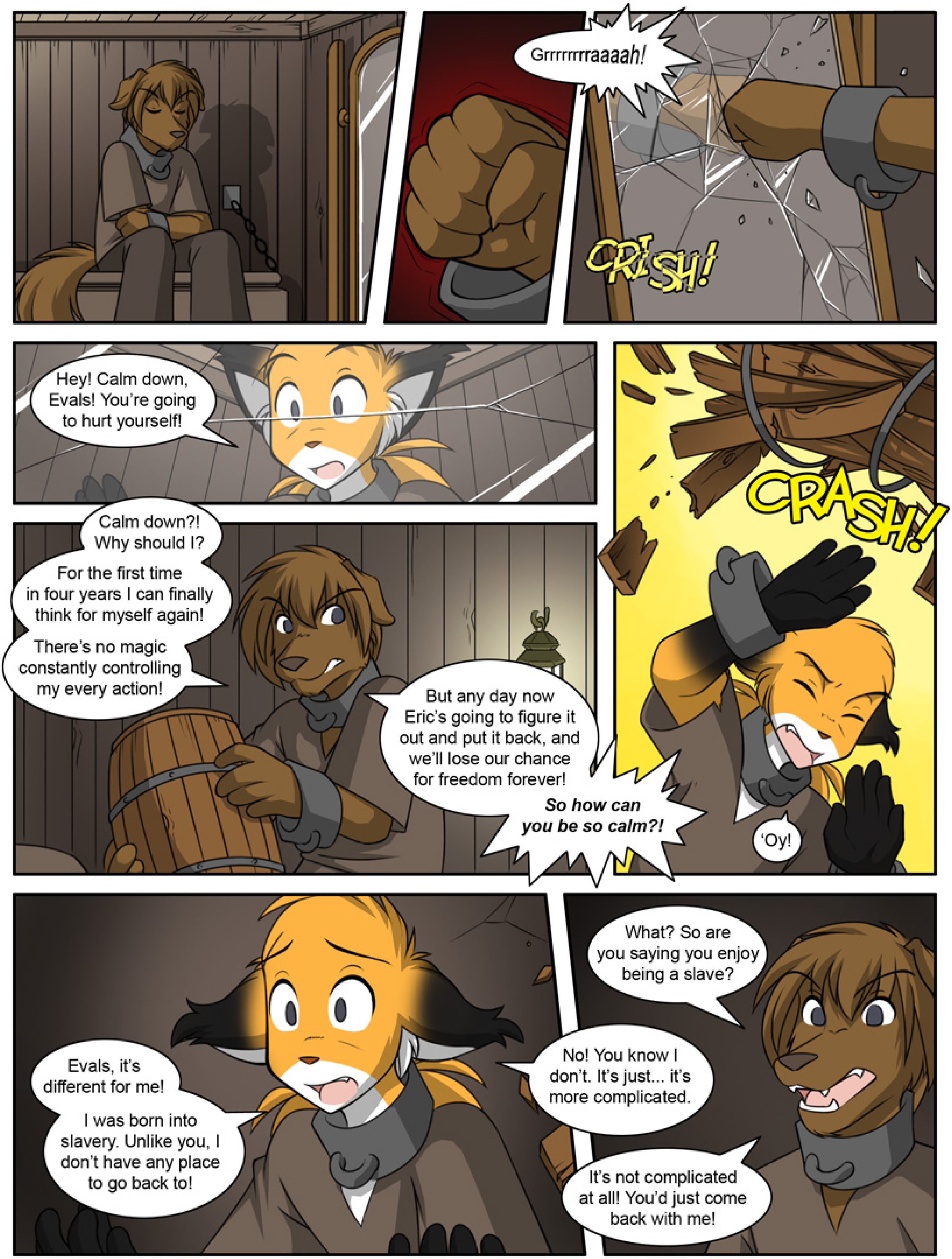
TwoKinds

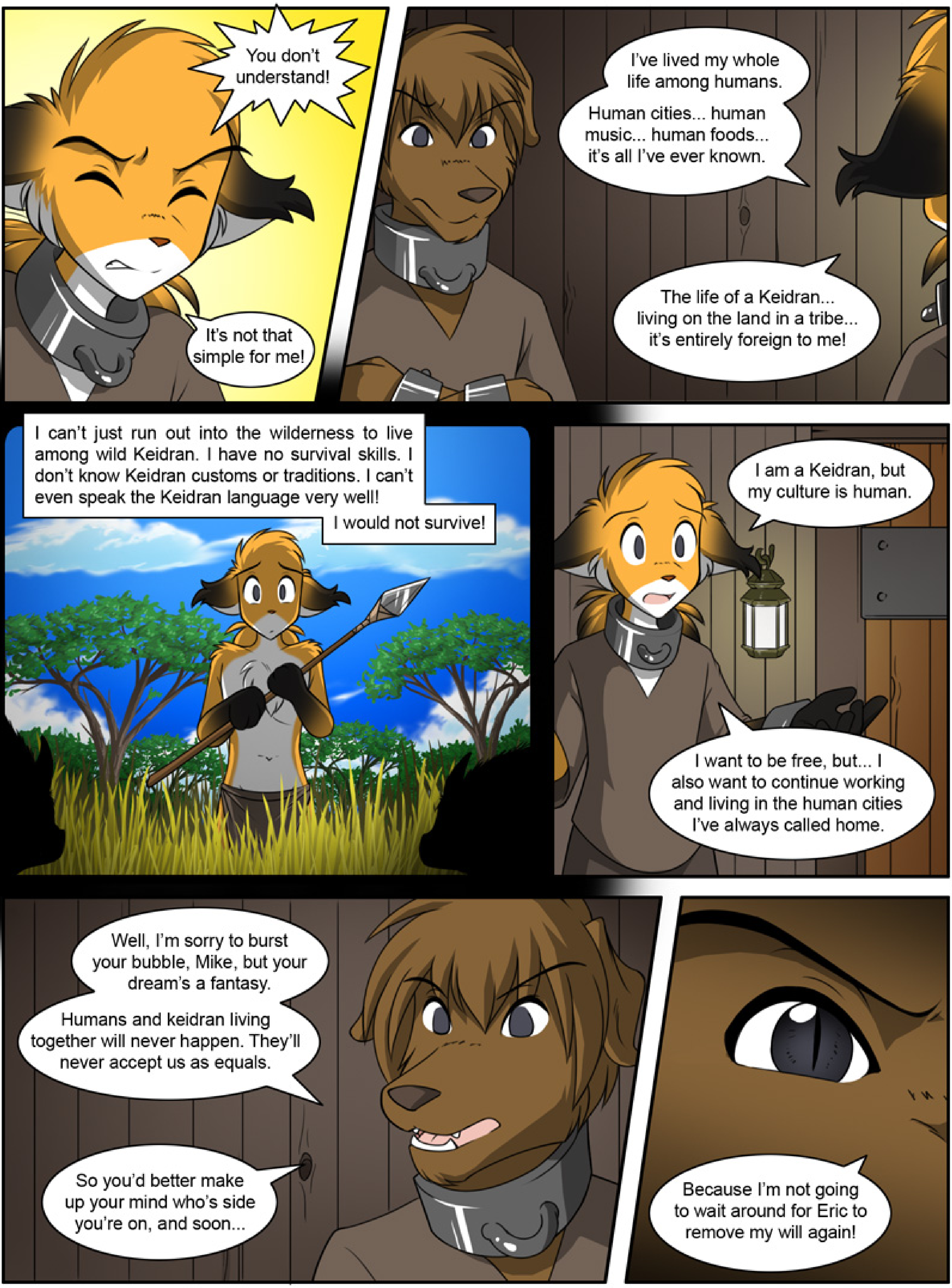
Chapter Fourteen

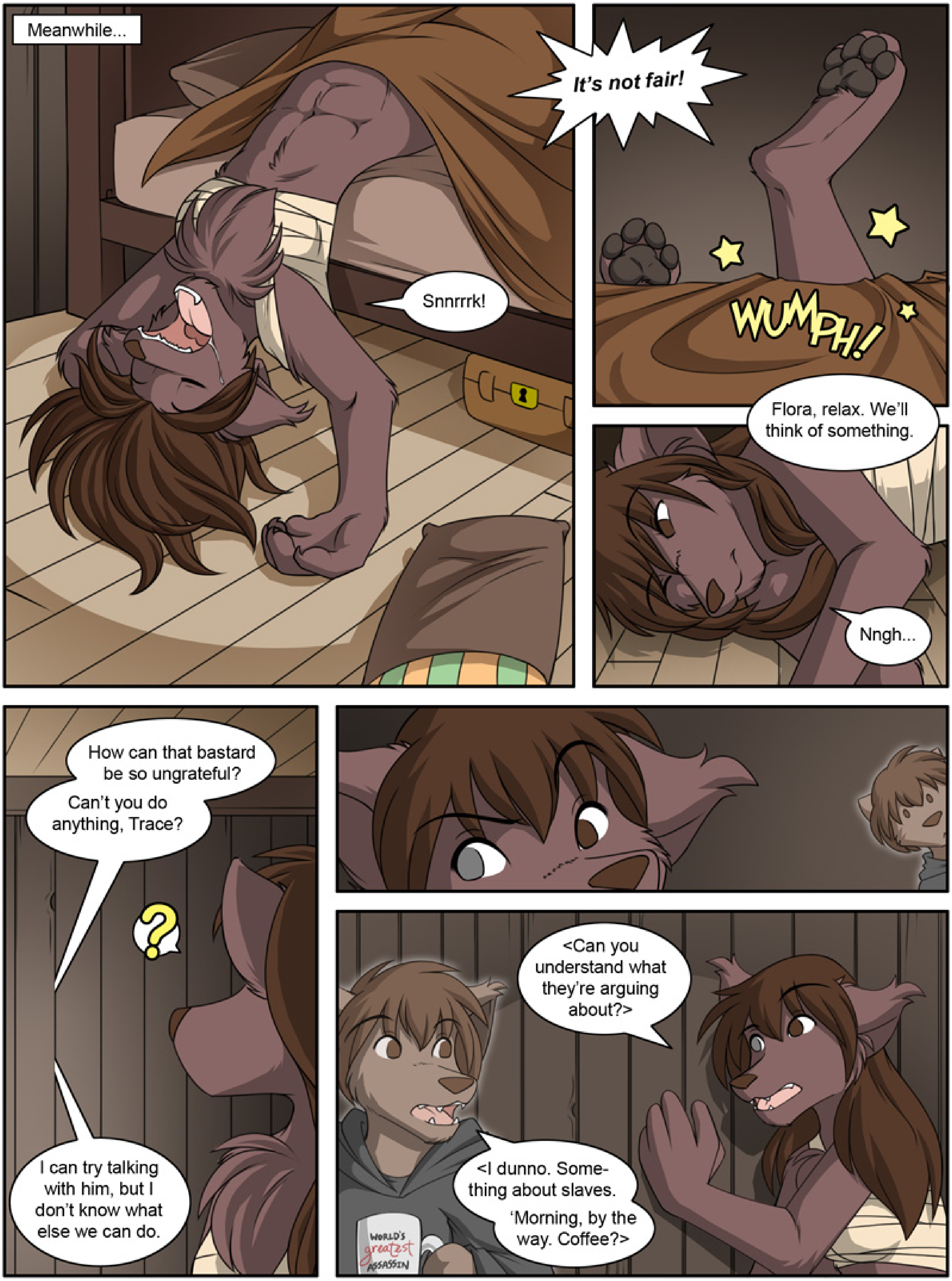
Mutiny

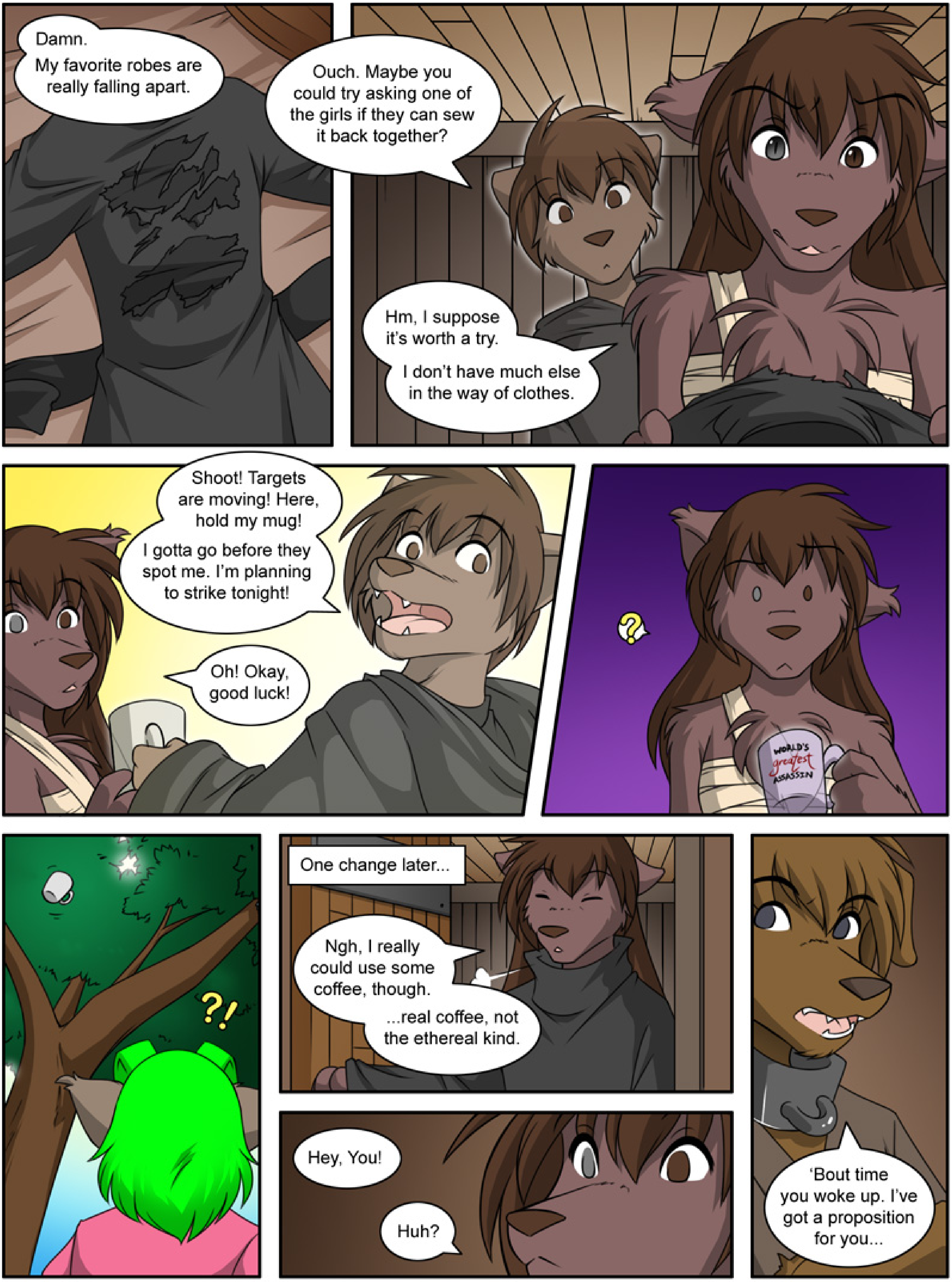

What do you mean 'no'?!
I'm sorry, Flora. I told you, I'm not willing to release them.
Why not?!
They stuck their neck out for you!
They could have easily taken this ship for themselves and ran when the Basitins said so.
But they didn't. They risked their freedom for you and the others!
Flora, I can't just release a slave every time he does what he's supposed to do.
Again, I apologize, but you knew what business I was in when you agreed to come aboard.

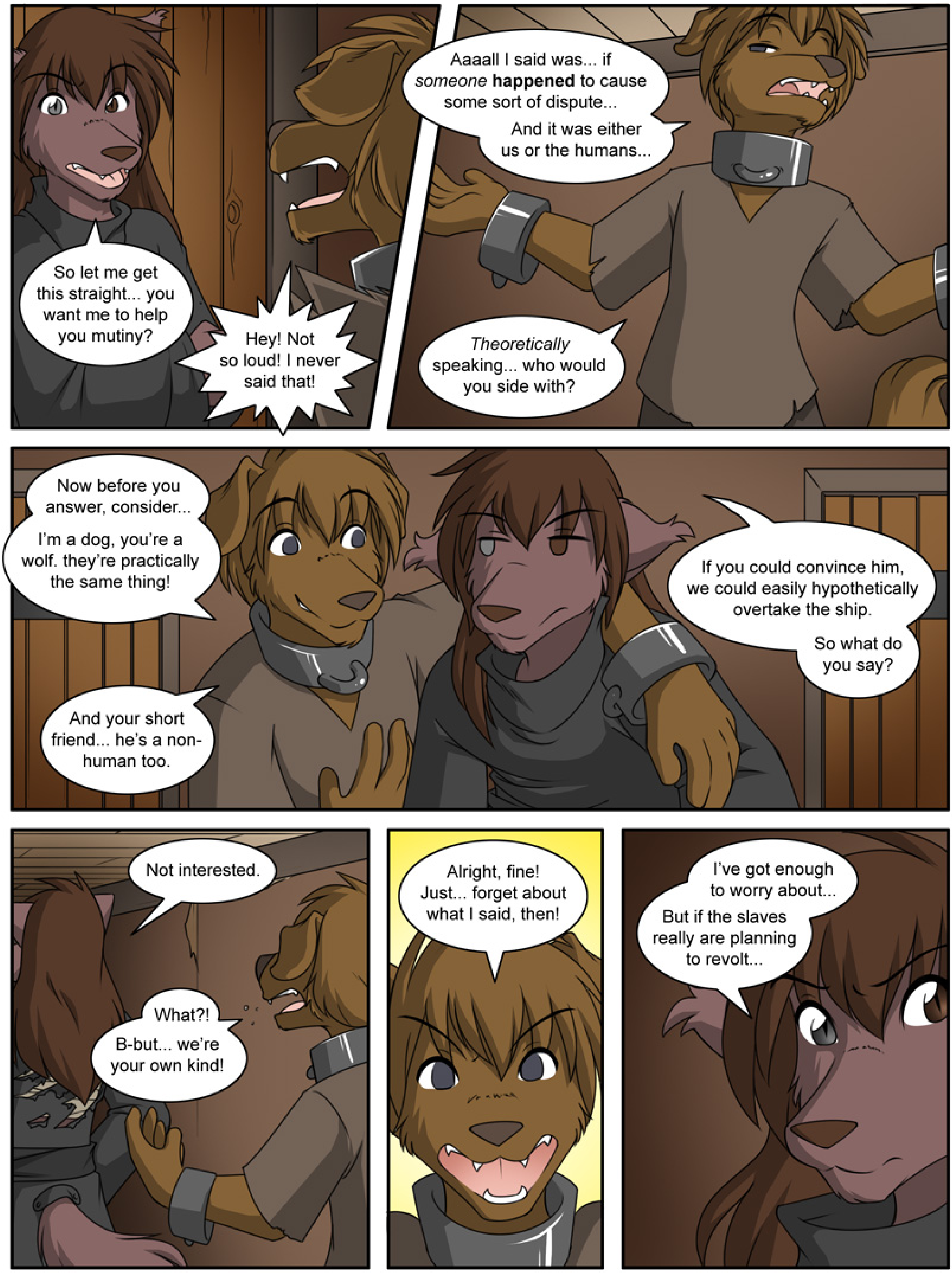

Alright, if it's just business, then fine!
We'll buy them!
Flora... even if I intended to sell...
...I know Trace doesn't have enough on hand to afford even one of them.
My answer has to still be no.
TSCH!
I'm out of here...
Oh, alright. Wait up!
I can't believe you!
You actually had me fooled for a while into thinking you really did care for Keidran in your own weird way.
But you really are just a perverted hypocrite!

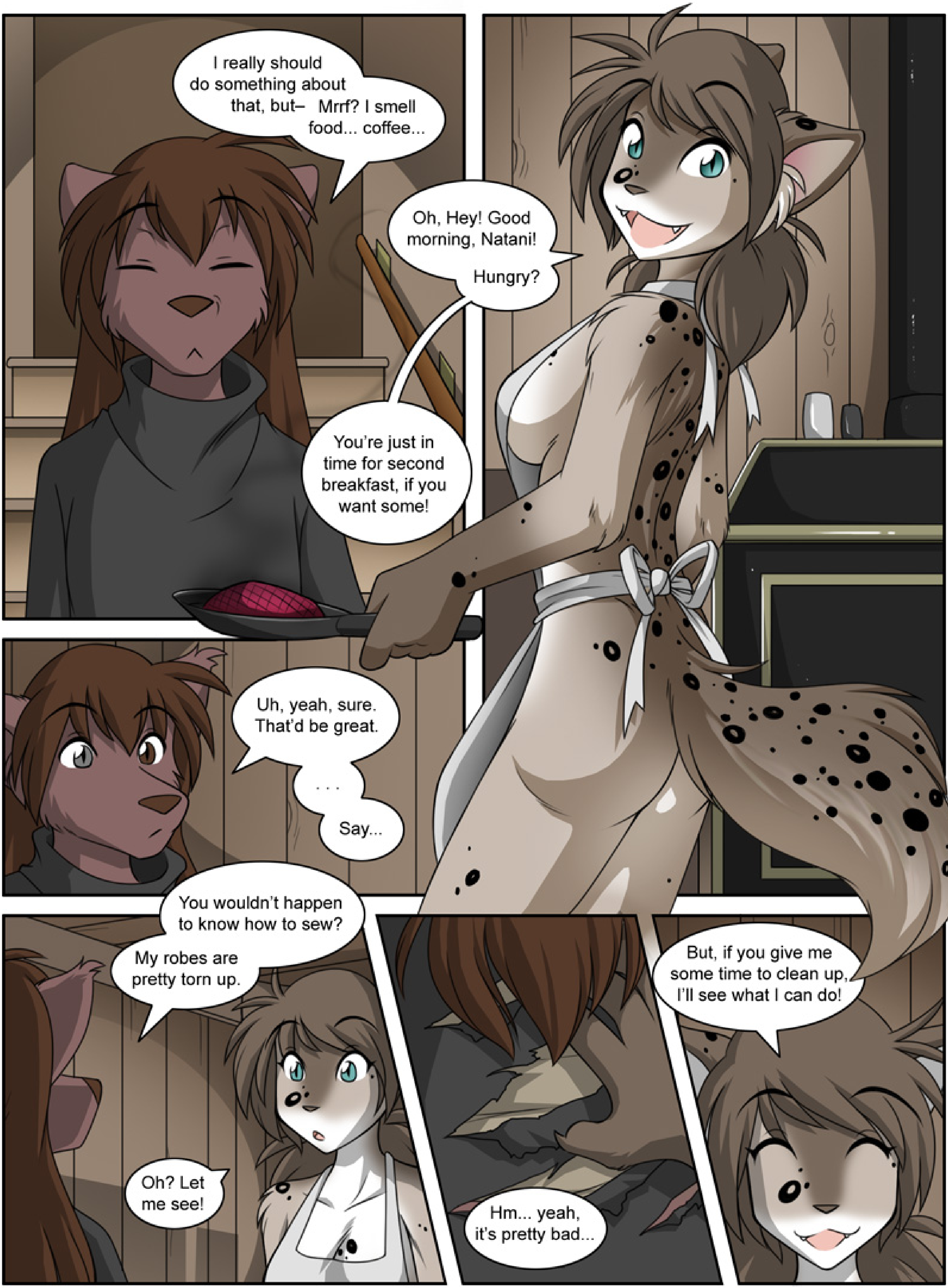

Grrrrrrraaaah!
CRASH!
Hey! Calm down, Evals! You're going to hurt yourself!
CRASH!
Calm down?! Why should I?
For the first time in four years I can finally think for myself again!
There's no magic constantly controlling my every action!
But any day now Eric's going to figure it out and put it back, and we'll lose our chance for freedom forever!
So how can you be so calm?!
'Oy!
What? So are you saying you enjoy being a slave?
No! You know I don't. It's just... it's more complicated.
Evals, it's different for me!
I was born into slavery. Unlike you, I don't have any place to go back to!
It's not complicated at all! You'd just come back with me!

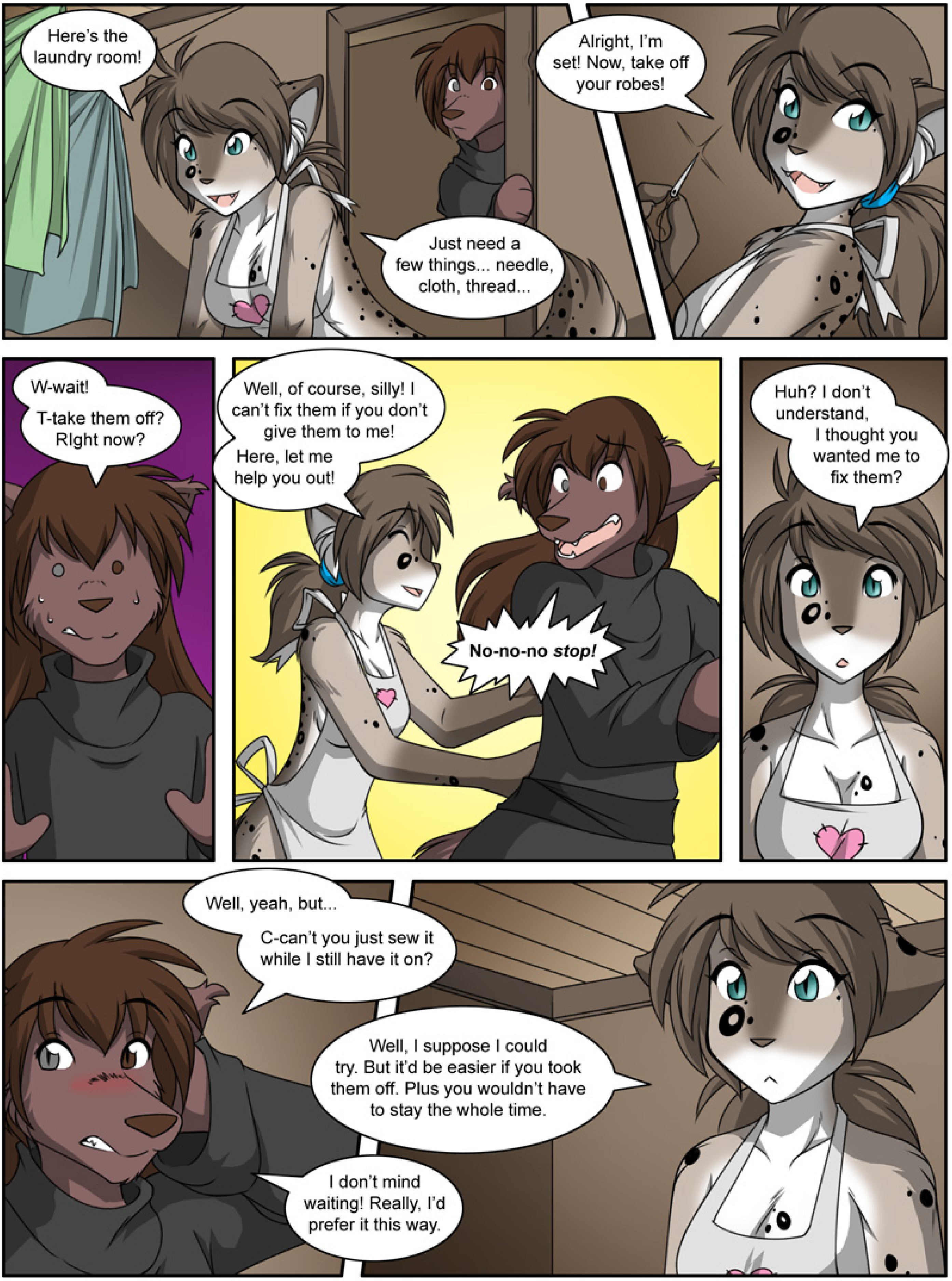

You don't understand!
It's not that simple for me!
I've lived my whole life among humans.
Human cities... human music... human foods... it's all I've ever known.
The life of a Keidran... living on the land in a tribe... it's entirely foreign to me!
I can't just run out into the wilderness to live among wild Keidran. I have no survival skills. I don't know Keidran customs or traditions. I can't even speak the Keidran language very well!
I would not survive!
I am a Keidran, but my culture is human.
I want to be free, but... I also want to continue working and living in the human cities I've always called home.
Well, I'm sorry to burst your bubble, Mike, but your dream's a fantasy.
Humans and keidran living together will never happen. They'll never accept us as equals.
So you'd better make up your mind who's side you're on, and soon...
Because I'm not going to wait around for Eric to remove my will again!

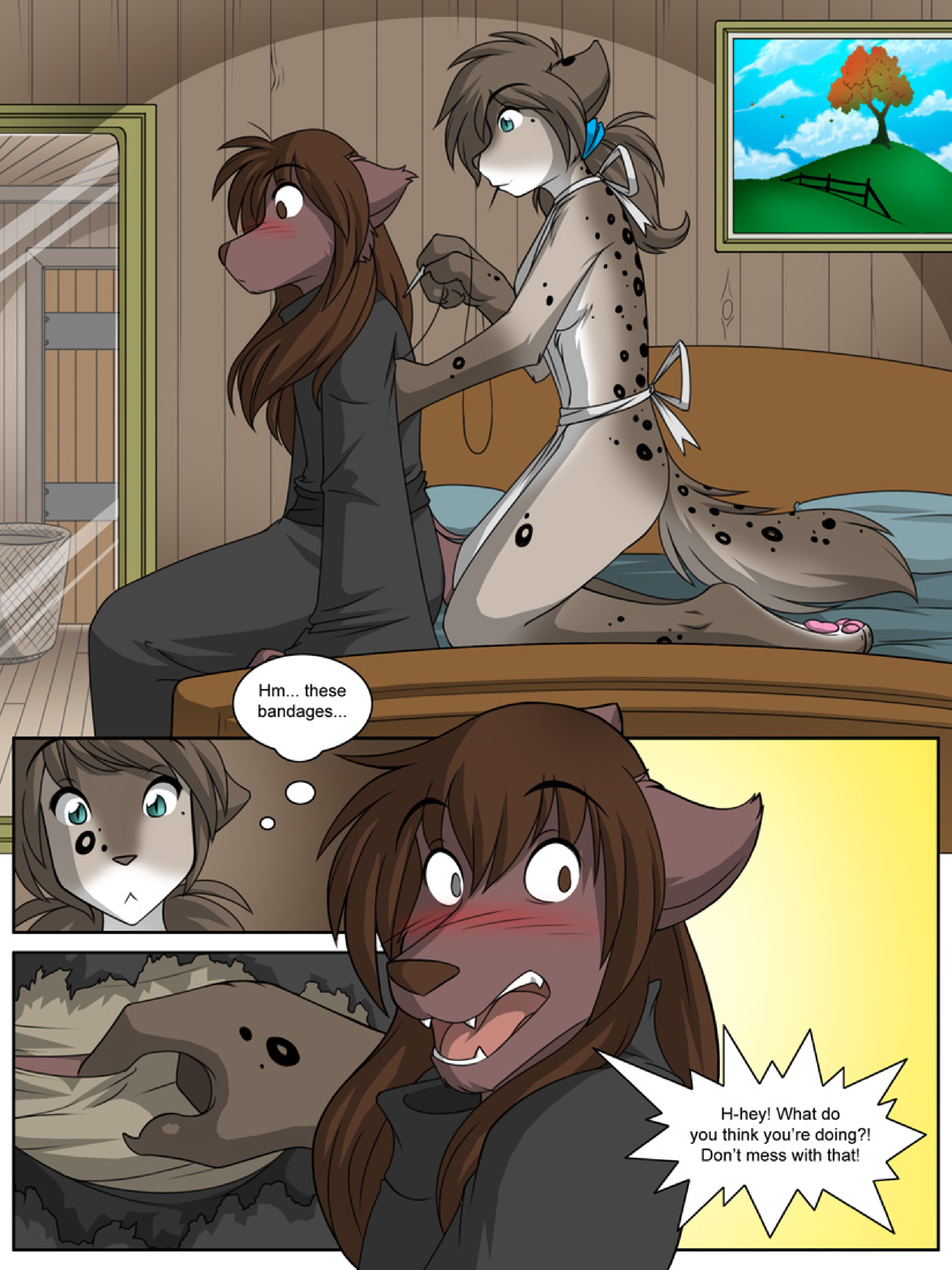

Meanwhile...
It's not fair!
Snnrrrk!
WUMPH!
Flora, relax. We'll think of something.
Nngh...
How can that bastard be so ungrateful?
Can't you do anything, Trace?
?
I can try talking with him, but I don't know what else we can do.
<Can you understand what they're arguing about?>
<I dunno. Something about slaves.
'Morning, by the way. Coffee?>
WORLD'S greatest ASSASSIN

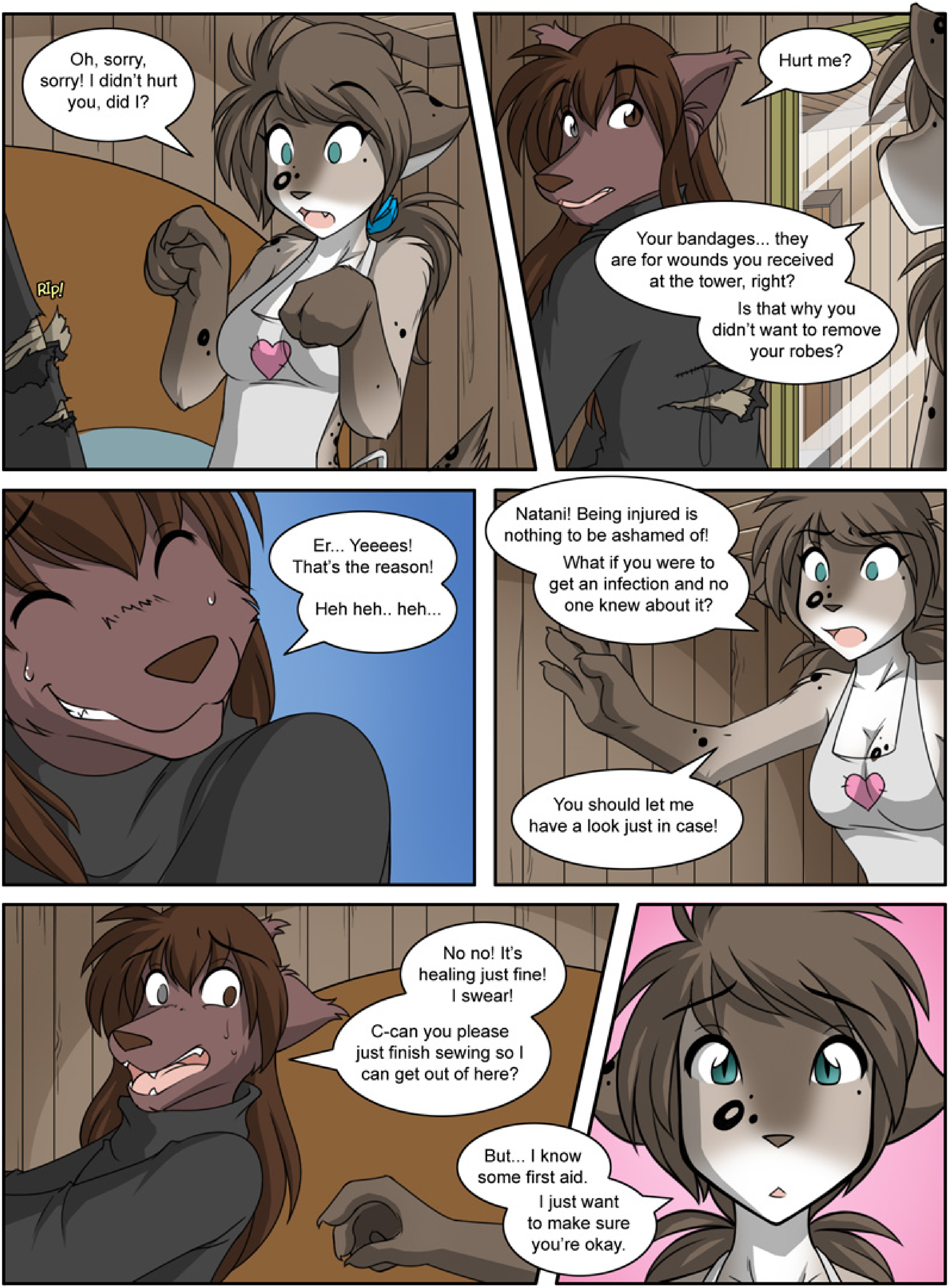

Damn.
My favorite robes are really falling apart.
Ouch. Maybe you could try asking one of the girls if they can sew it back together?
Hm, I suppose it's worth a try.
I don't have much else in the way of clothes.
Shoot! Targets are moving! Here, hold my mug!
I gotta go before they spot me. I'm planning to strike tonight!
Oh! Okay, good luck!
?
WORLD'S greatest ASSASSIN
?!
One change later...
Ngh, I really could use some coffee, though.
...real coffee, not the ethereal kind.
Hey, You!
Huh?
'Bout time you woke up. I've got a proposition for you...

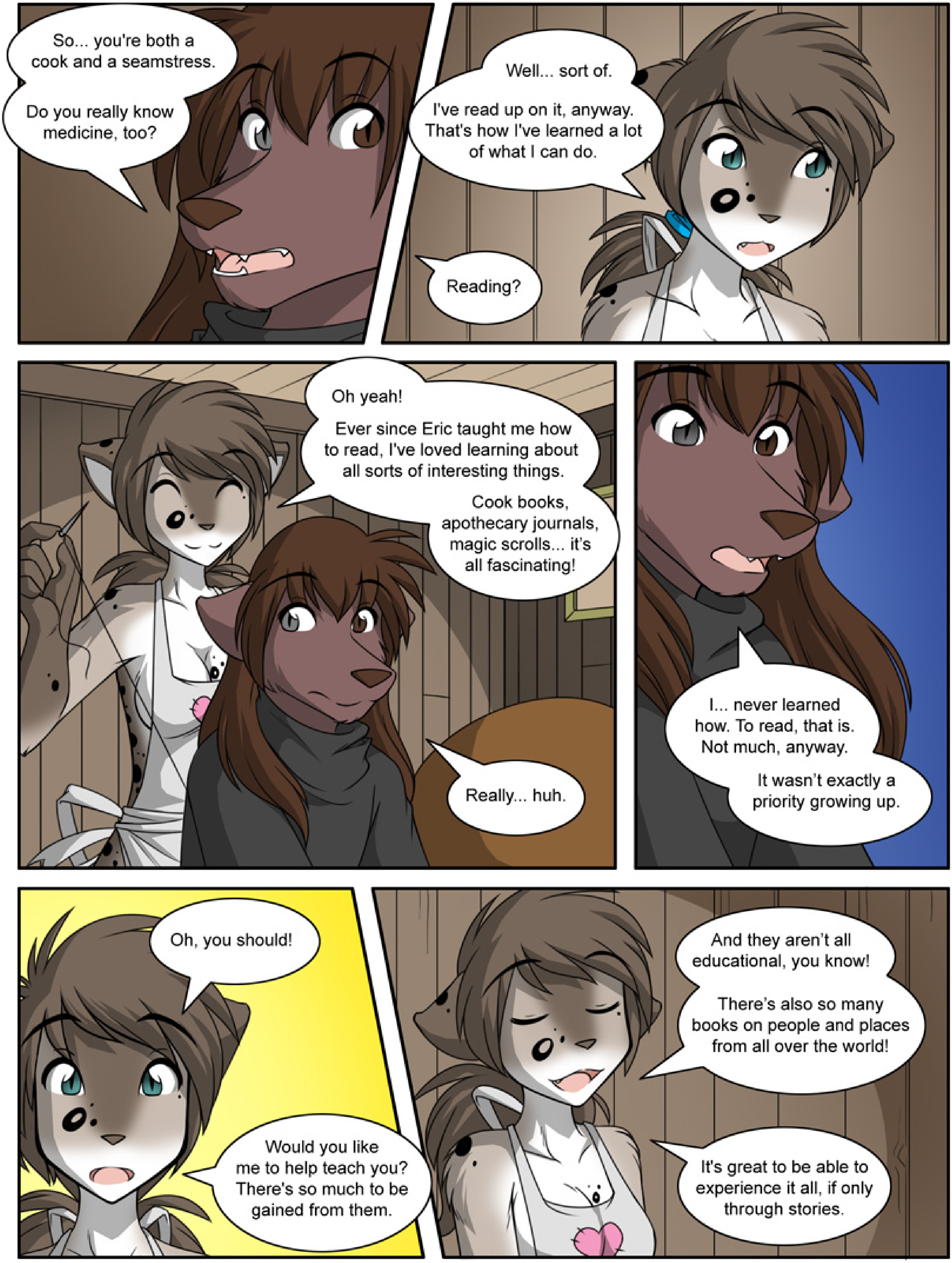

So let me get this straight... you want me to help you mutiny?
Hey! Not so loud! I never said that!
Aaaall I said was... if *someone* **happened** to cause some sort of dispute...
And it was either us or the humans...
Theoretically speaking... who would you side with?
Now before you answer, consider...
I'm a dog, you're a wolf. they're practically the same thing!
And your short friend... he's a non-human too.
If you could convince him, we could easily hypothetically overtake the ship.
So what do you say?
Not interested.
What?! B-but... we're your own kind!
Alright, fine! Just... forget about what I said, then!
I've got enough to worry about...
But if the slaves really are planning to revolt...

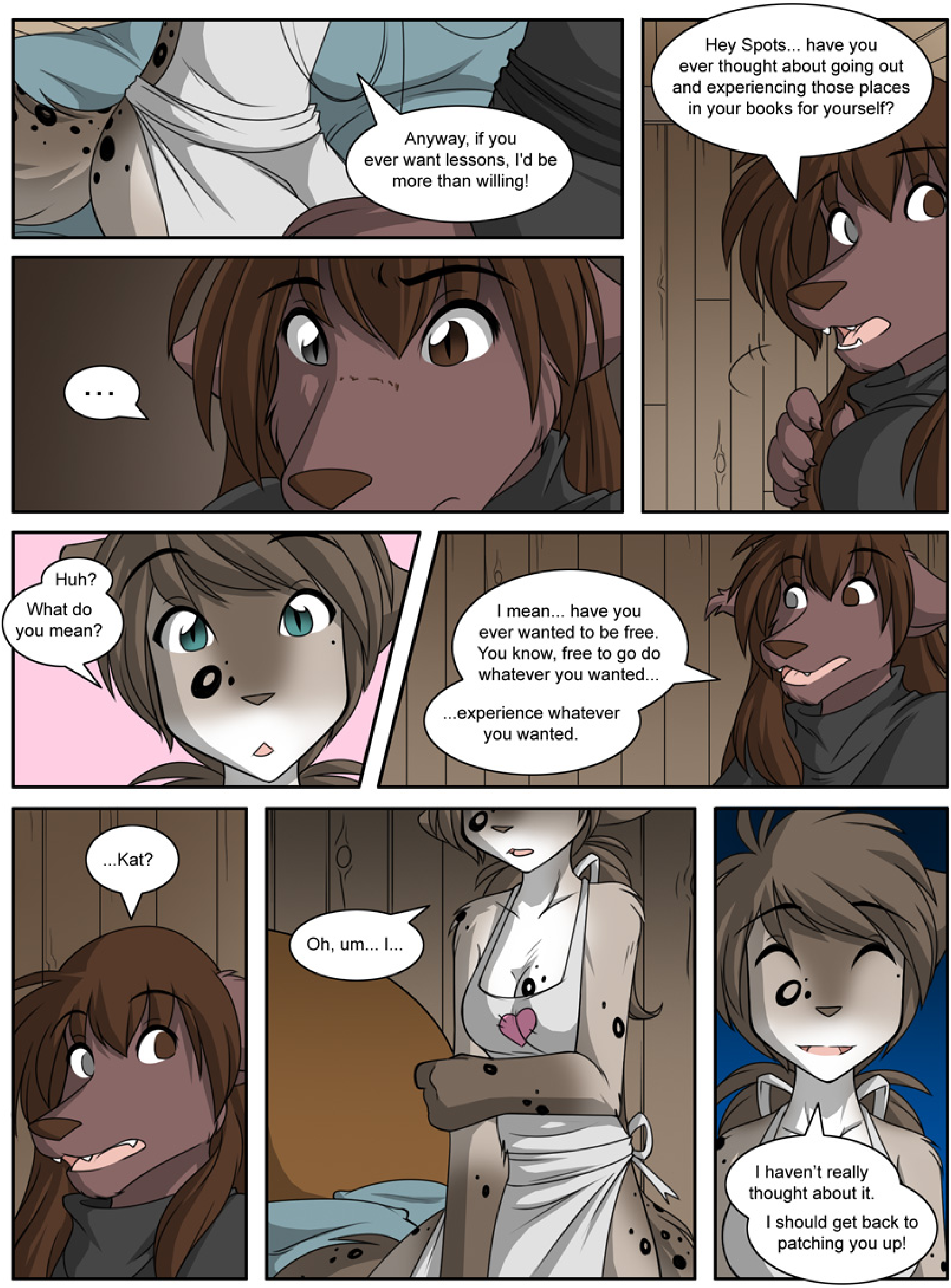

I really should do something about that, but–
Mrrf? I smell food... coffee...
Oh, Hey! Good morning, Natani!
Hungry?
You're just in time for second breakfast, if you want some!
Uh, yeah, sure. That'd be great.
. . .
Say...
You wouldn't happen to know how to sew?
My robes are pretty torn up.
Oh? Let me see!
Hm... yeah, it's pretty bad...
But, if you give me some time to clean up, I'll see what I can do!

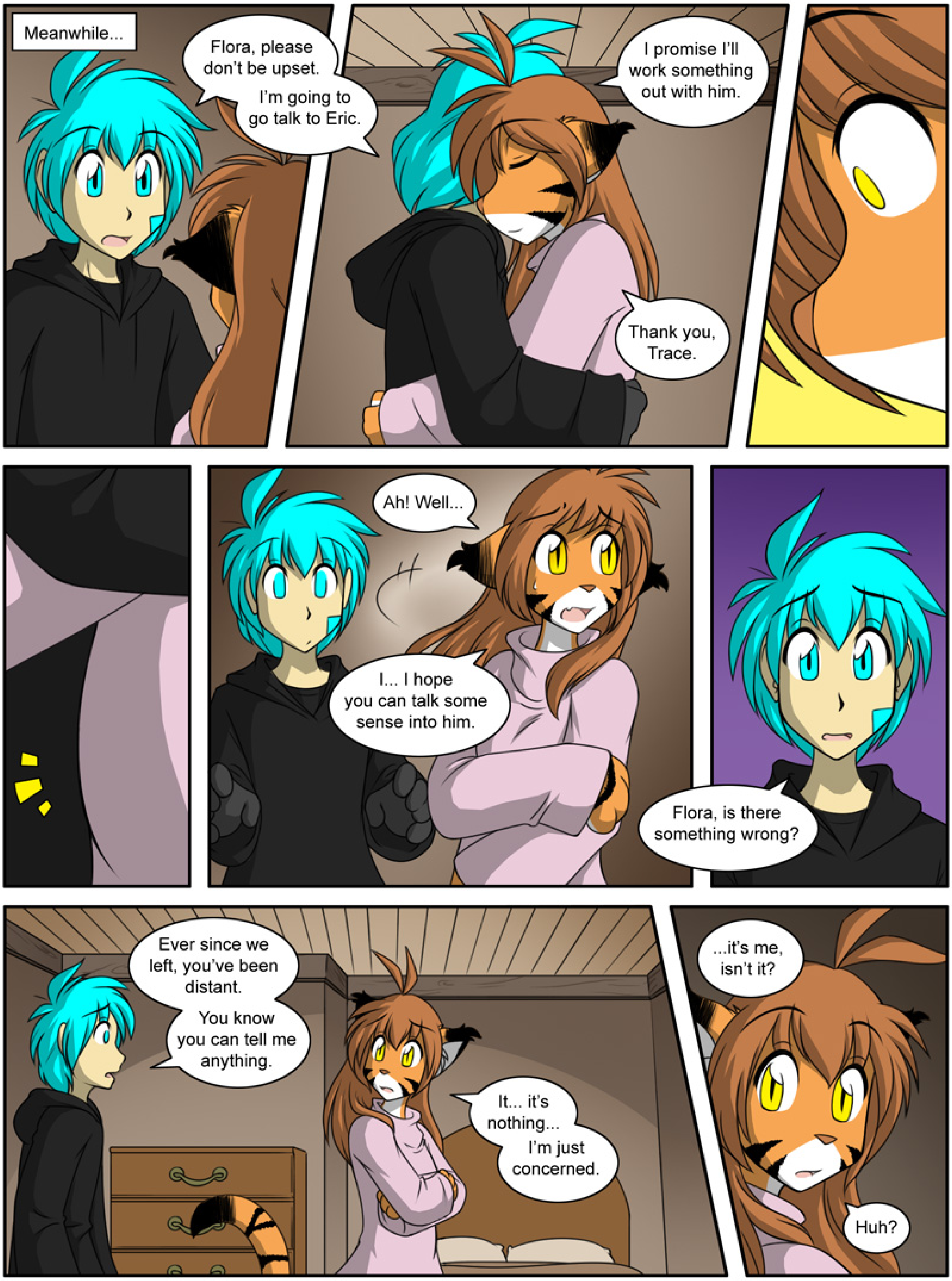

Here's the laundry room!
Just need a few things... needle, cloth, thread...
Alright, I'm set! Now, take off your robes!
W-wait!
T-take them off? RIght now?
Well, of course, silly! I can't fix them if you don't give them to me!
Here, let me help you out!
No-no-no *stop!*
Huh? I don't understand, I thought you wanted me to fix them?
Well, yeah, but...
C-can't you just sew it while I still have it on?
Well, I suppose I could try. But it'd be easier if you took them off. Plus you wouldn't have to stay the whole time.
I don't mind waiting! Really, I'd prefer it this way.

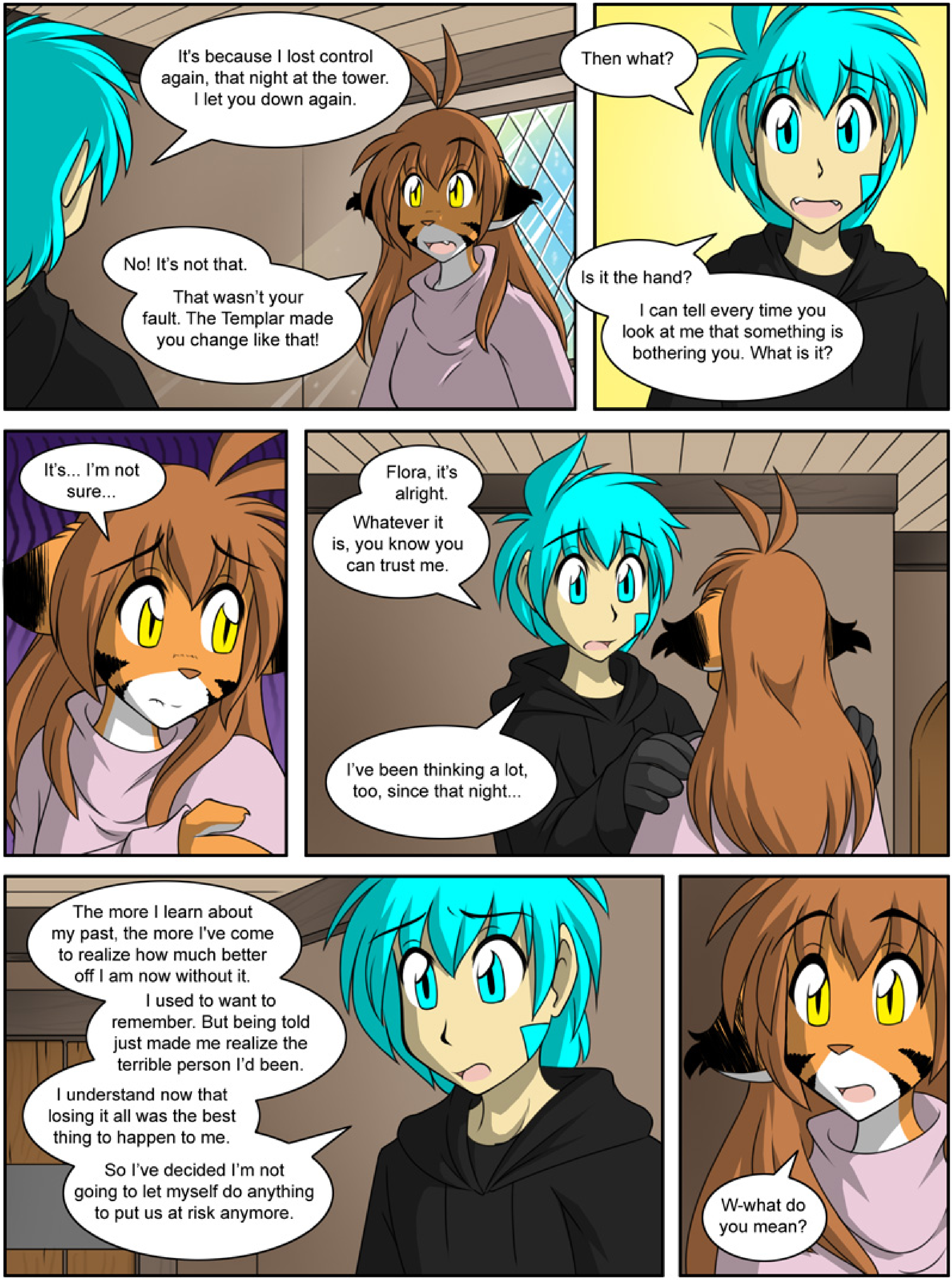

Hm... these bandages...
H-hey! What do you think you're doing?! Don't mess with that!

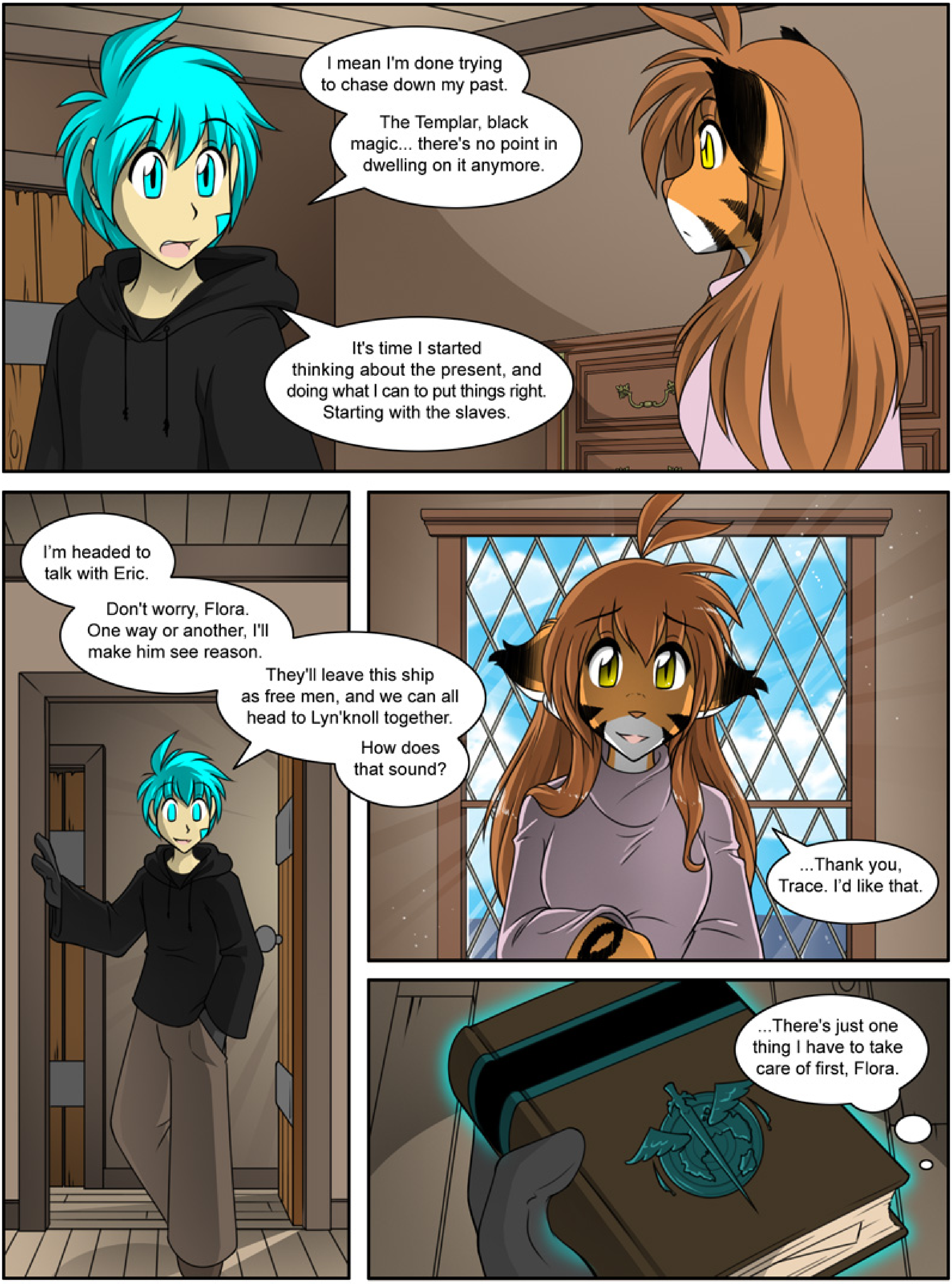

Oh, sorry, sorry! I didn't hurt you, did I?
RIP!
Hurt me?
Your bandages... they are for wounds you received at the tower, right?
Is that why you didn't want to remove your robes?
Er... Yeeees! That's the reason!
Heh heh.. heh...
Natani! Being injured is nothing to be ashamed of!
What if you were to get an infection and no one knew about it?
You should let me have a look just in case!
No no! It's healing just fine! I swear!
C-can you please just finish sewing so I can get out of here?
But... I know some first aid.
I just want to make sure you're okay.

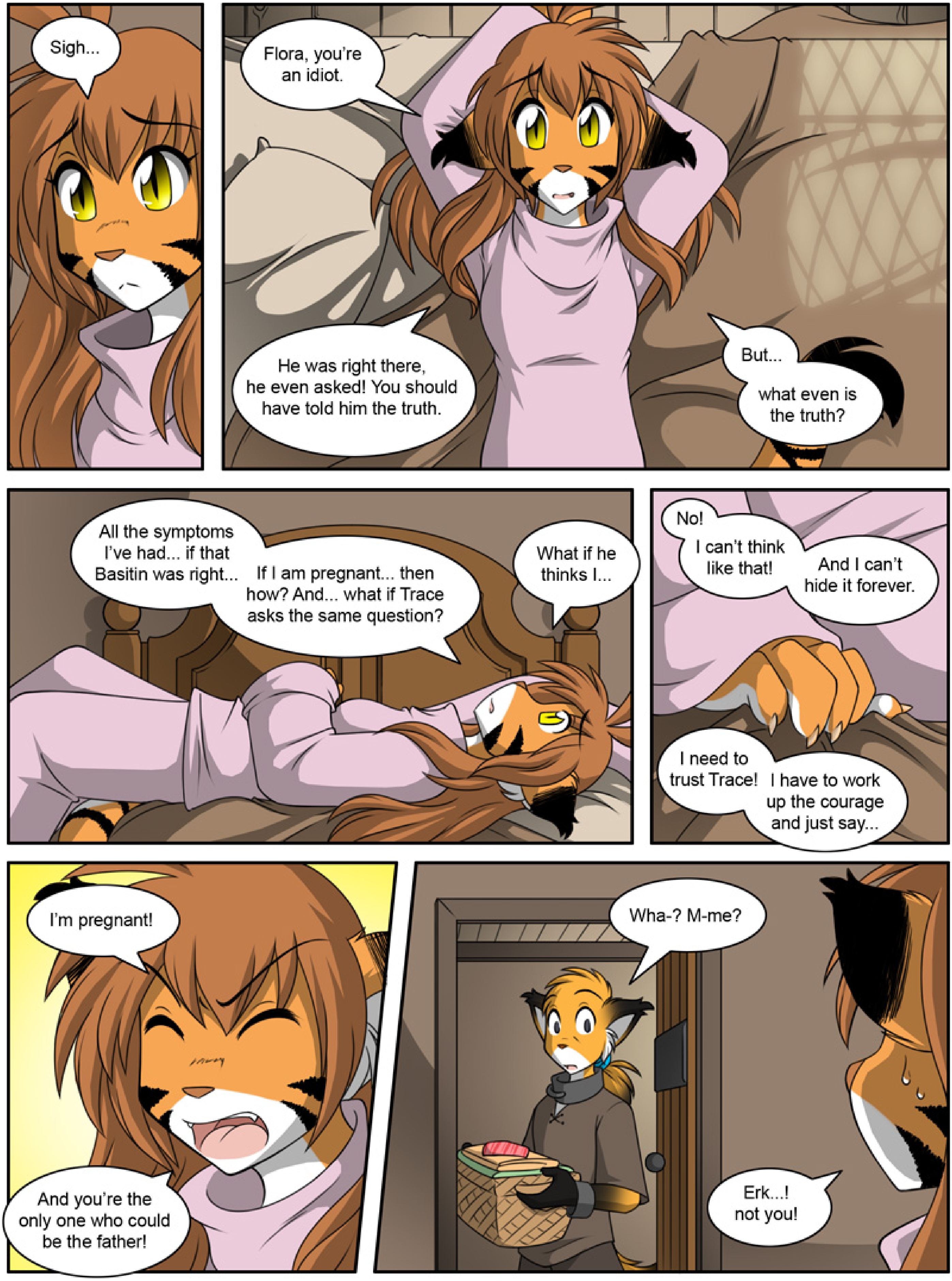

So... you're both a cook and a seamstress.
Do you really know medicine, too?
Well... sort of.
I've read up on it, anyway. That's how I've learned a lot of what I can do.
Reading?
Oh yeah!
Ever since Eric taught me how to read, I've loved learning about all sorts of interesting things.
Cook books, apothecary journals, magic scrolls... it's all fascinating!
Really... huh.
I... never learned how. To read, that is. Not much, anyway.
It wasn't exactly a priority growing up.
Oh, you should!
Would you like me to help teach you? There's so much to be gained from them.
And they aren't all educational, you know!
There's also so many books on people and places from all over the world!
It's great to be able to experience it all, if only through stories.

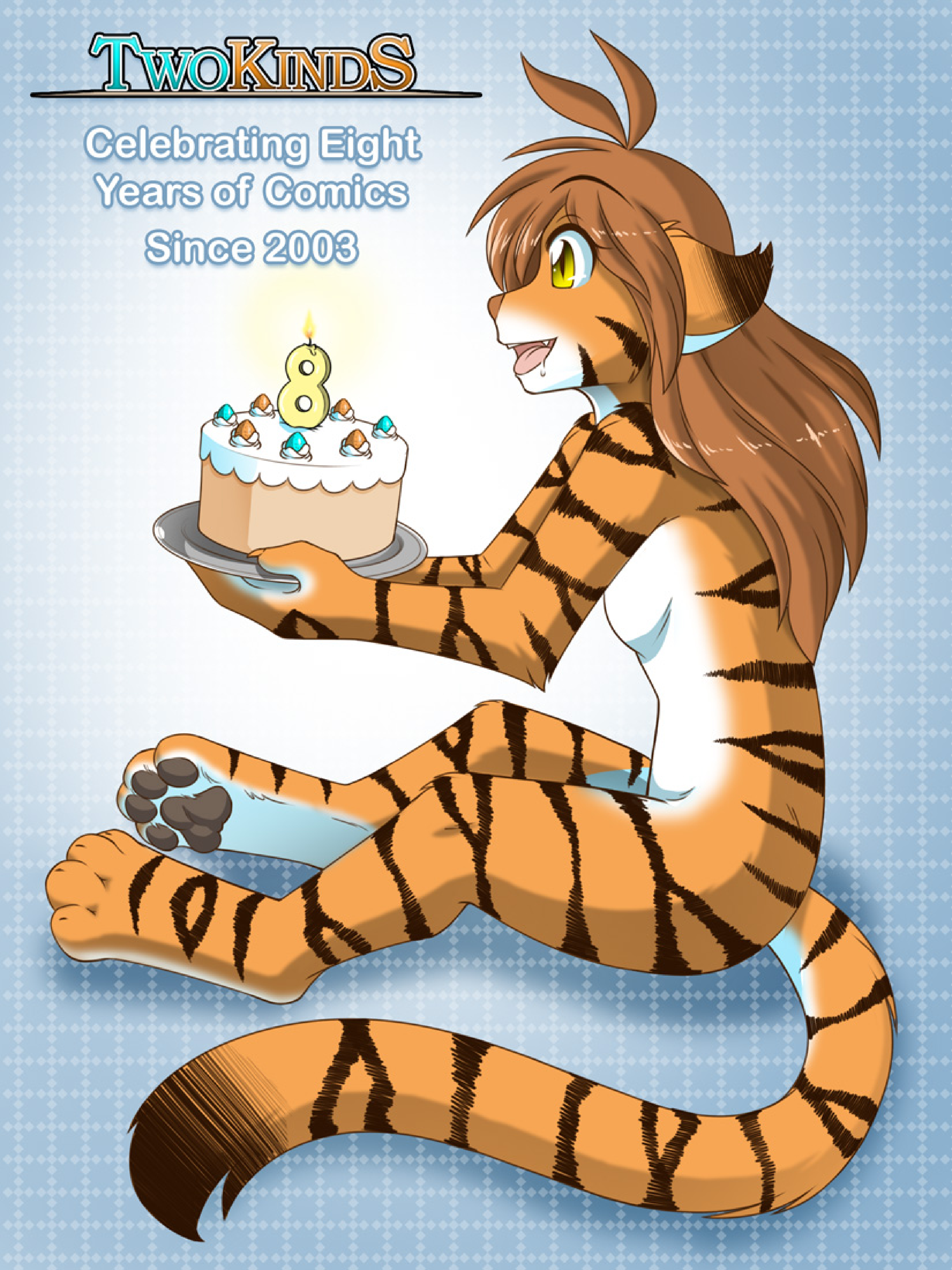

Anyway, if you ever want lessons, I'd be more than willing!
Hey Spots... have you ever thought about going out and experiencing those places in your books for yourself?
...
Huh? What do you mean?
I mean... have you ever wanted to be free. You know, free to go do whatever you wanted...
...experience whatever you wanted.
...Kat?
Oh, um... I...
I haven't really thought about it.
I should get back to patching you up!

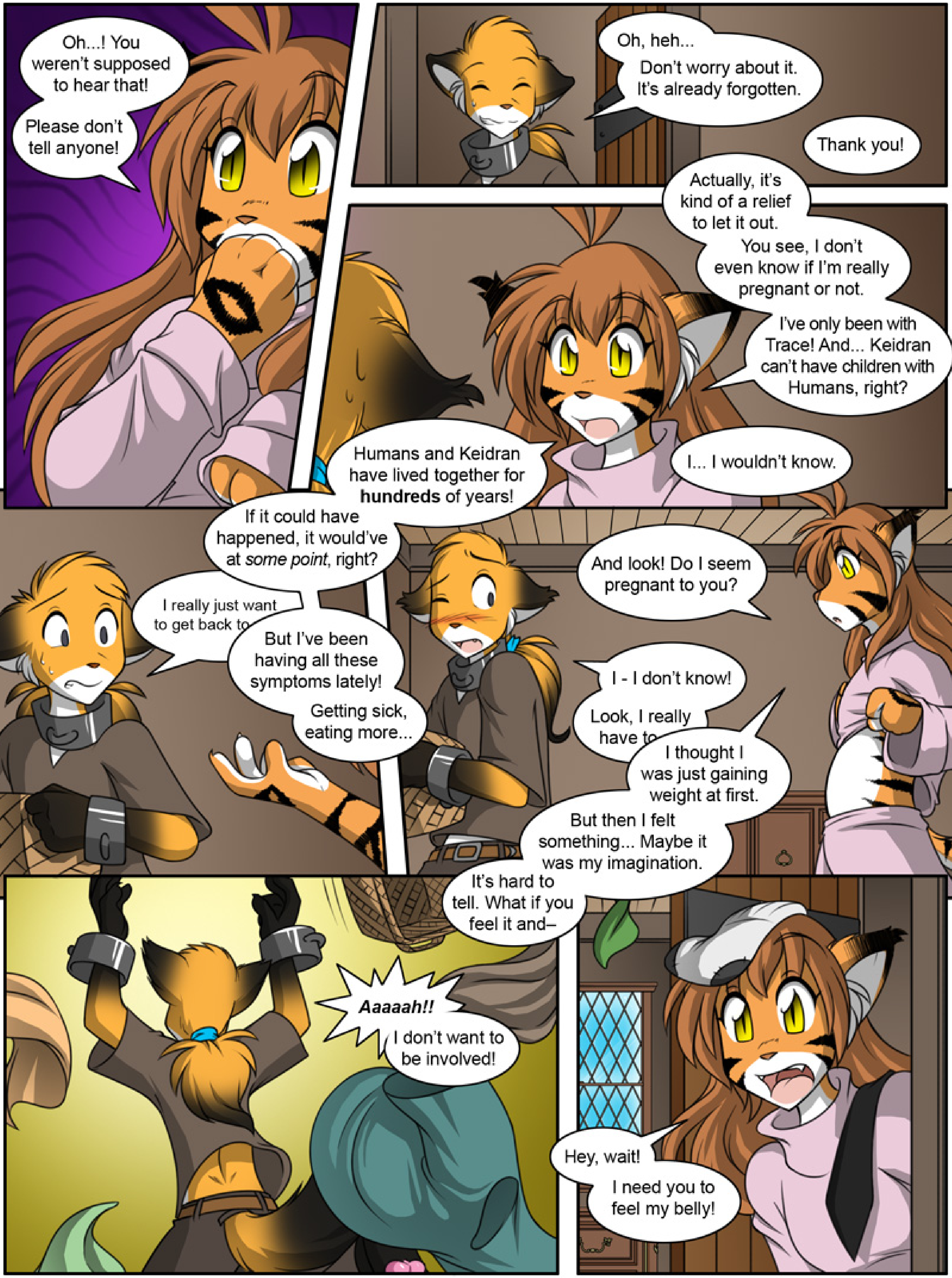

Meanwhile...
Flora, please don't be upset.
I'm going to go talk to Eric.
I promise I'll work something out with him.
Thank you, Trace.
Ah! Well...
I... I hope you can talk some sense into him.
Flora, is there something wrong?
Ever since we left, you've been distant.
You know you can tell me anything.
It... it's nothing...
I'm just concerned.
...it's me, isn't it?
Huh?

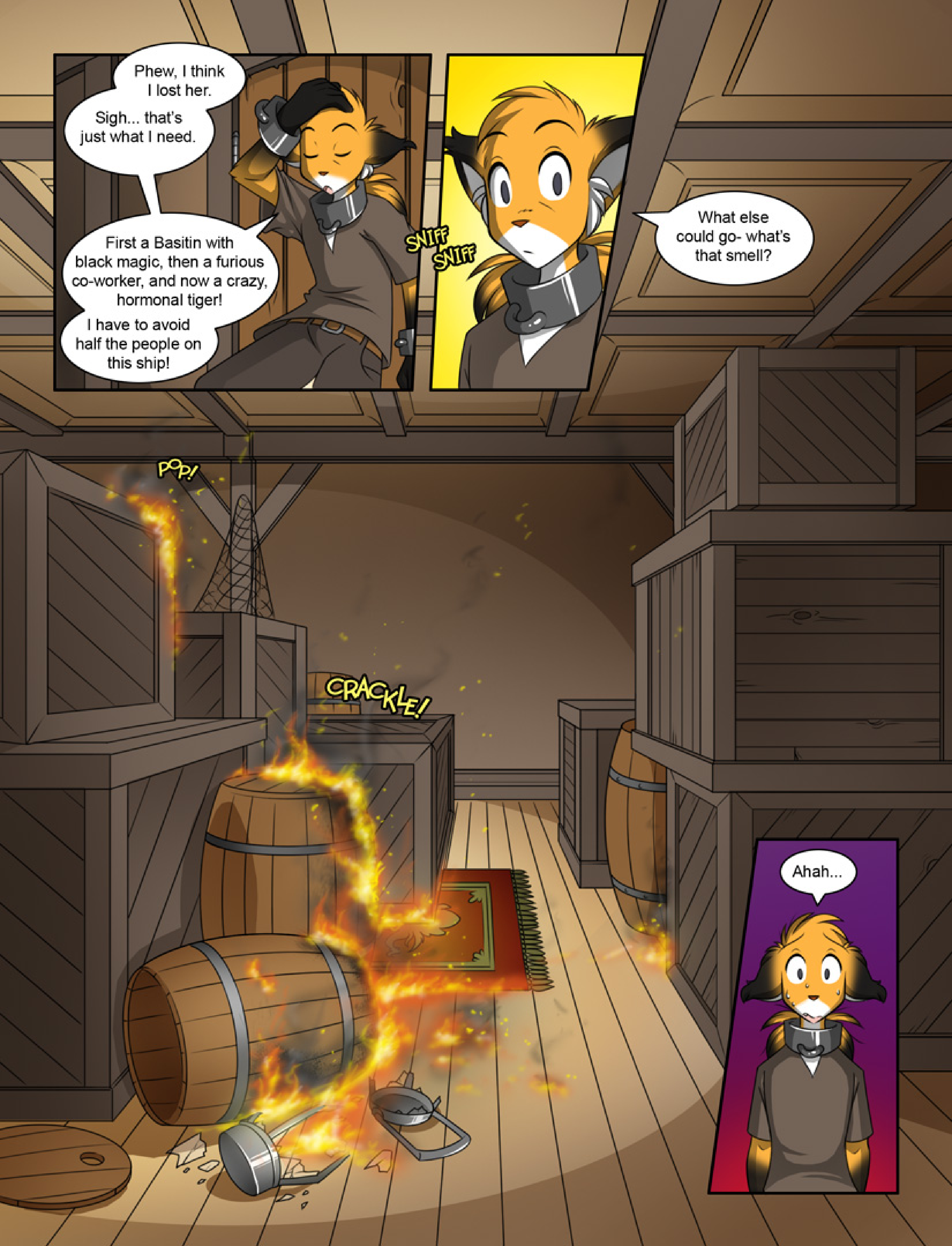

It's because I lost control again, that night at the tower. I let you down again.
No! It's not that.
That wasn't your fault. The Templar made you change like that!
Then what?
Is it the hand?
I can tell every time you look at me that something is bothering you. What is it?
It's... I'm not sure...
Flora, it's alright.
Whatever it is, you know you can trust me.
I've been thinking a lot, too, since that night...
The more I learn about my past, the more I've come to realize how much better off I am now without it.
I used to want to remember. But being told just made me realize the terrible person I'd been.
I understand now that losing it all was the best thing to happen to me.
So I've decided I'm not going to let myself do anything to put us at risk anymore.
W-what do you mean?

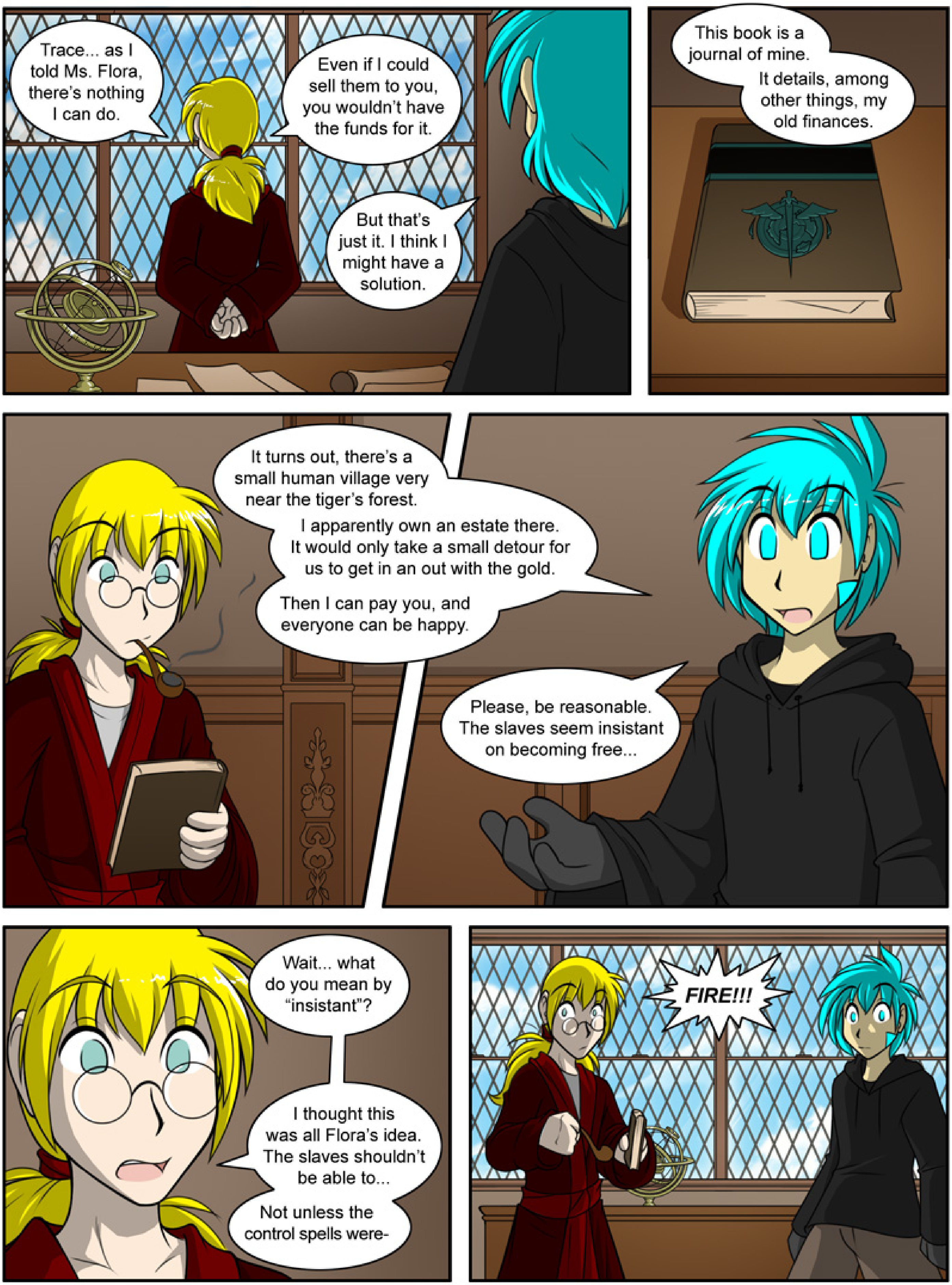

I mean I'm done trying to chase down my past.
The Templar, black magic... there's no point in dwelling on it anymore.
It's time I started thinking about the present, and doing what I can to put things right. Starting with the slaves.
I'm headed to talk with Eric.
Don't worry, Flora. One way or another, I'll make him see reason.
They'll leave this ship as free men, and we can all head to Lyn'knoll together.
How does that sound?
...Thank you, Trace. I'd like that.
...There's just one thing I have to take care of first, Flora.

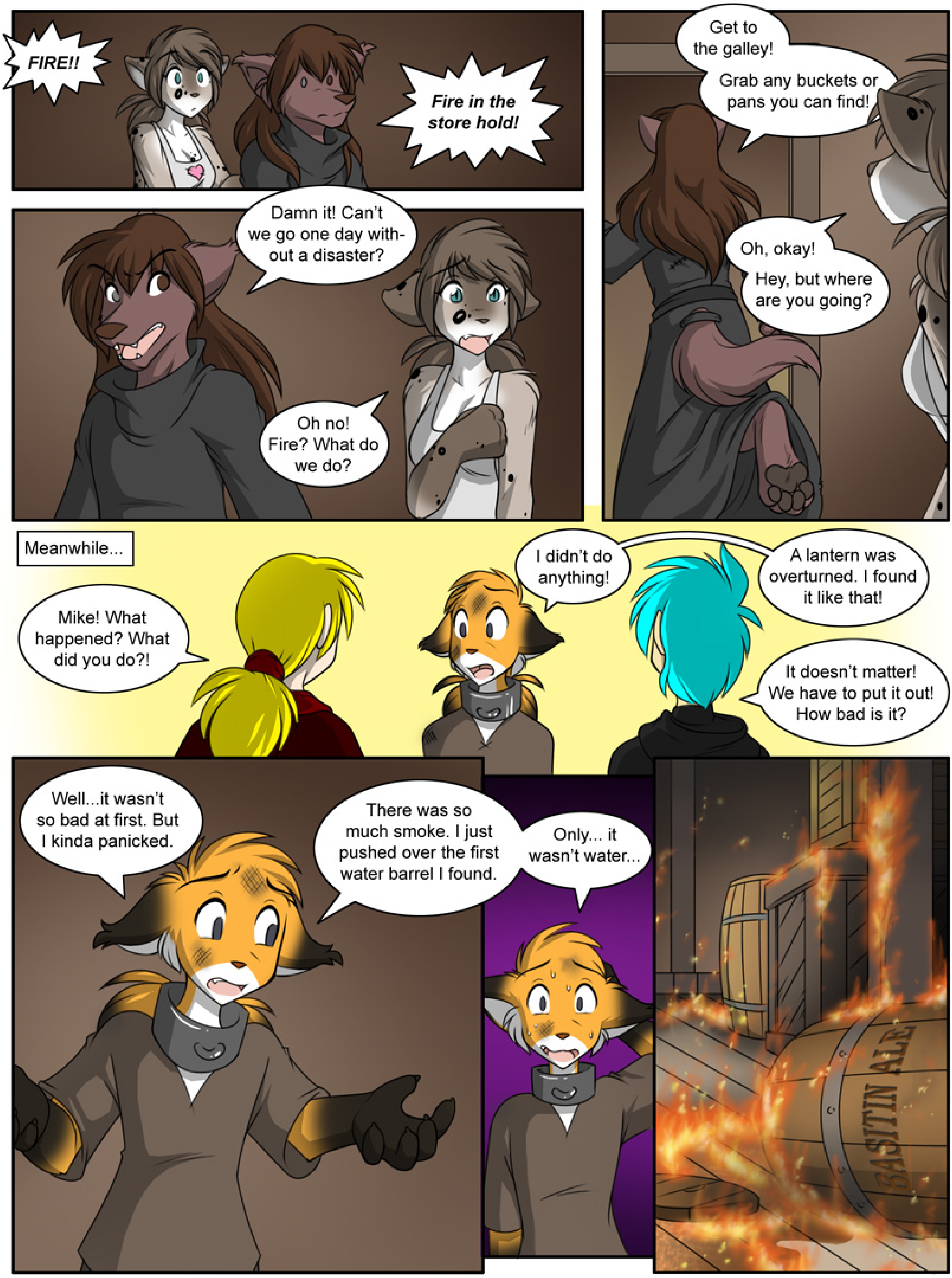

Sigh...
Flora, you're an idiot.
He was right there, he even asked! You should have told him the truth.
But...
what even is the truth?
All the symptoms I've had... if that Basitin was right...
If I am pregnant... then how? And... what if Trace asks the same question?
What if he thinks I...
No!
I can't think like that!
And I can't hide it forever.
I need to trust Trace!
I have to work up the courage and just say...
I'm pregnant!
And you're the only one who could be the father!
Wha-? M-me?
Erk...! not you!

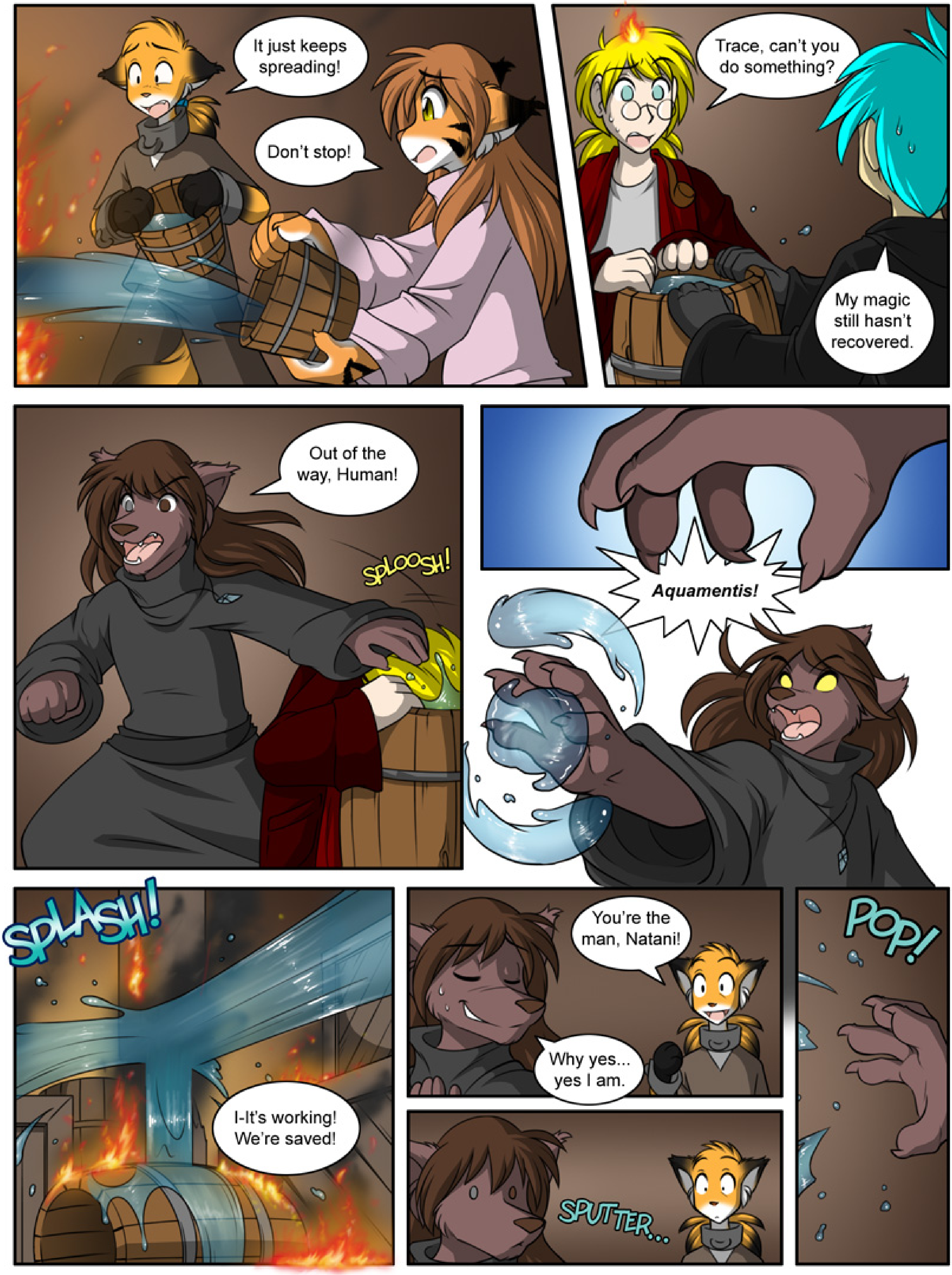

TwoKinds
Celebrating Eight
Years of Comics
Since 2003
8

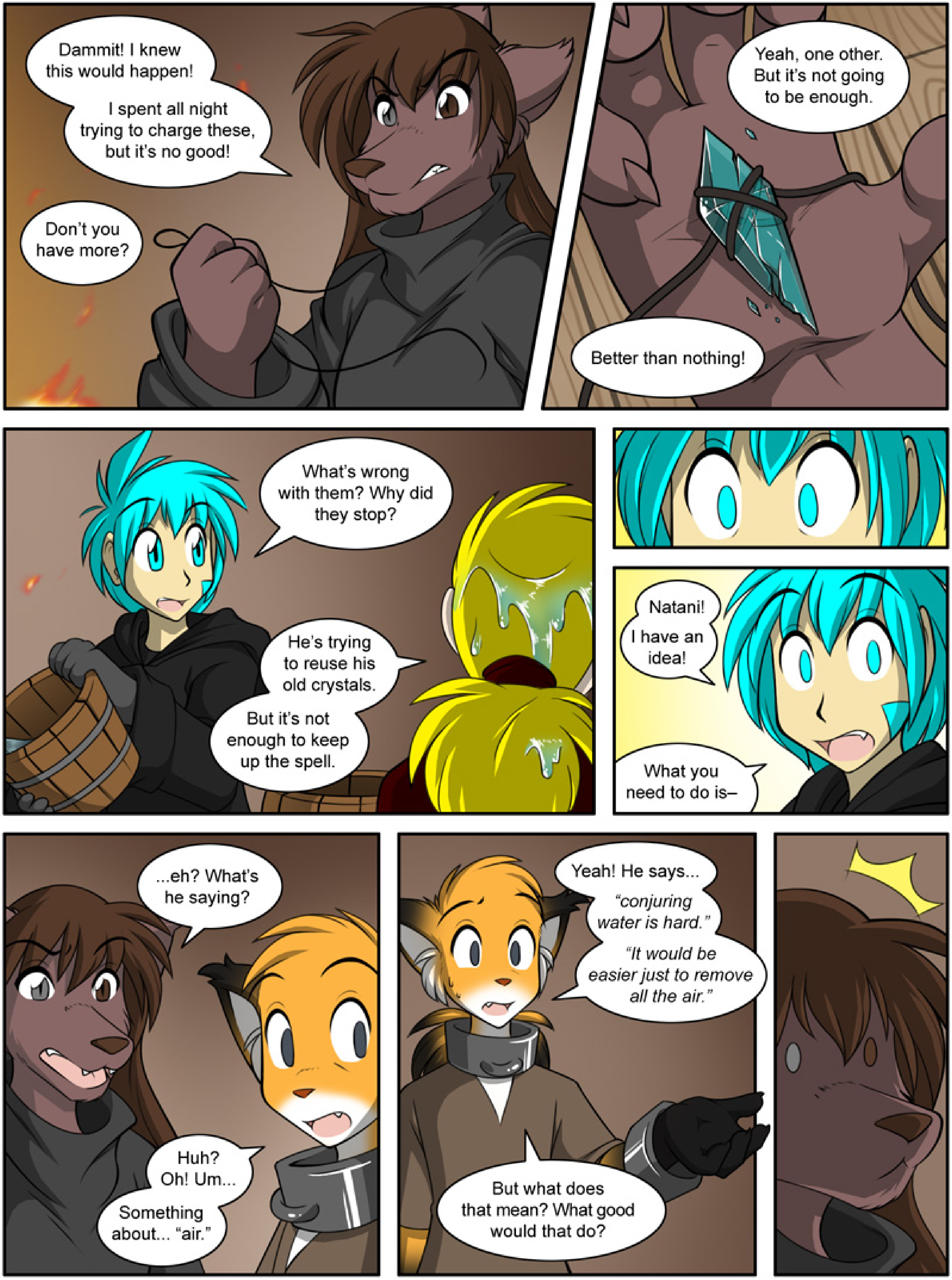

Oh...! You weren't supposed to hear that!
Please don't tell anyone!
Oh, heh...
Don't worry about it. It's already forgotten.
Thank you!
Actually, it's kind of a relief to let it out.
You see, I don't even know if I'm really pregnant or not.
I've only been with Trace! And... Keidran can't have children with Humans, right?
I... I wouldn't know.
Humans and Keidran have lived together for **hundreds** of years!
If it could have happened, it would've at *some point*, right?
I really just want to get back to
But I've been having all these symptoms lately!
Getting sick, eating more...
And look! Do I seem pregnant to you?
I - I don't know!
Look, I really have to
I thought I was just gaining weight at first.
But then I felt something... Maybe it was my imagination.
It's hard to tell. What if you feel it and–
Aaaaah!!
I don't want to be involved!
Hey, wait!
I need you to feel my belly!

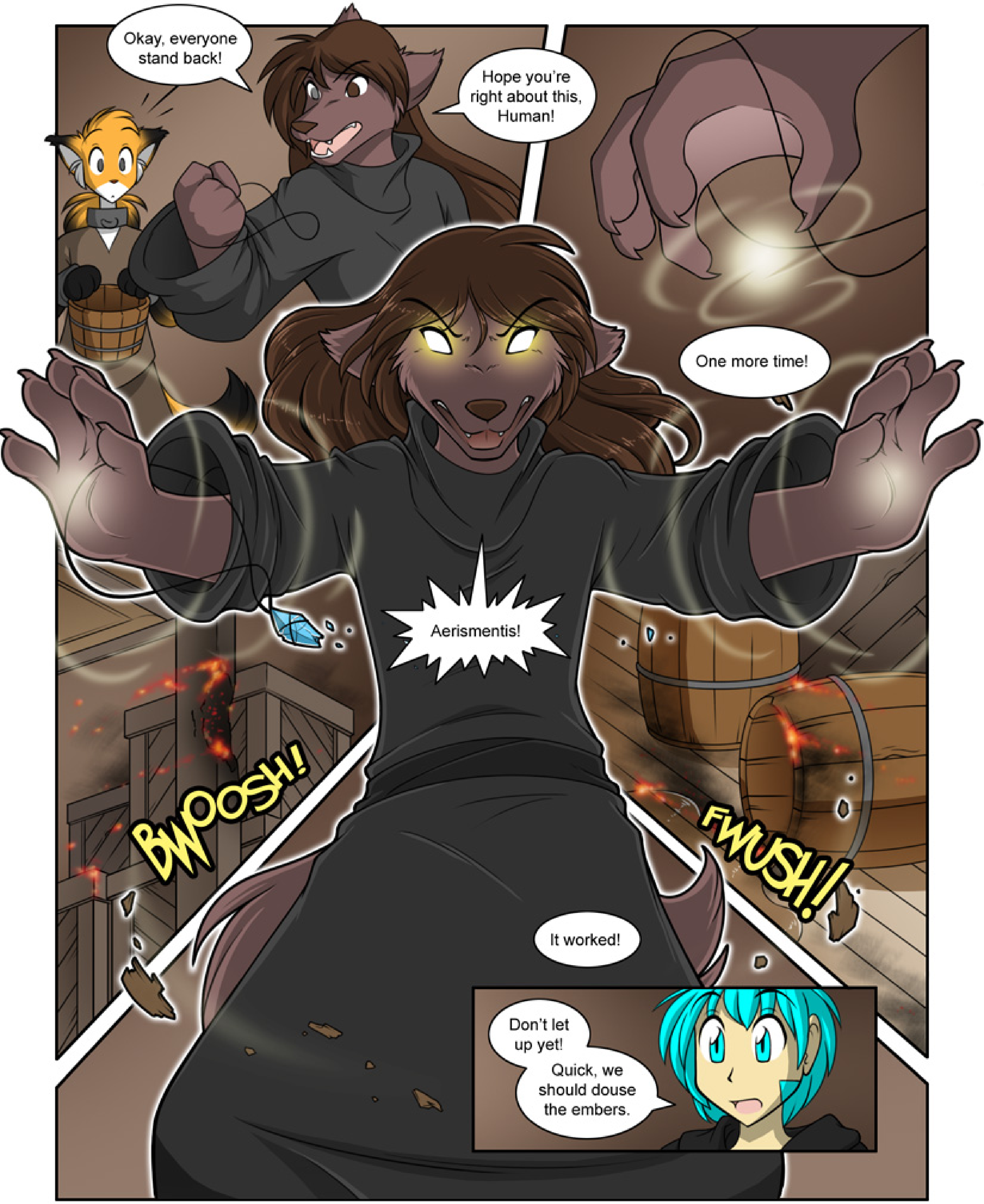

Phew, I think I lost her.
Sigh... that's just what I need.
First a Basitin with black magic, then a furious co-worker, and now a crazy, hormonal tiger!
I have to avoid half the people on this ship!
SNIFF SNIFF
What else could go- what's that smell?
POP!
CRACKLE!
Ahah...

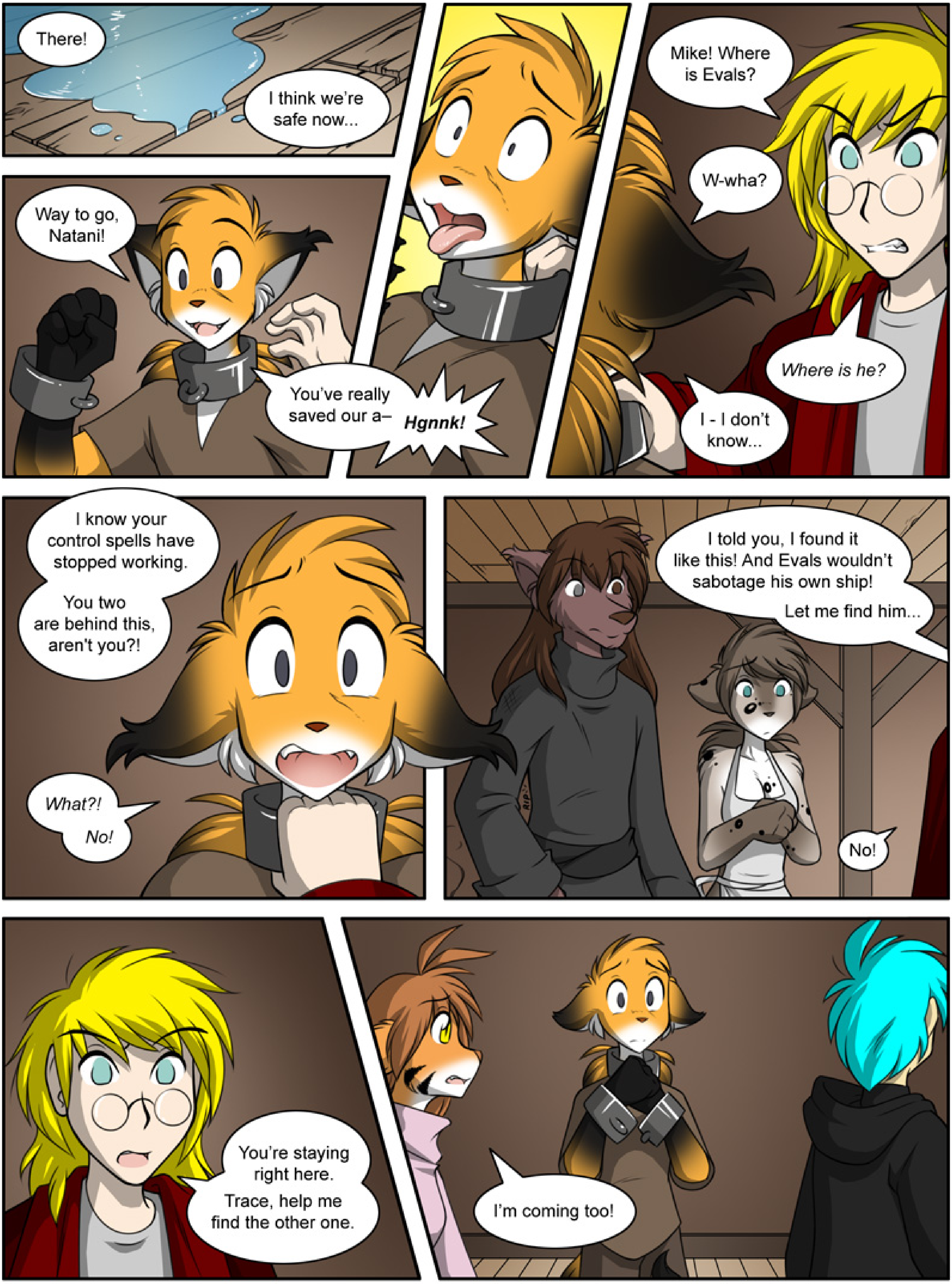

Trace... as I told Ms. Flora, there's nothing I can do.
Even if I could sell them to you, you wouldn't have the funds for it.
But that's just it. I think I might have a solution.
This book is a journal of mine.
It details, among other things, my old finances.
It turns out, there's a small human village very near the tiger's forest.
I apparently own an estate there. It would only take a small detour for us to get in an out with the gold.
Then I can pay you, and everyone can be happy.
Please, be reasonable. The slaves seem insistant on becoming free...
Wait... what do you mean by "insistant"?
I thought this was all Flora's idea. The slaves shouldn't be able to...
Not unless the control spells were-
FIRE!!!

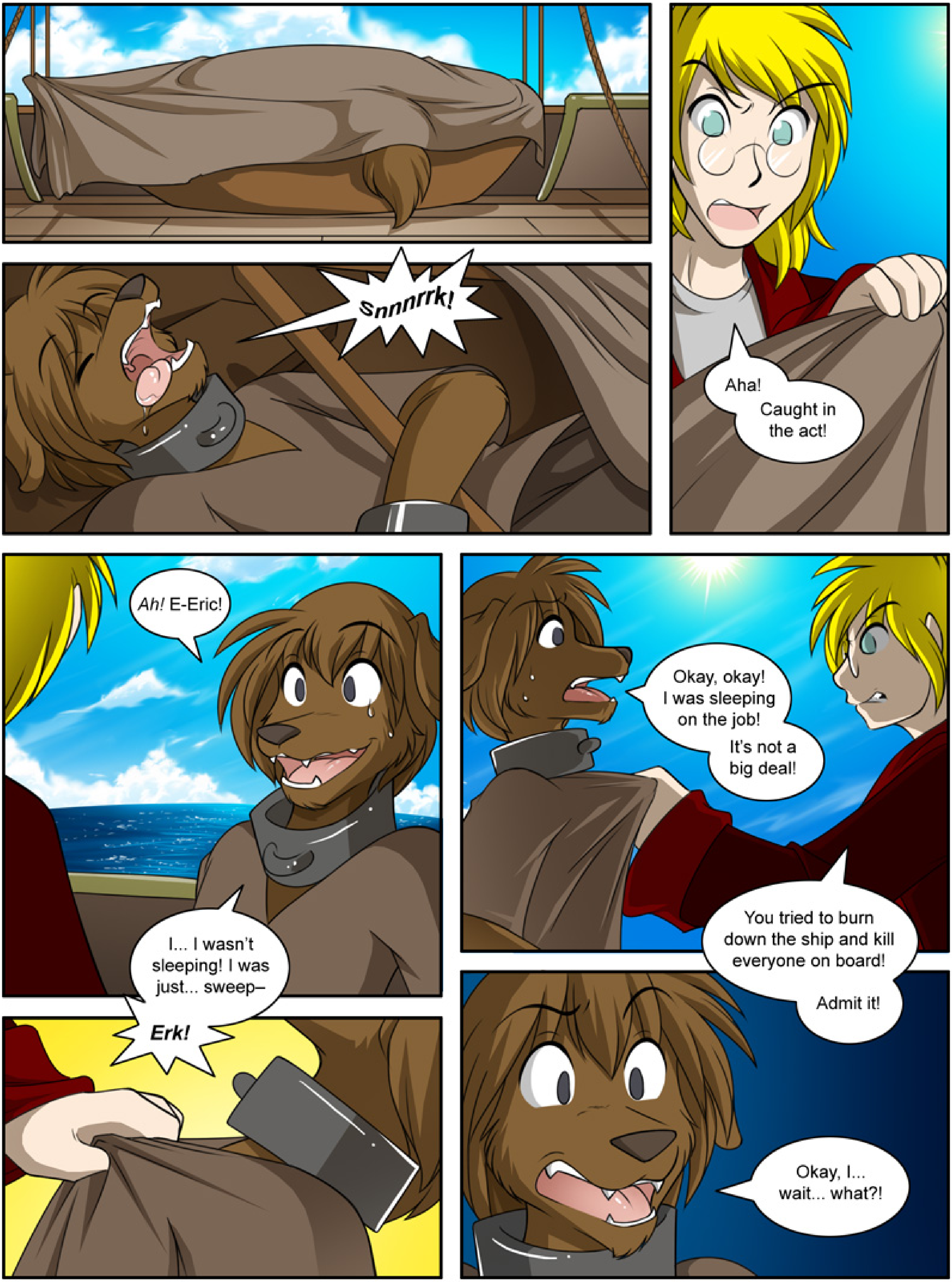

FIRE!!
Fire in the store hold!
Damn it! Can't we go one day without a disaster?
Oh no! Fire? What do we do?
Get to the galley!
Grab any buckets or pans you can find!
Oh, okay!
Hey, but where are you going?
Meanwhile...
Mike! What happened? What did you do?!
I didn't do anything!
A lantern was overturned. I found it like that!
It doesn't matter! We have to put it out! How bad is it?
Well...it wasn't so bad at first. But I kinda panicked.
There was so much smoke. I just pushed over the first water barrel I found.
Only... it wasn't water...
BASITIN ALE

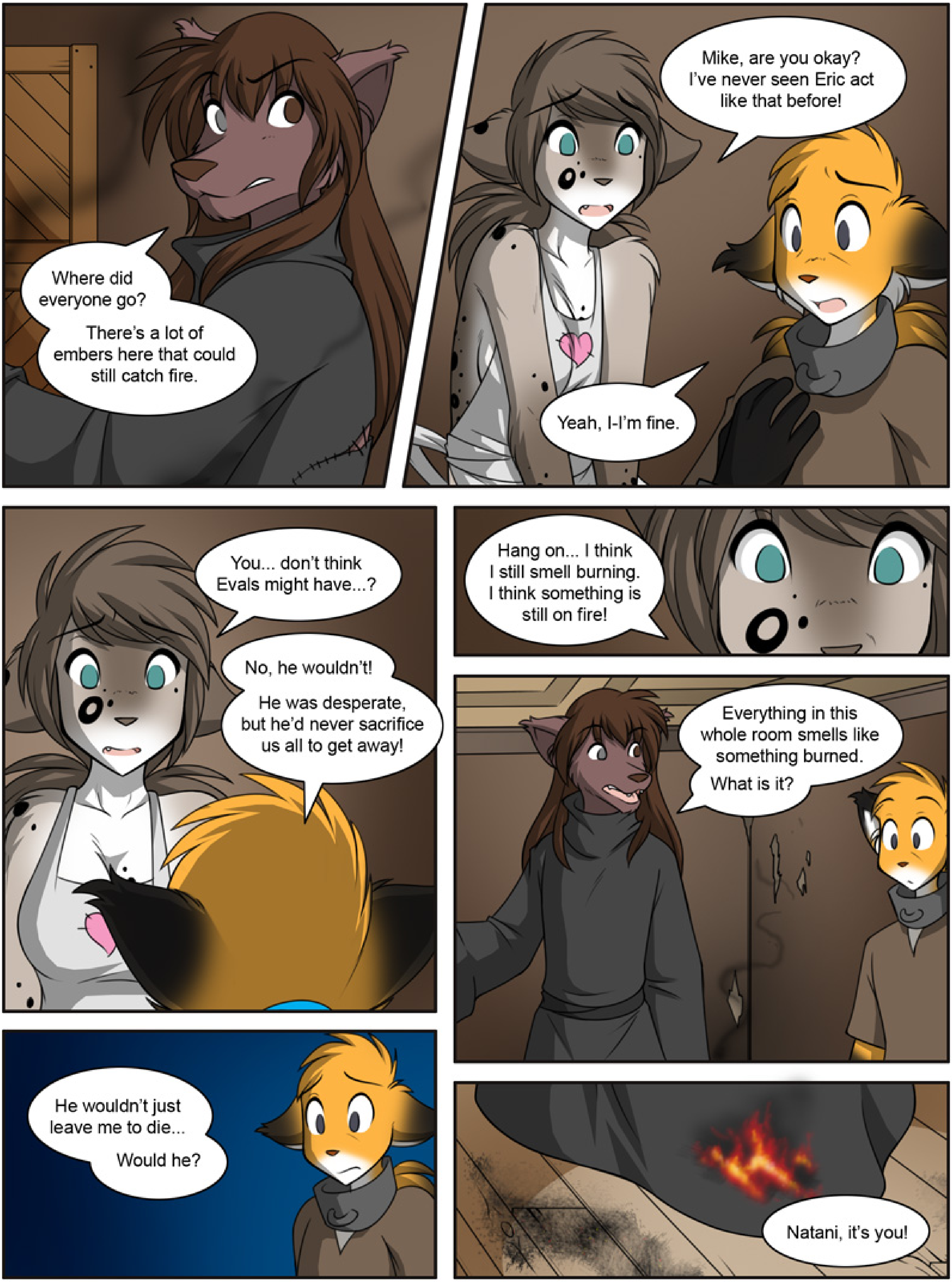

It just keeps spreading!
Don't stop!
Trace, can't you do something?
My magic still hasn't recovered.
Out of the way, Human!
SPLOOSH!
Aquamentis!
SPLASH!
I-It's working! We're saved!
You're the man, Natani!
Why yes... yes I am.
SPUTTER...
POP!

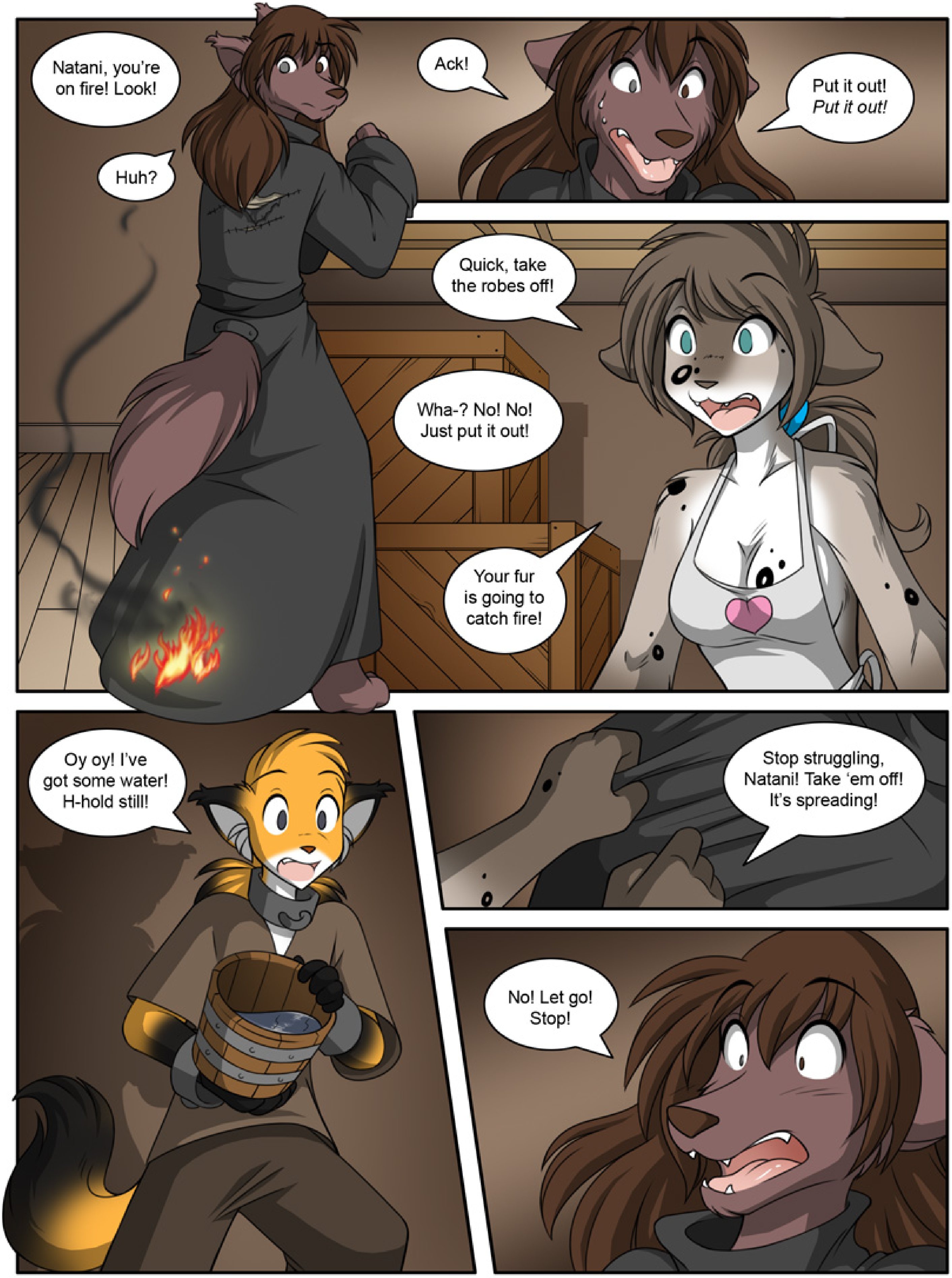

Dammit! I knew this would happen!
I spent all night trying to charge these, but it's no good!
Don't you have more?
Yeah, one other. But it's not going to be enough.
Better than nothing!
What's wrong with them? Why did they stop?
He's trying to reuse his old crystals.
But it's not enough to keep up the spell.
Natani!
I have an idea!
What you need to do is–
...eh? What's he saying?
Huh? Oh! Um...
Something about... "air."
Yeah! He says...
"conjuring water is hard."
"It would be easier just to remove all the air."
But what does that mean? What good would that do?

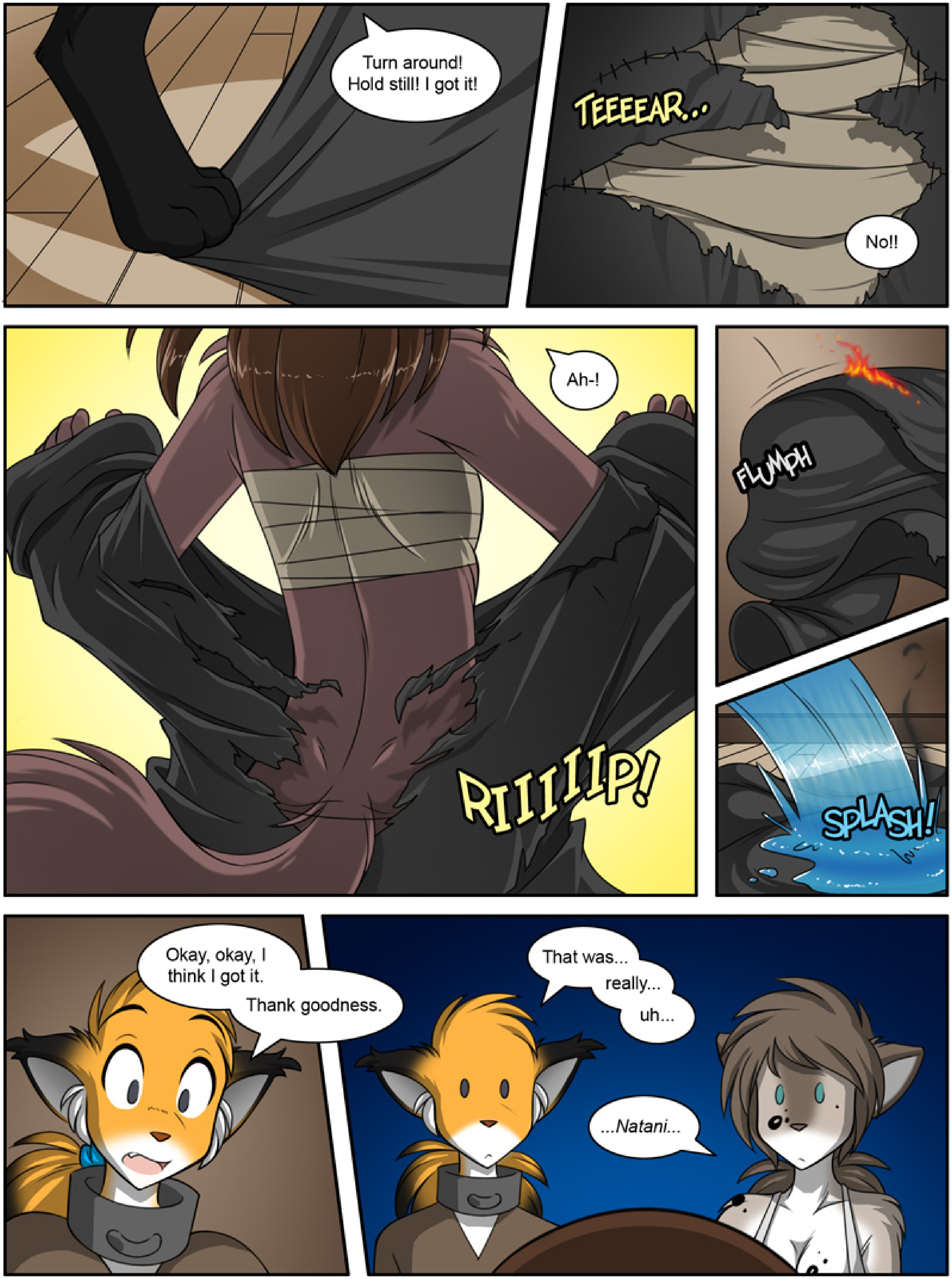

Okay, everyone stand back!
Hope you're right about this, Human!
One more time!
Aerismentis!
BWOOSH!
FWUSH!
It worked!
Don't let up yet!
Quick, we should douse the embers.

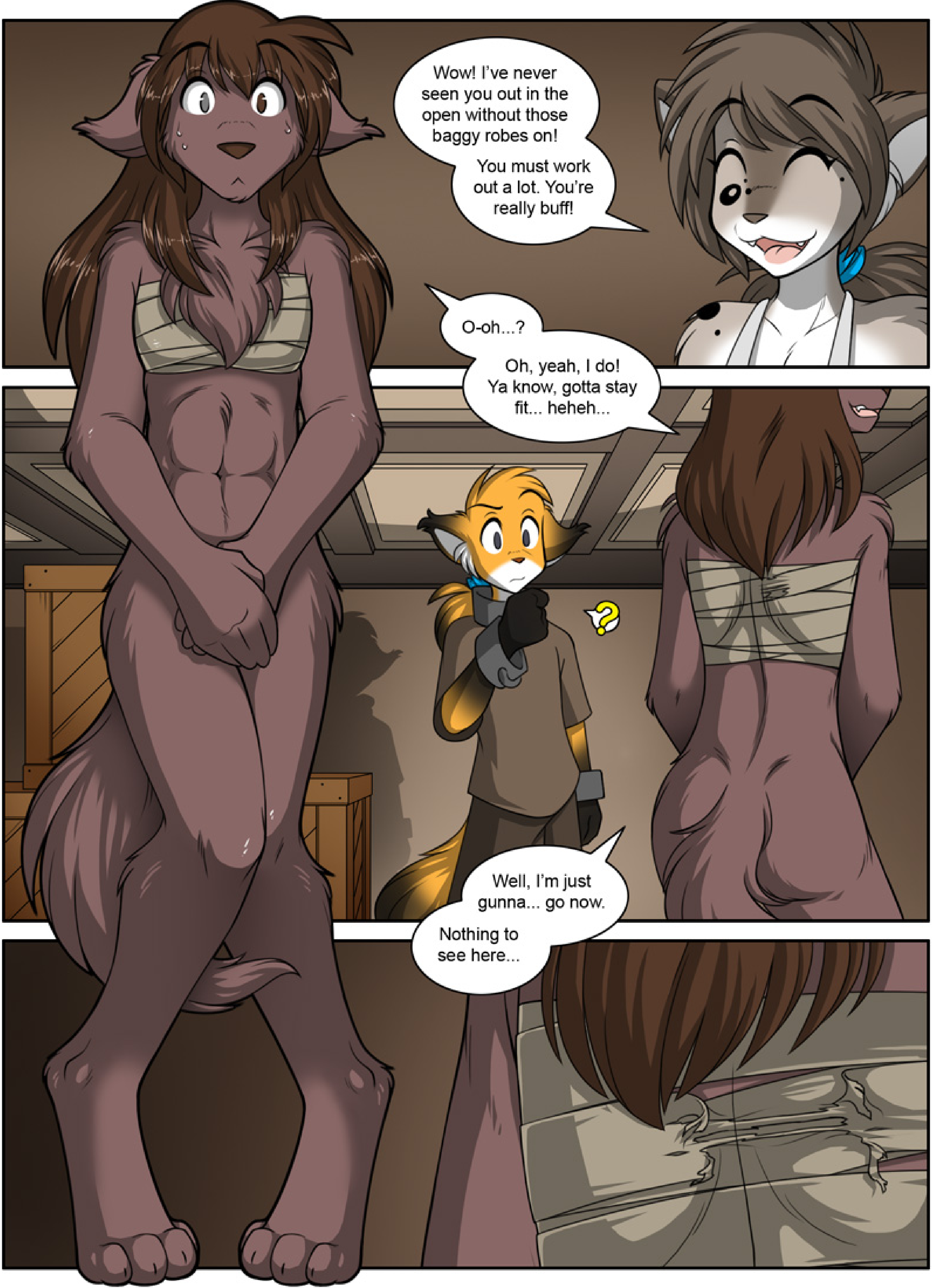

There!
I think we're safe now...
Way to go, Natani!
You've really saved our a–
Hgnnk!
Mike! Where is Evals?
W-wha?
Where is he?
I - I don't know...
I know your control spells have stopped working.
You two are behind this, aren't you?!
What?!
No!
I told you, I found it like this! And Evals wouldn't sabotage his own ship!
Let me find him...
No!
You're staying right here.
Trace, help me find the other one.
I'm coming too!

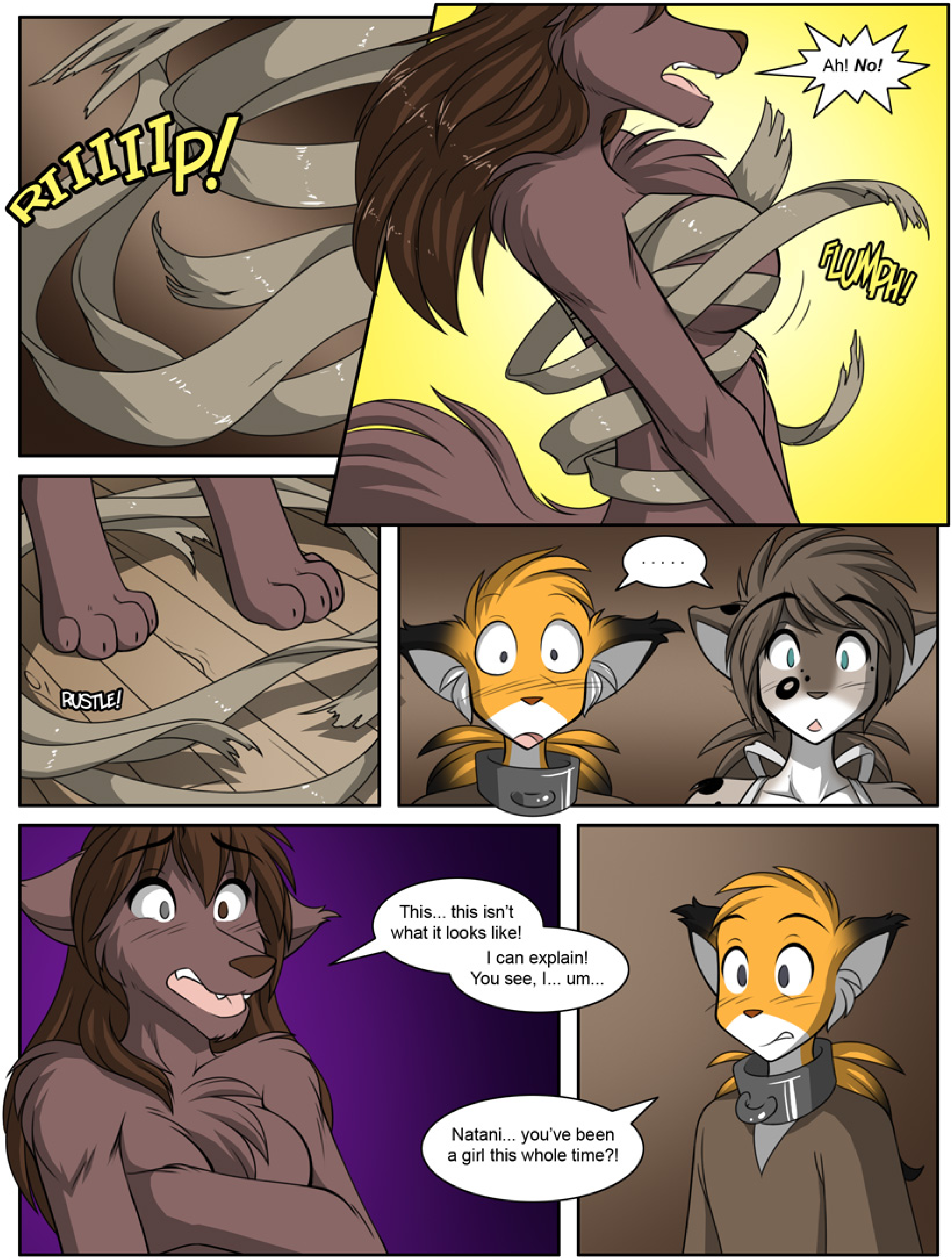

Snnnrrk!
Aha! Caught in the act!
Ah! E-Eric!
I... I wasn't sleeping! I was just... sweep–
Erk!
Okay, okay! I was sleeping on the job! It's not a big deal!
You tried to burn down the ship and kill everyone on board! Admit it!
Okay, I... wait... what?!

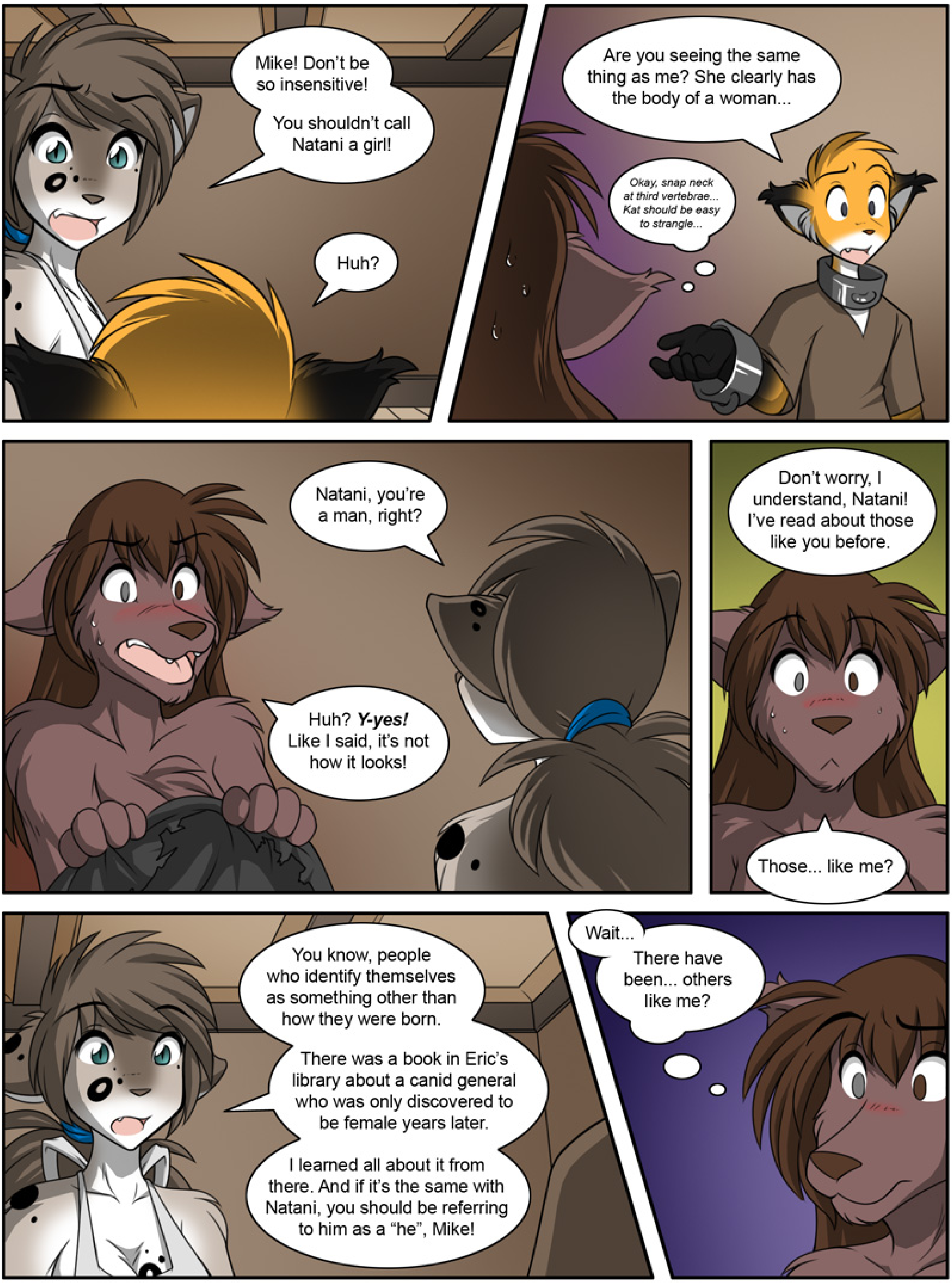

Where did everyone go?
There's a lot of embers here that could still catch fire.
Mike, are you okay? I've never seen Eric act like that before!
Yeah, I-I'm fine.
You... don't think Evals might have...?
No, he wouldn't!
He was desperate, but he'd never sacrifice us all to get away!
Hang on... I think I still smell burning. I think something is still on fire!
Everything in this whole room smells like something burned.
What is it?
He wouldn't just leave me to die...
Would he?
Natani, it's you!

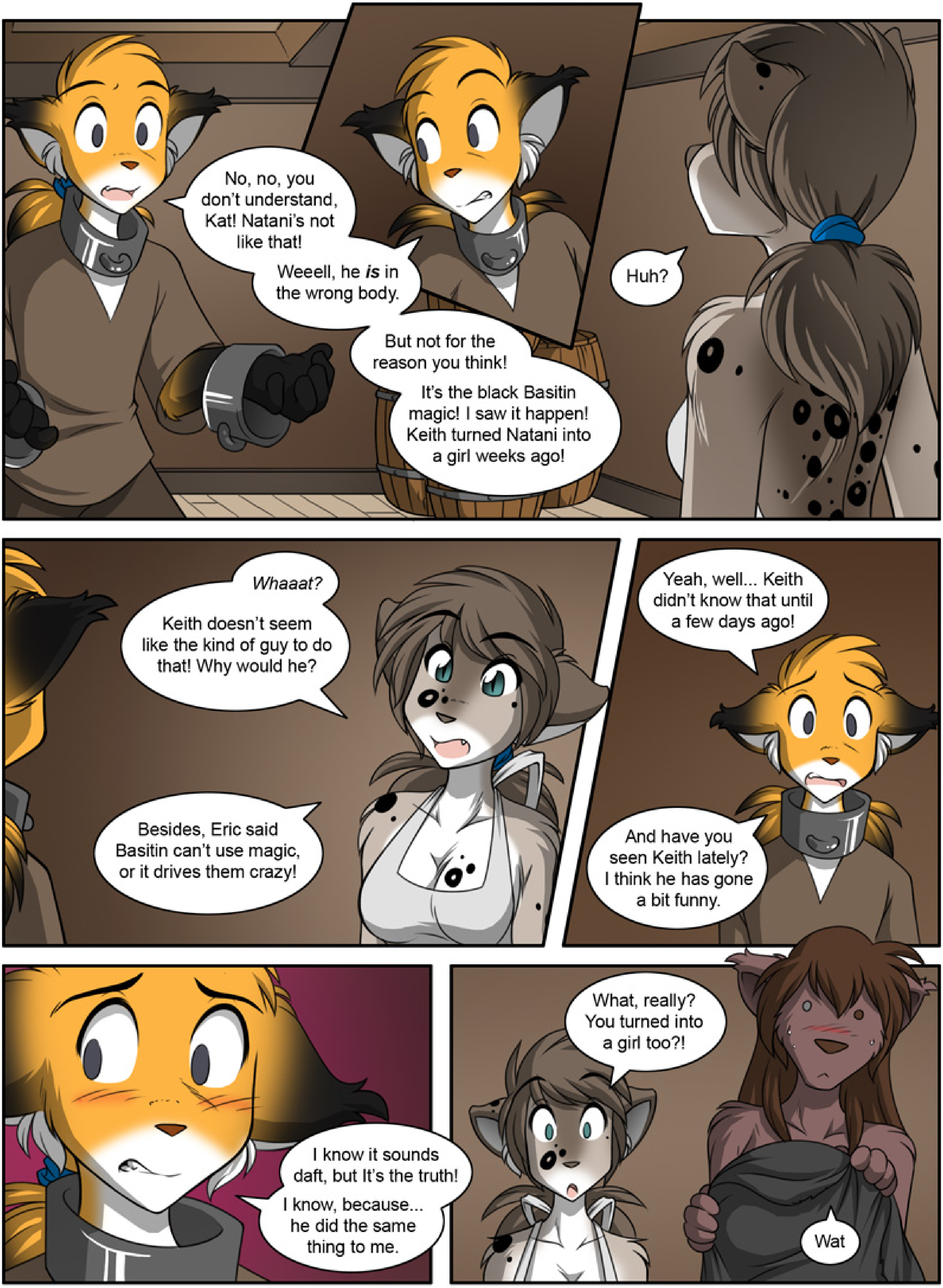

Natani, you're on fire! Look!
Huh?
Ack!
Put it out! *Put it out!*
Quick, take the robes off!
Wha-? No! No! Just put it out!
Your fur is going to catch fire!
Oy oy! I've got some water! H-hold still!
Stop struggling, Natani! Take 'em off! It's spreading!
No! Let go! Stop!

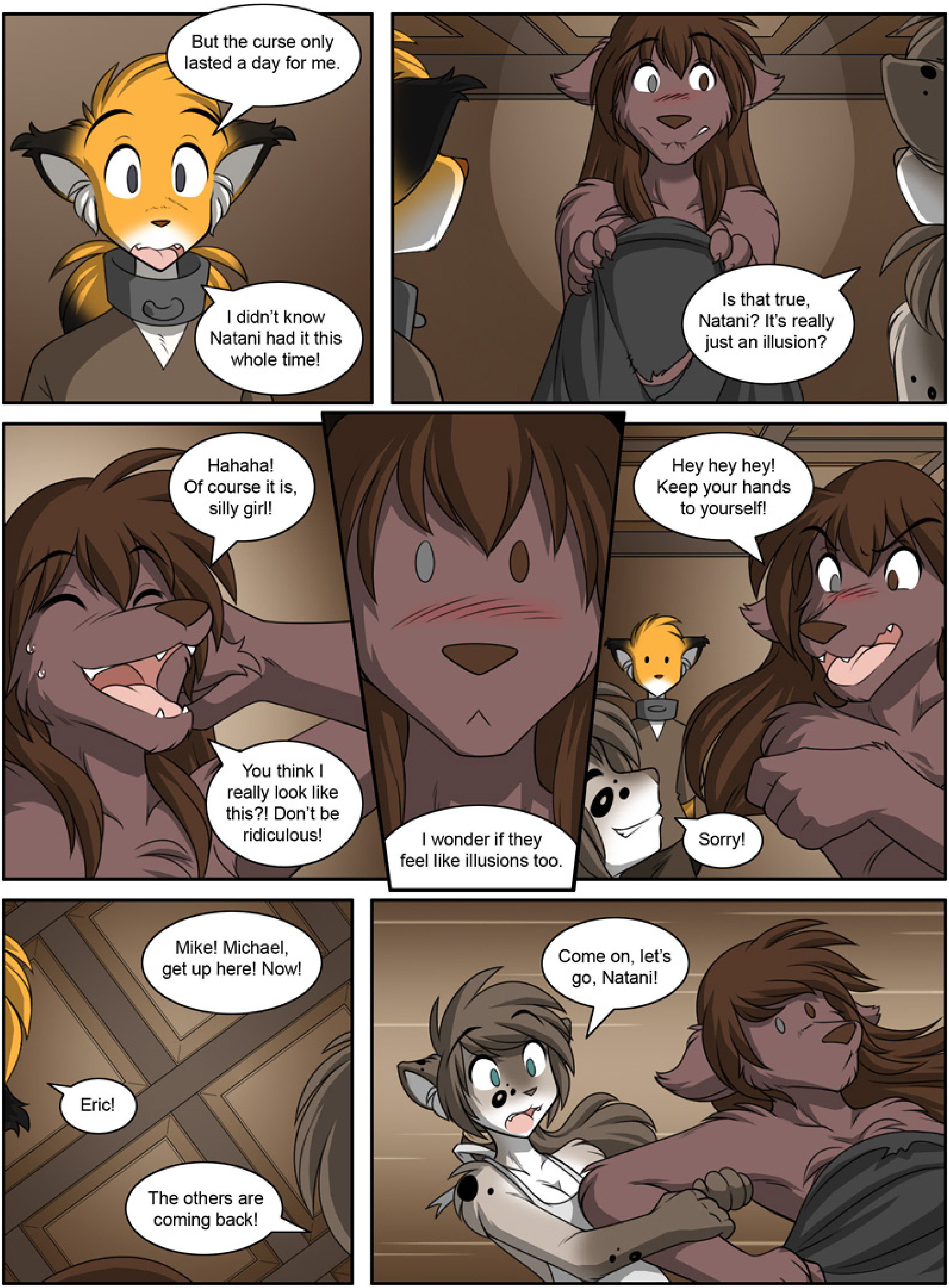

Turn around! Hold still! I got it!
TEEEEAR...
No!!
Ah-!
RIIIIP!
FLUMPH
SPLASH!
Okay, okay, I think I got it.
Thank goodness.
That was... really... uh...
...Natani...

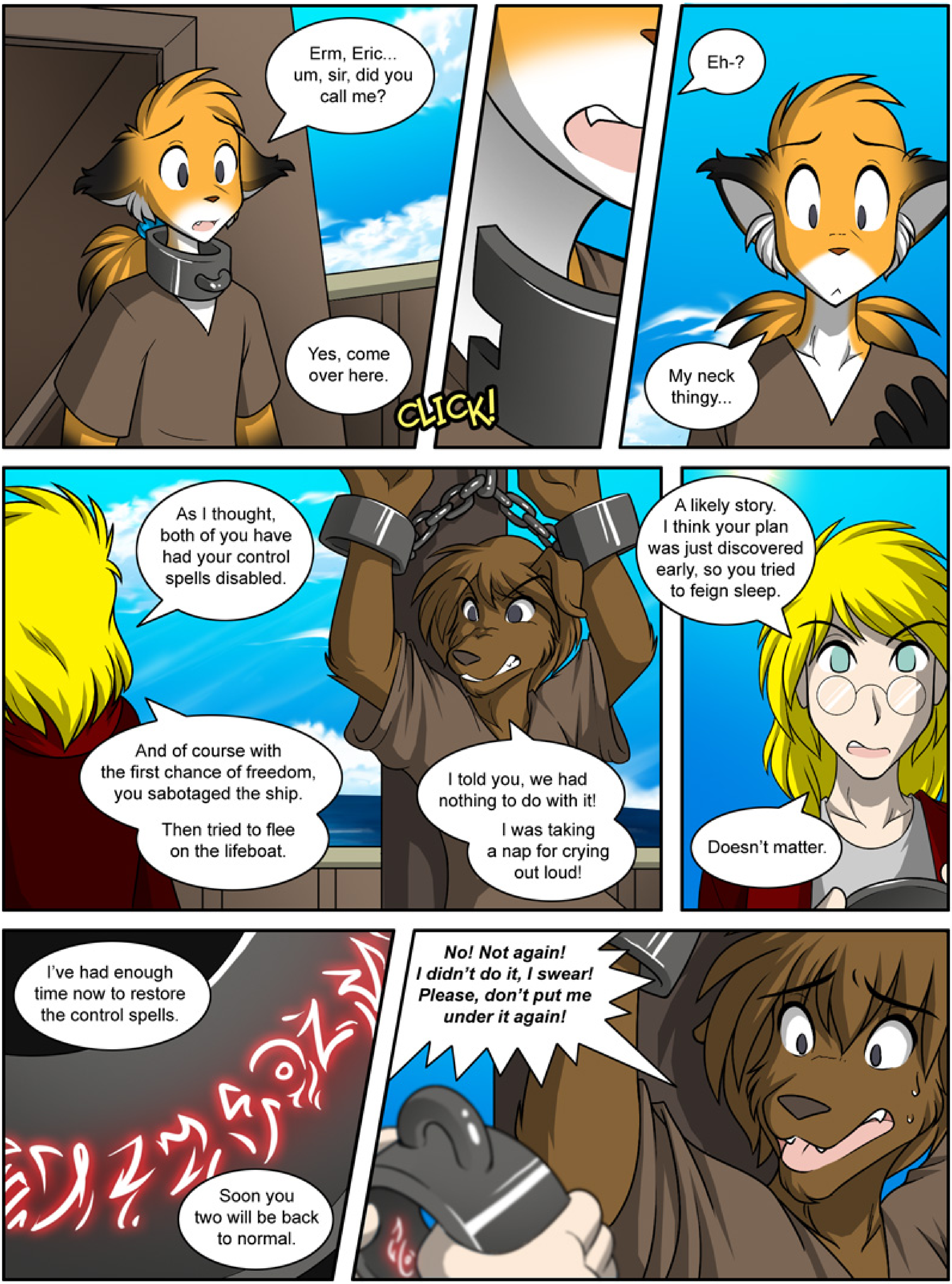

Wow! I've never seen you out in the open without those baggy robes on!
You must work out a lot. You're really buff!
O-oh...?
Oh, yeah, I do! Ya know, gotta stay fit... heheh...
?
Well, I'm just gunna... go now.
Nothing to see here...

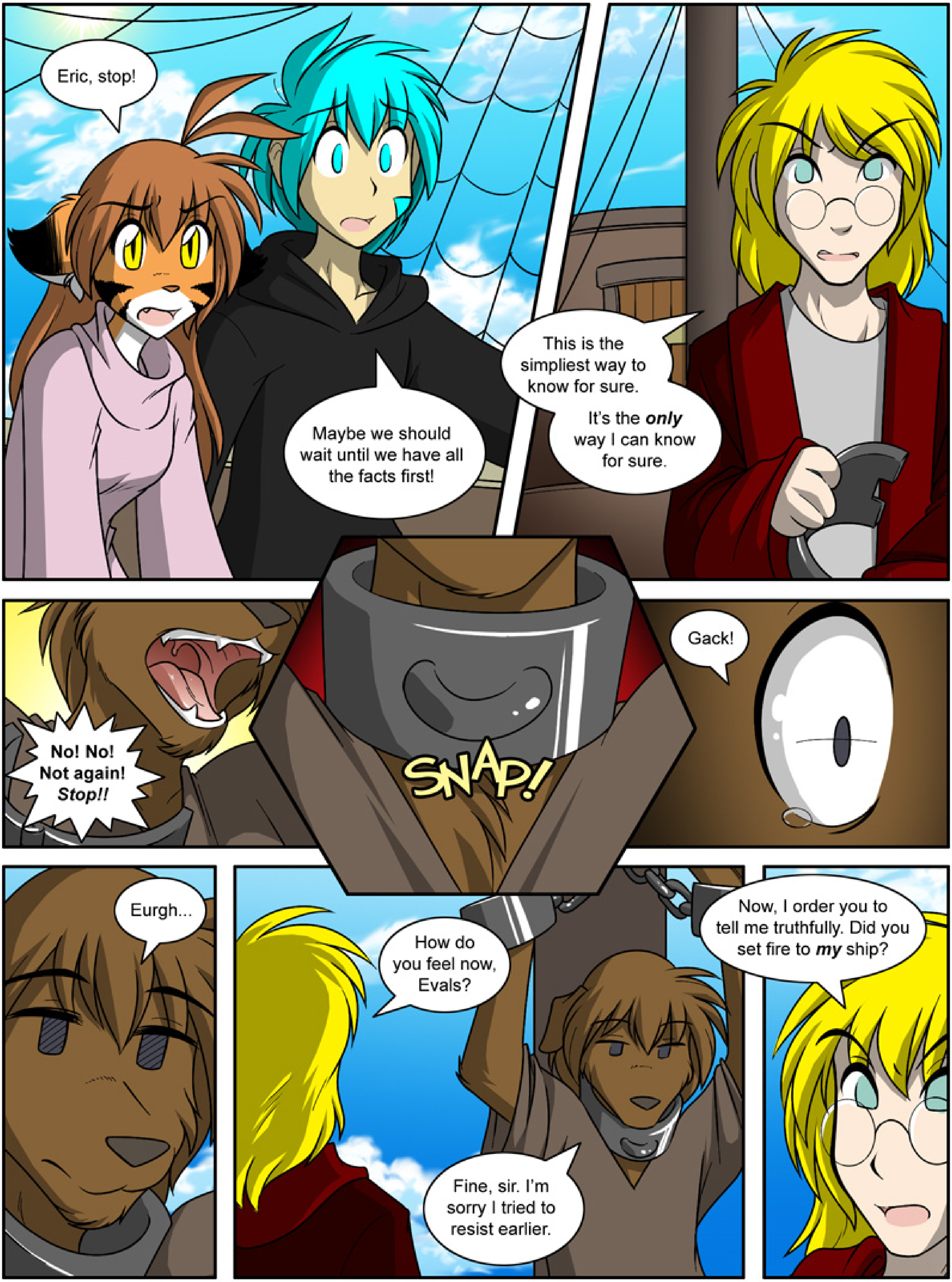

RIIIIP!
Ah! No!
FLUMPH!
RUSTLE!
.....
This... this isn't what it looks like!
I can explain! You see, I... um...
Natani... you've been a girl this whole time?!

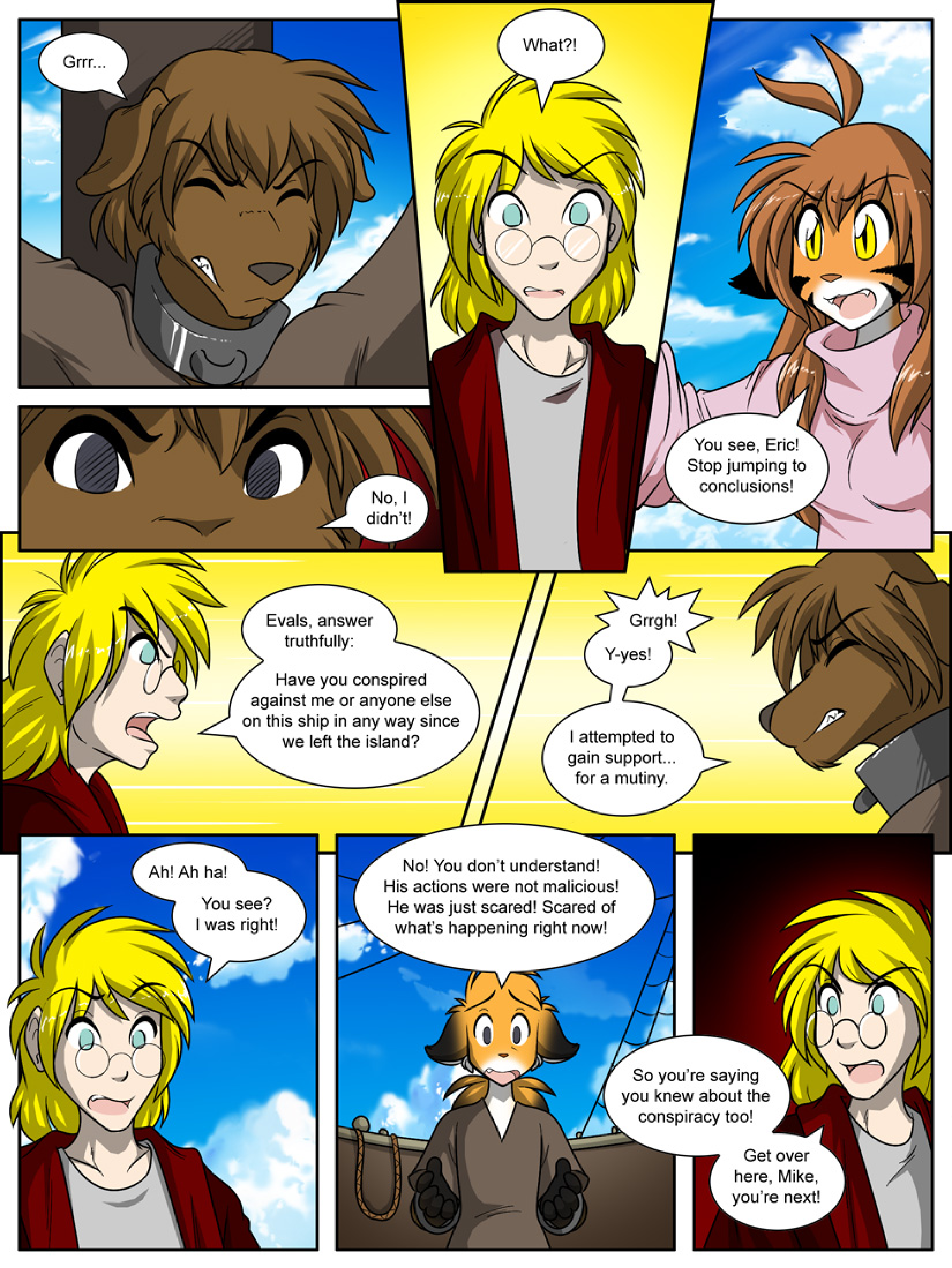

Mike! Don't be so insensitive!
You shouldn't call Natani a girl!
Huh?
Are you seeing the same thing as me? She clearly has the body of a woman...
Okay, snap neck at third vertebrae... Kat should be easy to strangle...
Natani, you're a man, right?
Huh? ***Y-yes!*** Like I said, it's not how it looks!
Don't worry, I understand, Natani! I've read about those like you before.
Those... like me?
You know, people who identify themselves as something other than how they were born.
There was a book in Eric's library about a canid general who was only discovered to be female years later.
I learned all about it from there. And if it's the same with Natani, you should be referring to him as a "he", Mike!
Wait...
There have been... others like me?

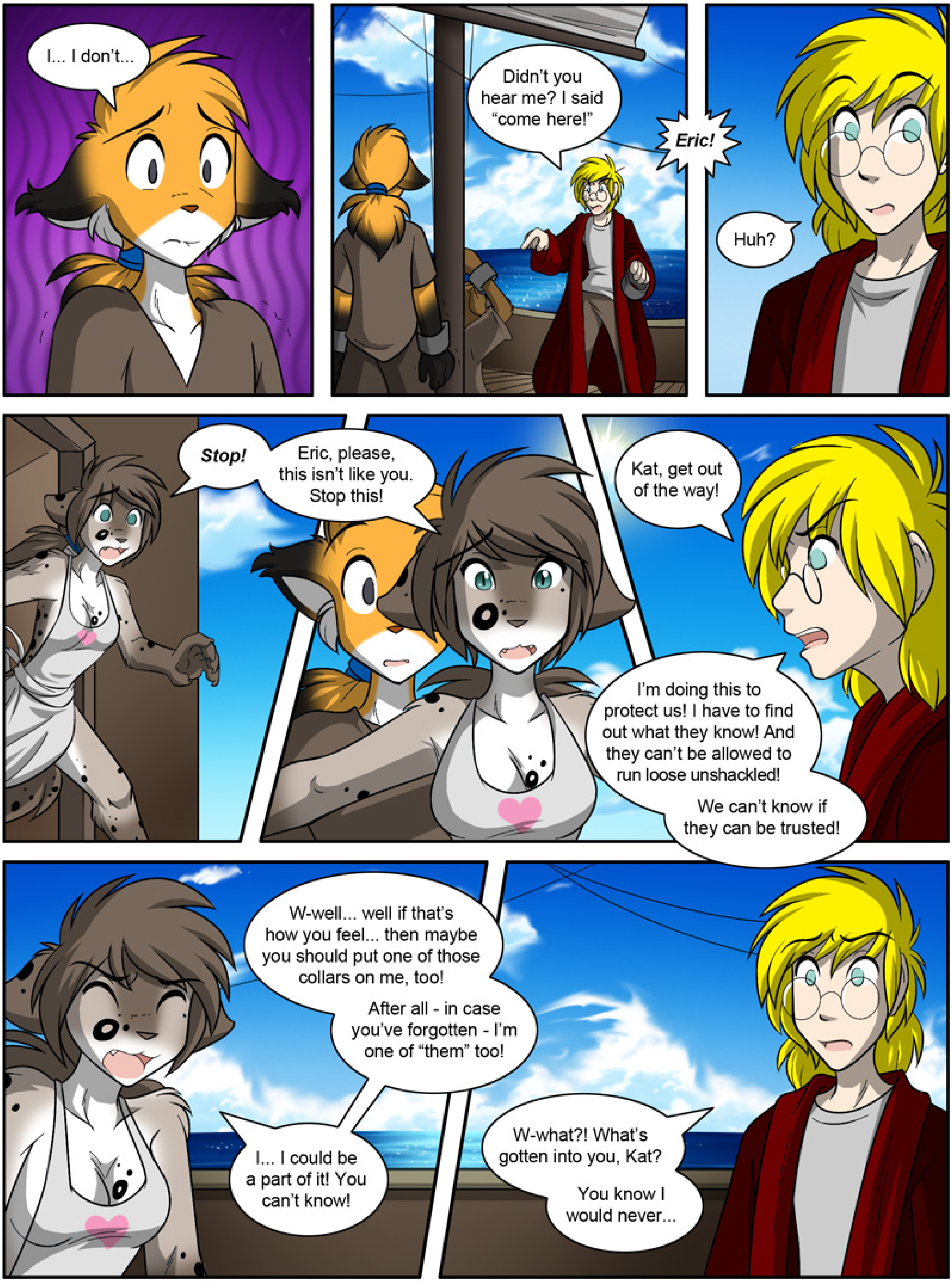

No, no, you don't understand, Kat! Natani's not like that!
Weeell, he *is* in the wrong body.
Huh?
But not for the reason you think!
It's the black Basitin magic! I saw it happen! Keith turned Natani into a girl weeks ago!
Whaaat?
Keith doesn't seem like the kind of guy to do that! Why would he?
Besides, Eric said Basitin can't use magic, or it drives them crazy!
Yeah, well... Keith didn't know that until a few days ago!
And have you seen Keith lately? I think he has gone a bit funny.
I know it sounds daft, but It's the truth!
I know, because... he did the same thing to me.
What, really? You turned into a girl too?!
Wat

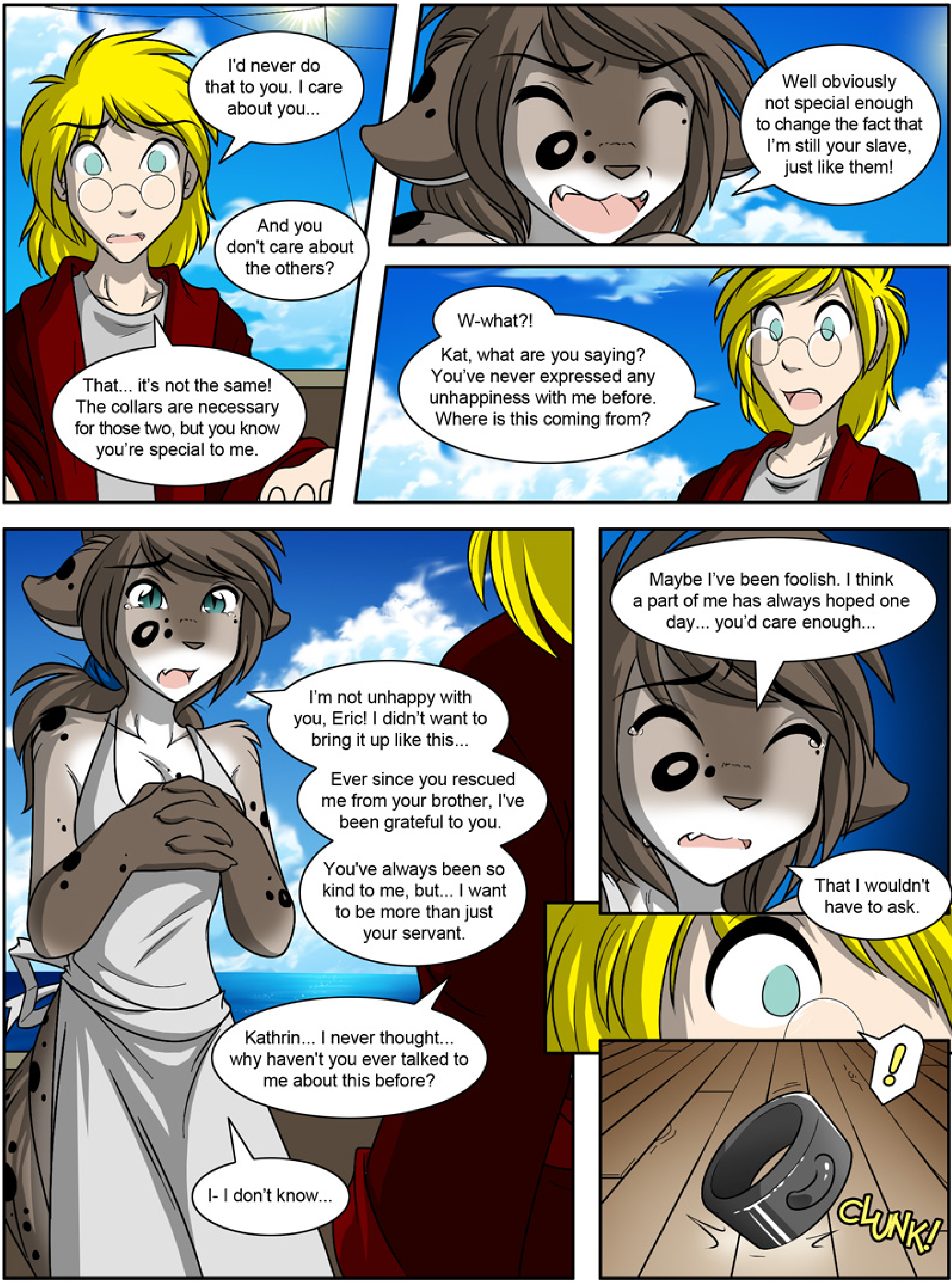

But the curse only lasted a day for me.
I didn't know Natani had it this whole time!
Is that true, Natani? It's really just an illusion?
Hahaha! Of course it is, silly girl!
You think I really look like this?! Don't be ridiculous!
I wonder if they feel like illusions too.
Hey hey hey! Keep your hands to yourself!
Sorry!
Mike! Michael, get up here! Now!
Eric!
The others are coming back!
Come on, let's go, Natani!

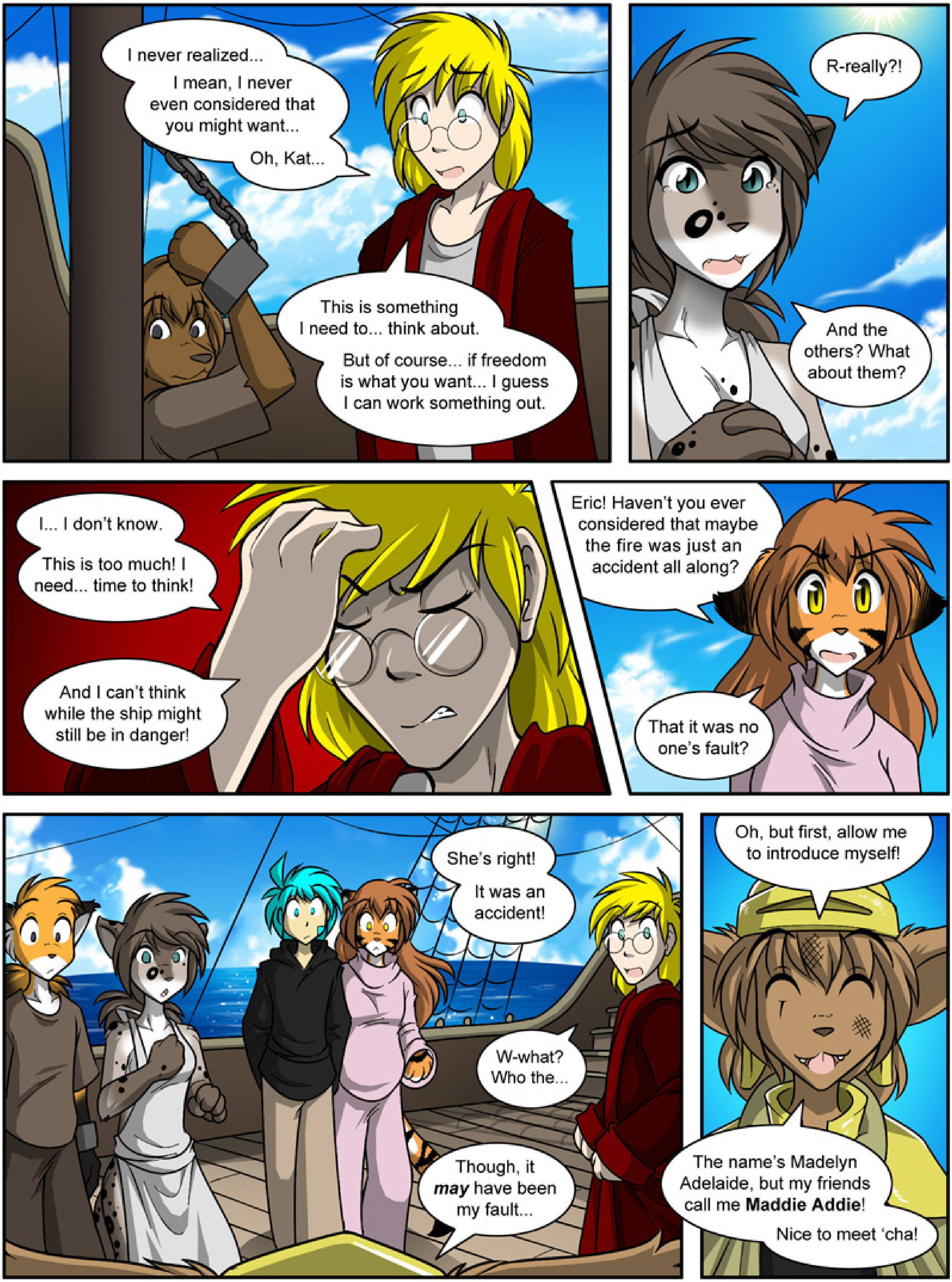

Erm, Eric... um, sir, did you call me?
Yes, come over here.
CLICK!
Eh-?
My neck thingy...
As I thought, both of you have had your control spells disabled.
And of course with the first chance of freedom, you sabotaged the ship.
Then tried to flee on the lifeboat.
I told you, we had nothing to do with it!
I was taking a nap for crying out loud!
A likely story. I think your plan was just discovered early, so you tried to feign sleep.
Doesn't matter.
I've had enough time now to restore the control spells.
Soon you two will be back to normal.
No! Not again! I didn't do it, I swear! Please, don't put me under it again!

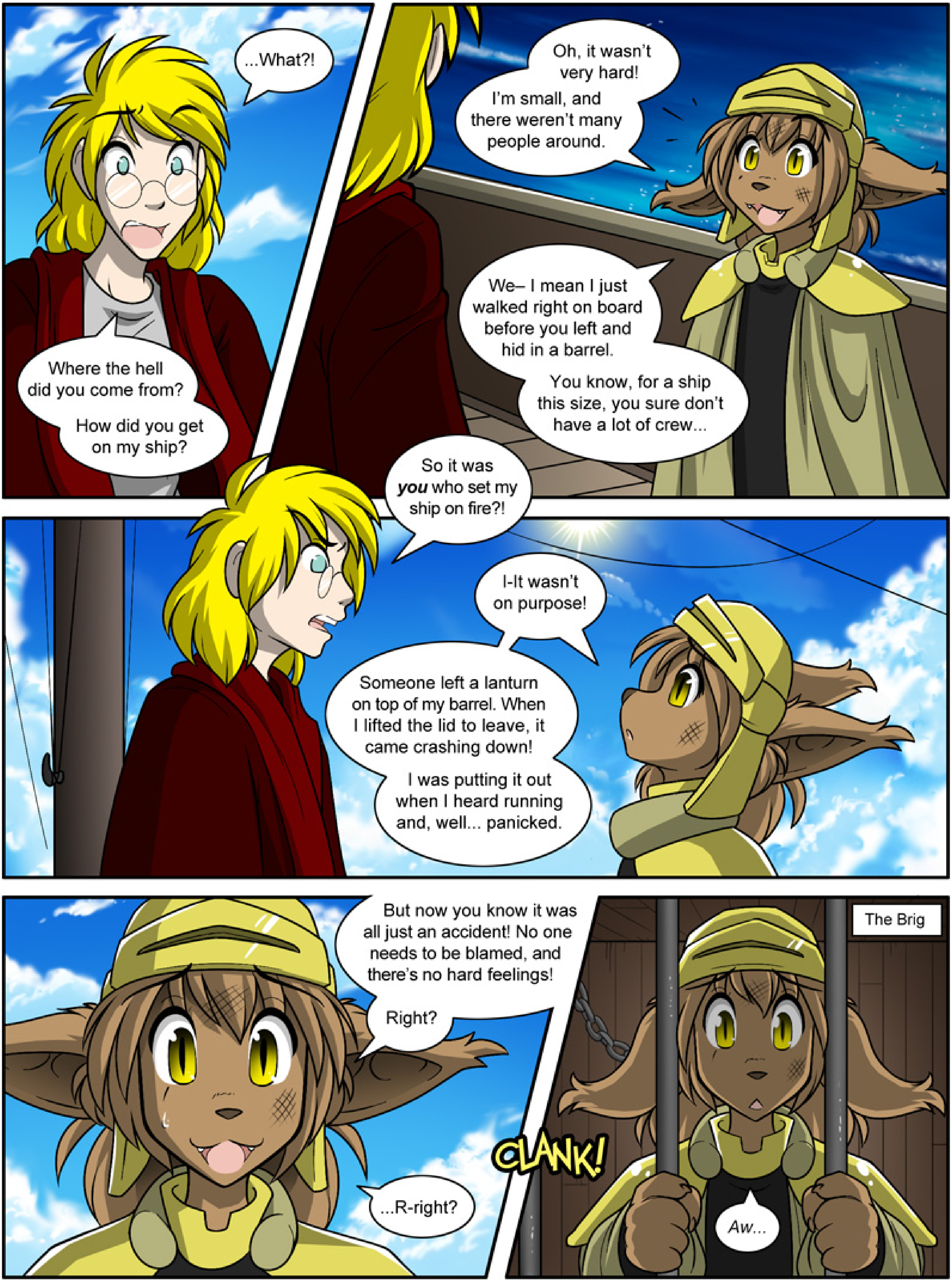

Eric, stop!
Maybe we should wait until we have all the facts first!
This is the simpliest way to know for sure.
It's the *only* way I can know for sure.
No! No! Not again! *Stop!!*
SNAP!
Gack!
Eurgh...
How do you feel now, Evals?
Fine, sir. I'm sorry I tried to resist earlier.
Now, I order you to tell me truthfully. Did you set fire to *my* ship?

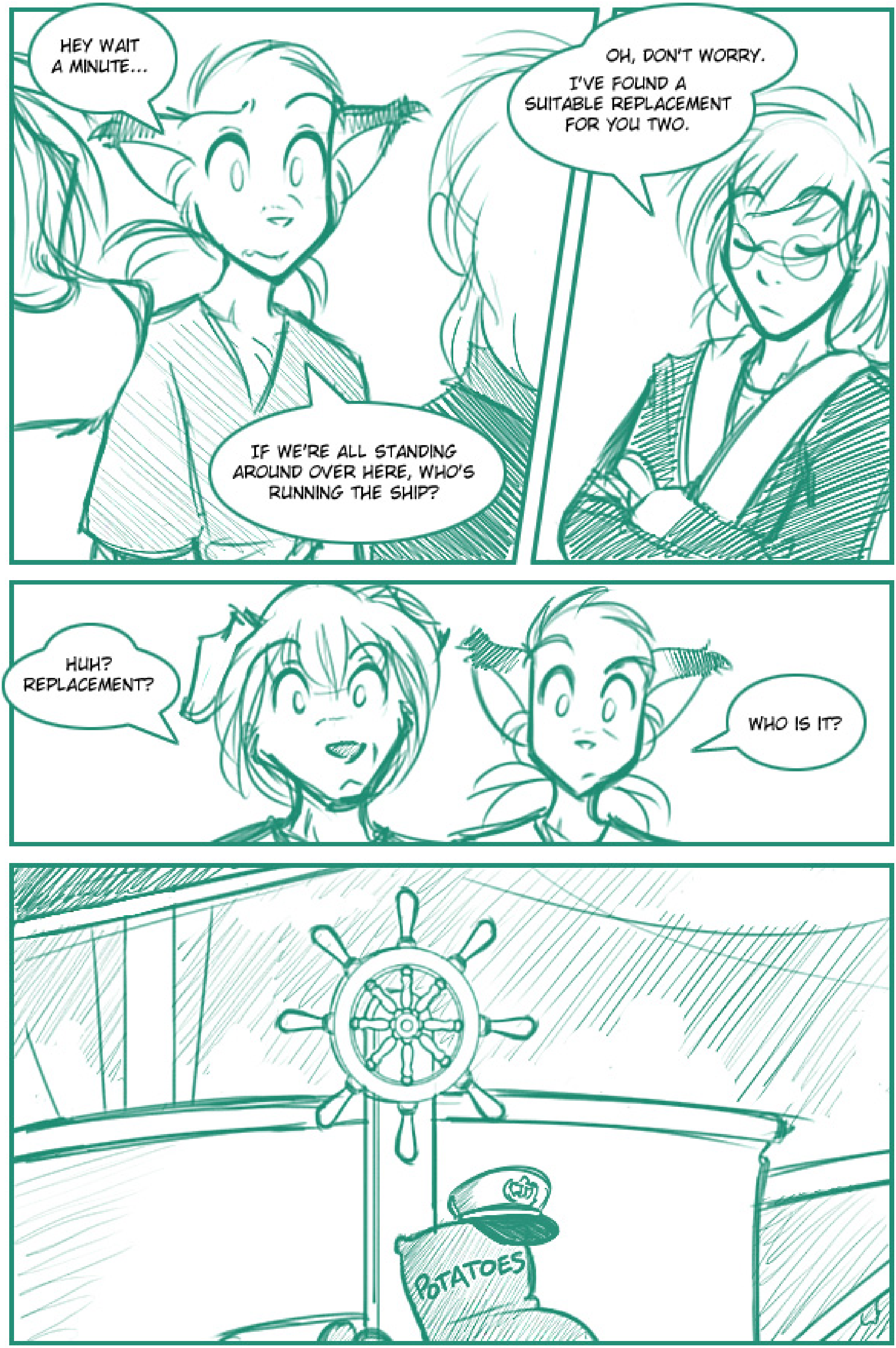

Grrr...
What?!
No, I didn't!
You see, Eric! Stop jumping to conclusions!
Evals, answer truthfully:
Have you conspired against me or anyone else on this ship in any way since we left the island?
Grrgh!
Y-yes!
I attempted to gain support... for a mutiny.
Ah! Ah ha!
You see? I was right!
No! You don't understand! His actions were not malicious! He was just scared! Scared of what's happening right now!
So you're saying you knew about the conspiracy too!
Get over here, Mike, you're next!

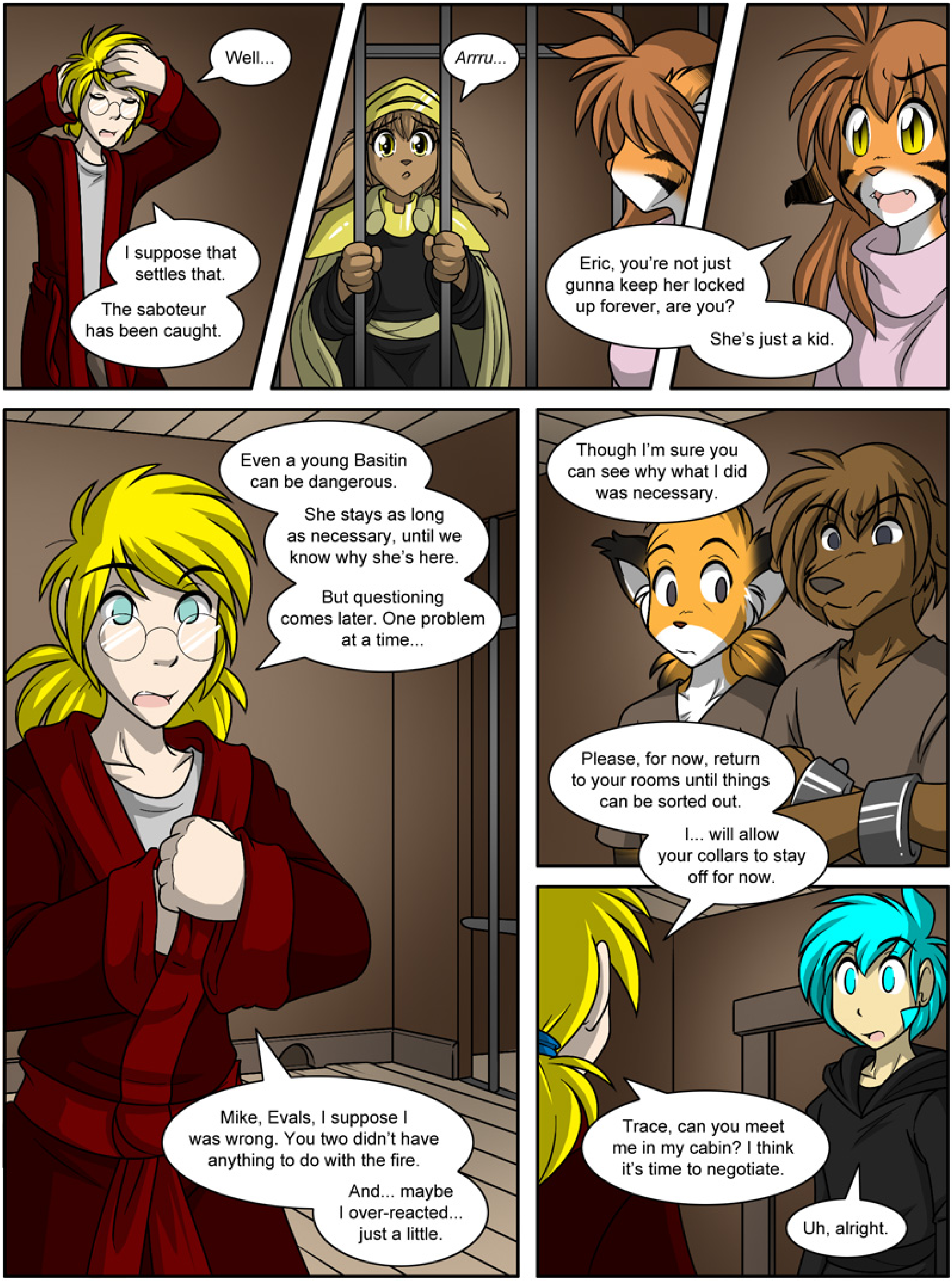

I... I don't...
Didn't you hear me? I said "come here!"
Eric!
Huh?
Stop!
Eric, please, this isn't like you. Stop this!
Kat, get out of the way!
I'm doing this to protect us! I have to find out what they know! And they can't be allowed to run loose unshackled!
We can't know if they can be trusted!
W-well... well if that's how you feel... then maybe you should put one of those collars on me, too!
After all - in case you've forgotten - I'm one of "them" too!
I... I could be a part of it! You can't know!
W-what?! What's gotten into you, Kat?
You know I would never...

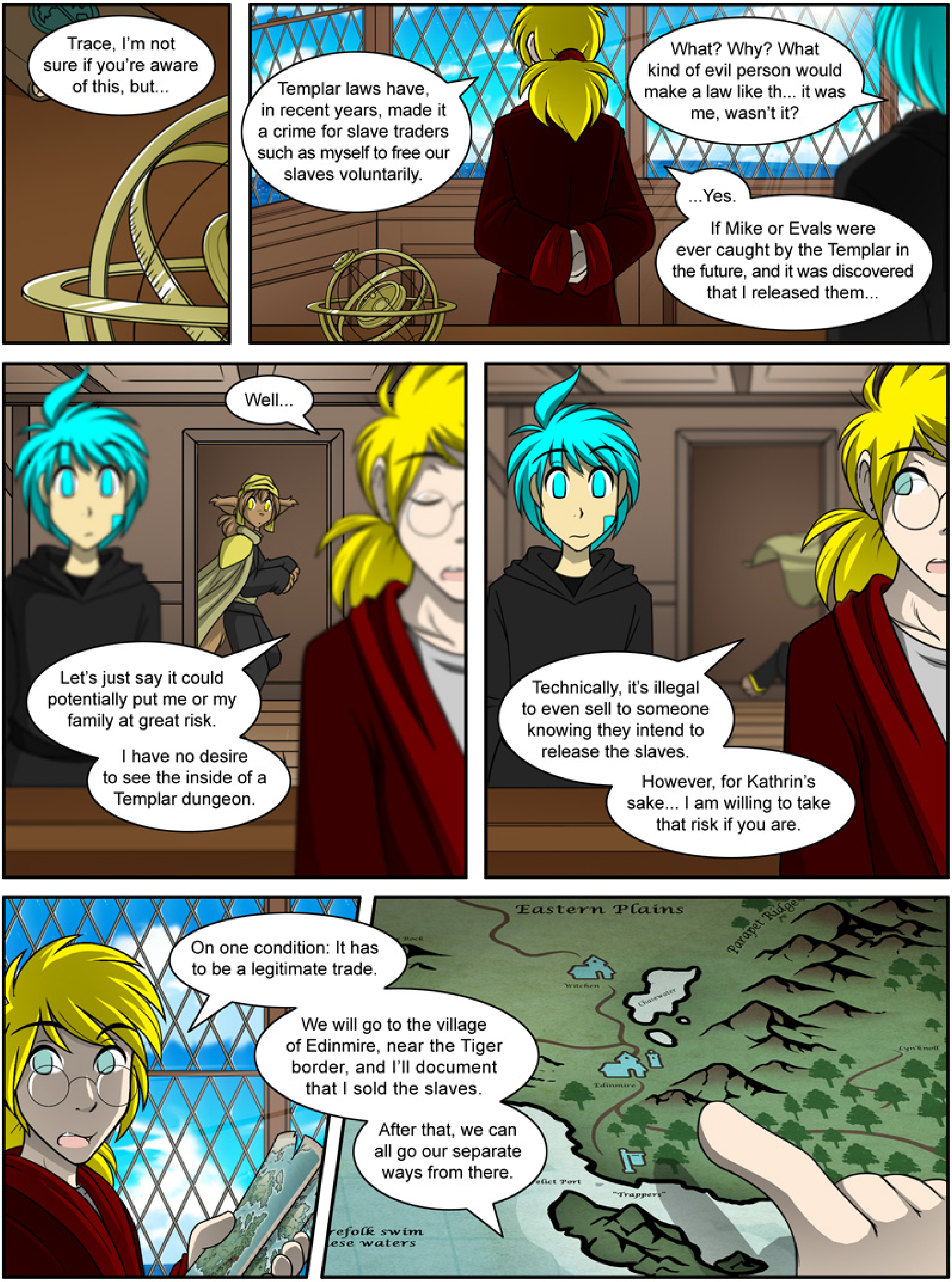

I'd never do that to you. I care about you...
And you don't care about the others?
That... it's not the same! The collars are necessary for those two, but you know you're special to me.
Well obviously not special enough to change the fact that I'm still your slave, just like them!
W-what?!
Kat, what are you saying? You've never expressed any unhappiness with me before. Where is this coming from?
I'm not unhappy with you, Eric! I didn't want to bring it up like this...
Ever since you rescued me from your brother, I've been grateful to you.
You've always been so kind to me, but... I want to be more than just your servant.
Kathrin... I never thought... why haven't you ever talked to me about this before?
I- I don't know...
Maybe I've been foolish. I think a part of me has always hoped one day... you'd care enough...
That I wouldn't have to ask.
!
CLUNK!

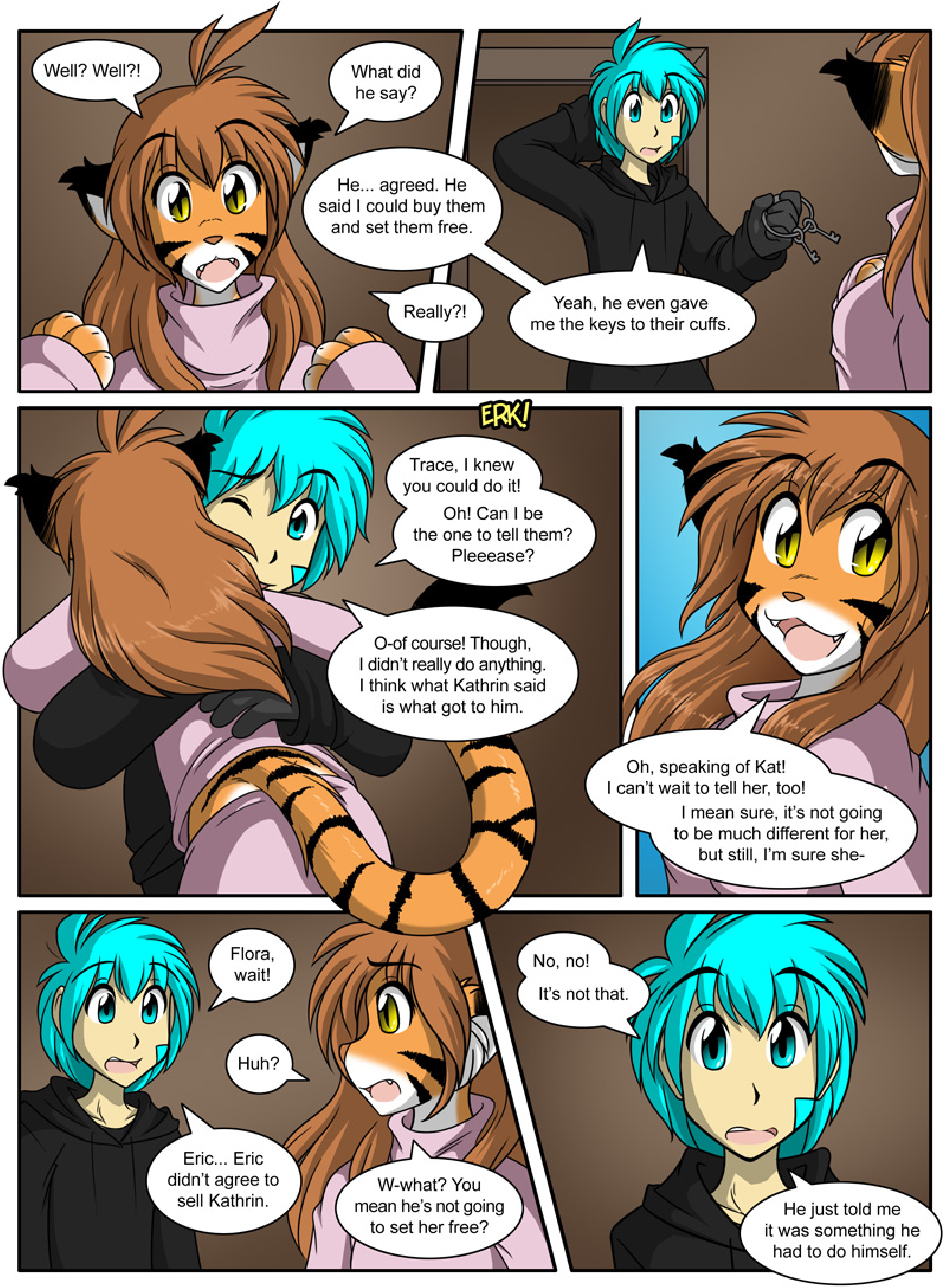

I never realized...
I mean, I never even considered that you might want...
Oh, Kat...
This is something I need to... think about.
But of course... if freedom is what you want... I guess I can work something out.
R-really?!
And the others? What about them?
I... I don't know.
This is too much! I need... time to think!
And I can't think while the ship might still be in danger!
Eric! Haven't you ever considered that maybe the fire was just an accident all along?
That it was no one's fault?
She's right!
It was an accident!
W-what? Who the...
Though, it *may* have been my fault...
Oh, but first, allow me to introduce myself!
The name's Madelyn Adelaide, but my friends call me **Maddie Addie**!
Nice to meet 'cha!

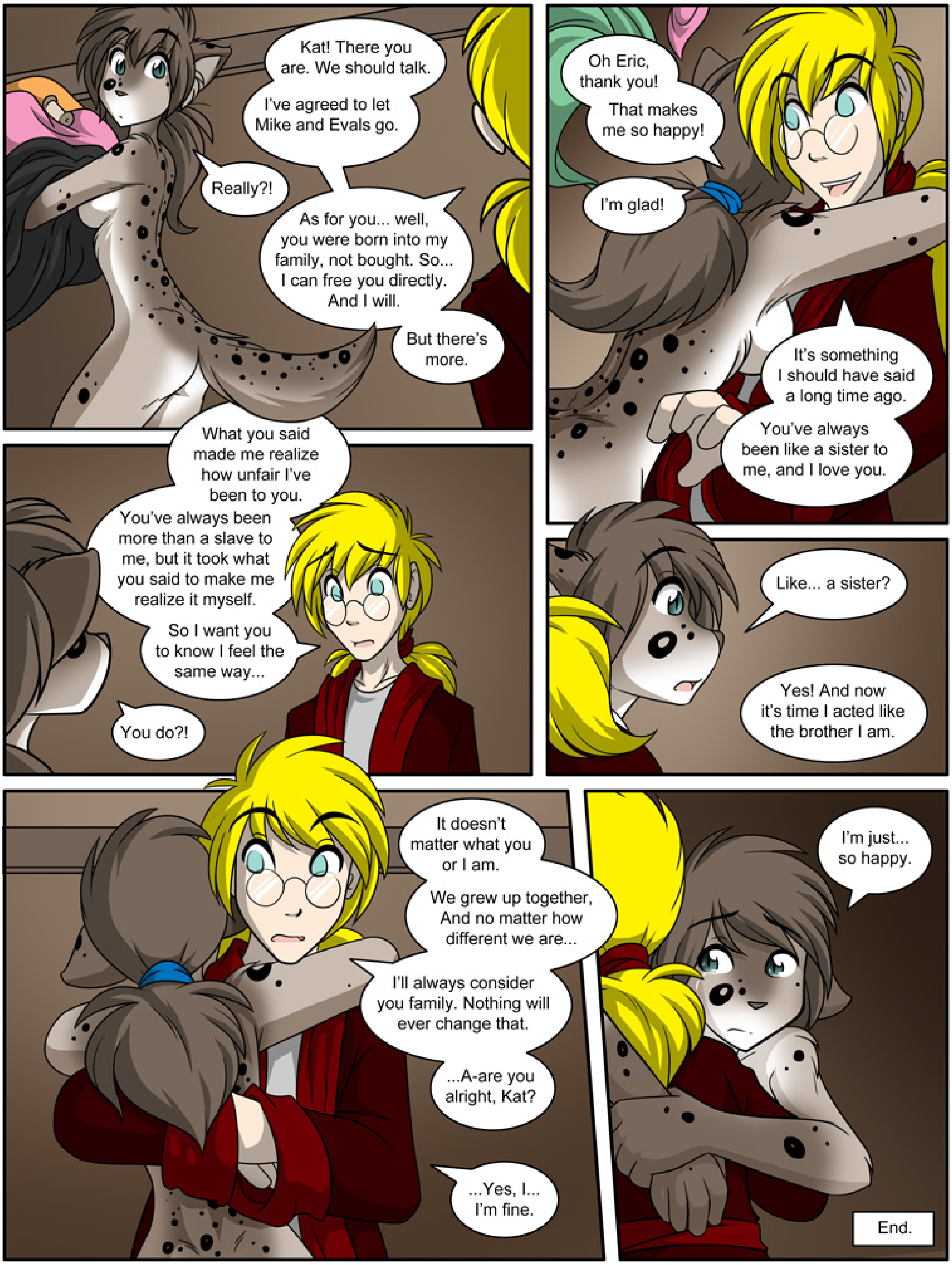

...What?!
Where the hell did you come from?
How did you get on my ship?
Oh, it wasn't very hard!
I'm small, and there weren't many people around.
We– I mean I just walked right on board before you left and hid in a barrel.
You know, for a ship this size, you sure don't have a lot of crew...
So it was *you* who set my ship on fire?!
I-It wasn't on purpose!
Someone left a lanturn on top of my barrel. When I lifted the lid to leave, it came crashing down!
I was putting it out when I heard running and, well... panicked.
But now you know it was all just an accident! No one needs to be blamed, and there's no hard feelings!
Right?
...R-right?
The Brig
CLANK!
Aw...


HEY WAIT A MINUTE...
IF WE'RE ALL STANDING AROUND OVER HERE, WHO'S RUNNING THE SHIP?
OH, DON'T WORRY.
I'VE FOUND A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT FOR YOU TWO.
HUH? REPLACEMENT?
WHO IS IT?
POTATOES

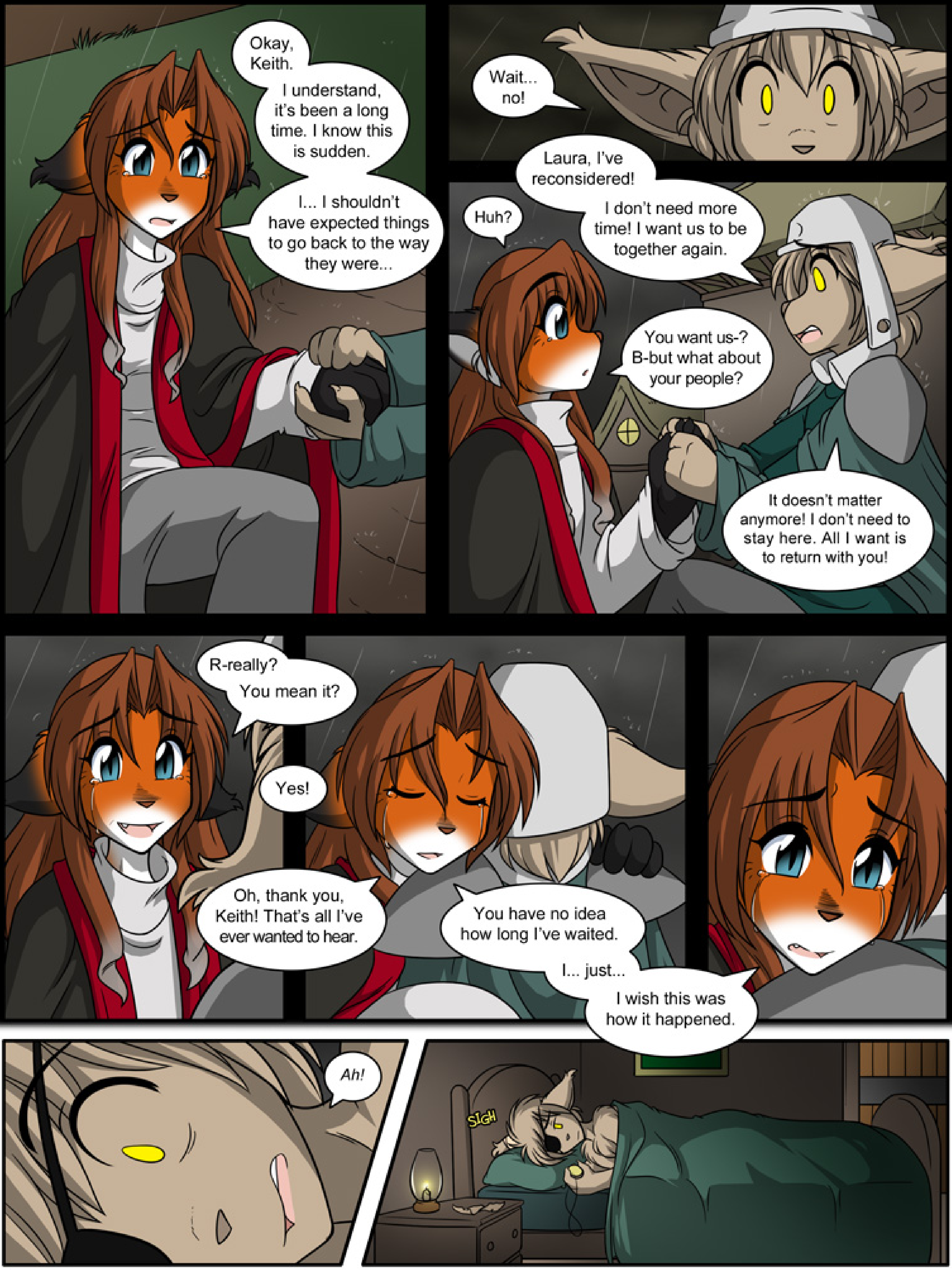

Well...
I suppose that settles that.
The saboteur has been caught.
Arrru...
Eric, you're not just gunna keep her locked up forever, are you?
She's just a kid.
Even a young Basitin can be dangerous.
She stays as long as necessary, until we know why she's here.
But questioning comes later. One problem at a time...
Mike, Evals, I suppose I was wrong. You two didn't have anything to do with the fire.
And... maybe I over-reacted... just a little.
Though I'm sure you can see why what I did was necessary.
Please, for now, return to your rooms until things can be sorted out.
I... will allow your collars to stay off for now.
Trace, can you meet me in my cabin? I think it's time to negotiate.
Uh, alright.

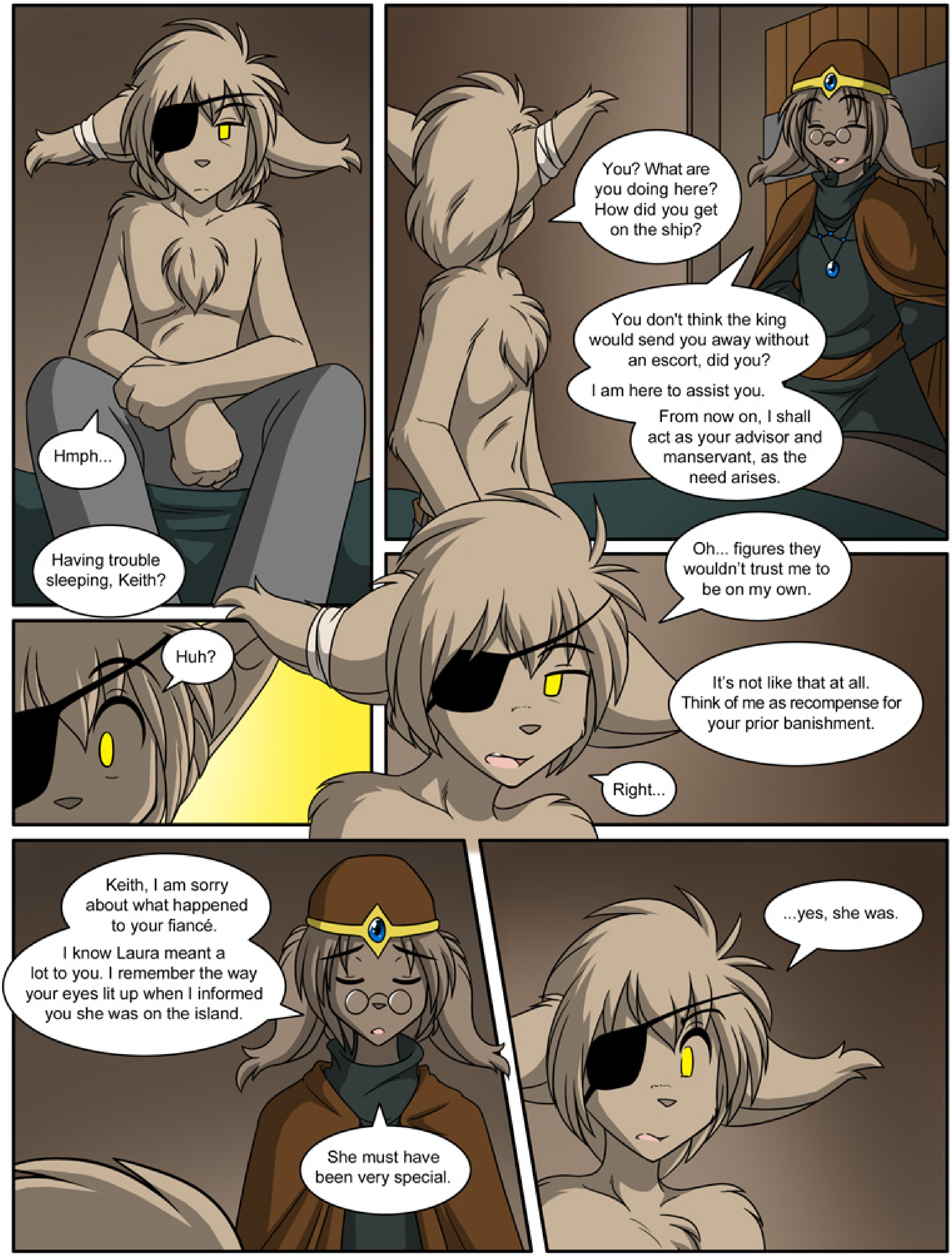

Trace, I'm not sure if you're aware of this, but...
Templar laws have, in recent years, made it a crime for slave traders such as myself to free our slaves voluntarily.
What? Why? What kind of evil person would make a law like th... it was me, wasn't it?
...Yes.
If Mike or Evals were ever caught by the Templar in the future, and it was discovered that I released them...
Well...
Let's just say it could potentially put me or my family at great risk.
I have no desire to see the inside of a Templar dungeon.
Technically, it's illegal to even sell to someone knowing they intend to release the slaves.
However, for Kathrin's sake... I am willing to take that risk if you are.
On one condition: It has to be a legitimate trade.
We will go to the village of Edinmire, near the Tiger border, and I'll document that I sold the slaves.
After that, we can all go our separate ways from there.
Eastern Plains
Parapet Ridge
Rock
Witchen
Glasswater
Edinmire
Lyn'knoll
elict Port
"Trappers"
refolk swim
ese waters

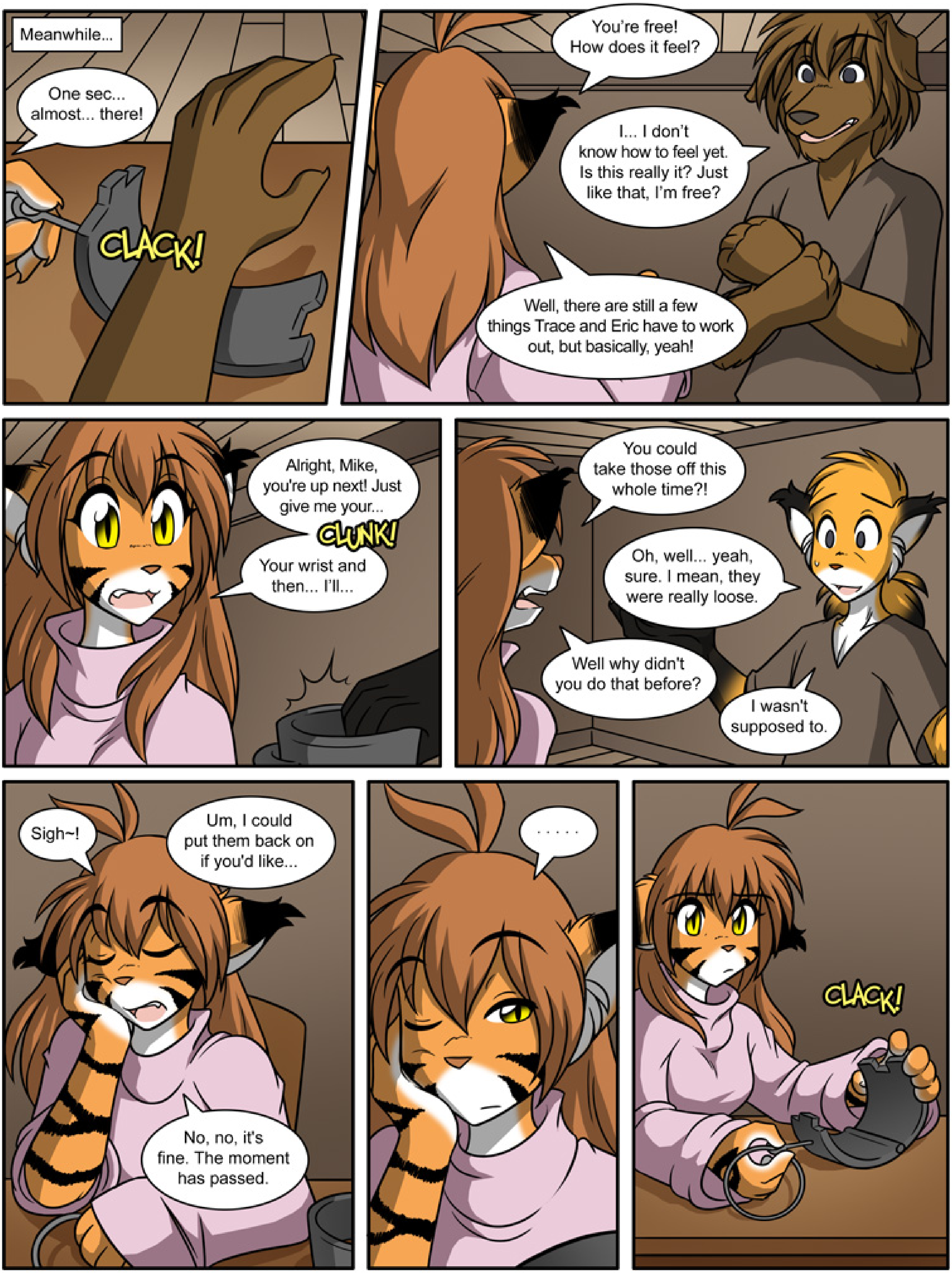

Well? Well?!
What did he say?
He... agreed. He said I could buy them and set them free.
Really?!
Yeah, he even gave me the keys to their cuffs.
ERK!
Trace, I knew you could do it!
Oh! Can I be the one to tell them? Pleeease?
O-of course! Though, I didn't really do anything. I think what Kathrin said is what got to him.
Oh, speaking of Kat! I can't wait to tell her, too!
I mean sure, it's not going to be much different for her, but still, I'm sure she-
Flora, wait!
Huh?
Eric... Eric didn't agree to sell Kathrin.
W-what? You mean he's not going to set her free?
No, no!
It's not that.
He just told me it was something he had to do himself.

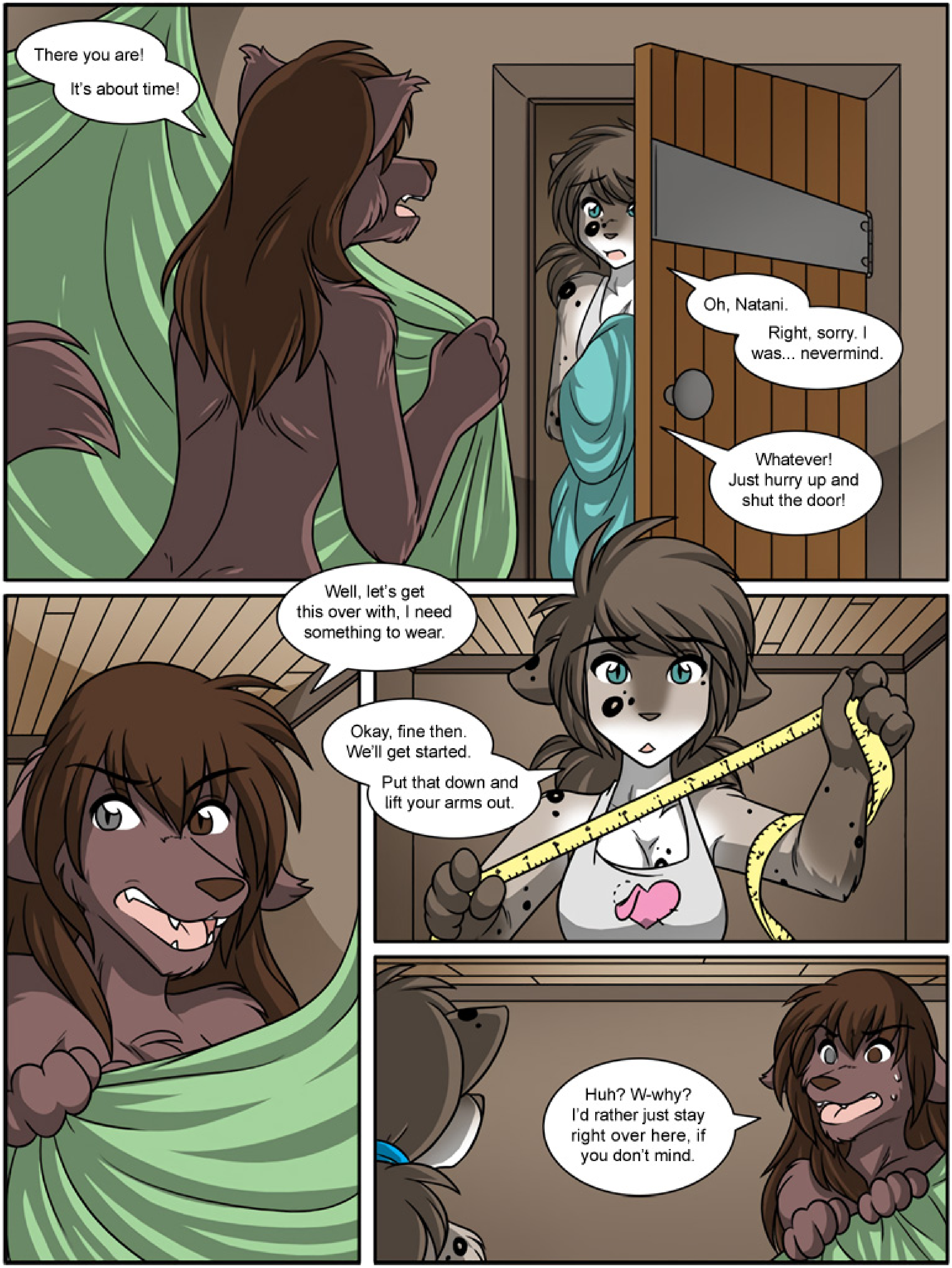

Kat! There you are. We should talk.
I've agreed to let Mike and Evals go.
Really?!
As for you... well, you were born into my family, not bought. So... I can free you directly. And I will.
But there's more.
Oh Eric, thank you!
That makes me so happy!
I'm glad!
It's something I should have said a long time ago.
You've always been like a sister to me, and I love you.
What you said made me realize how unfair I've been to you.
You've always been more than a slave to me, but it took what you said to make me realize it myself.
So I want you to know I feel the same way...
You do?!
Like... a sister?
Yes! And now it's time I acted like the brother I am.
It doesn't matter what you or I am.
We grew up together, And no matter how different we are...
I'll always consider you family. Nothing will ever change that.
...A-are you alright, Kat?
...Yes, I... I'm fine.
I'm just... so happy.
End.

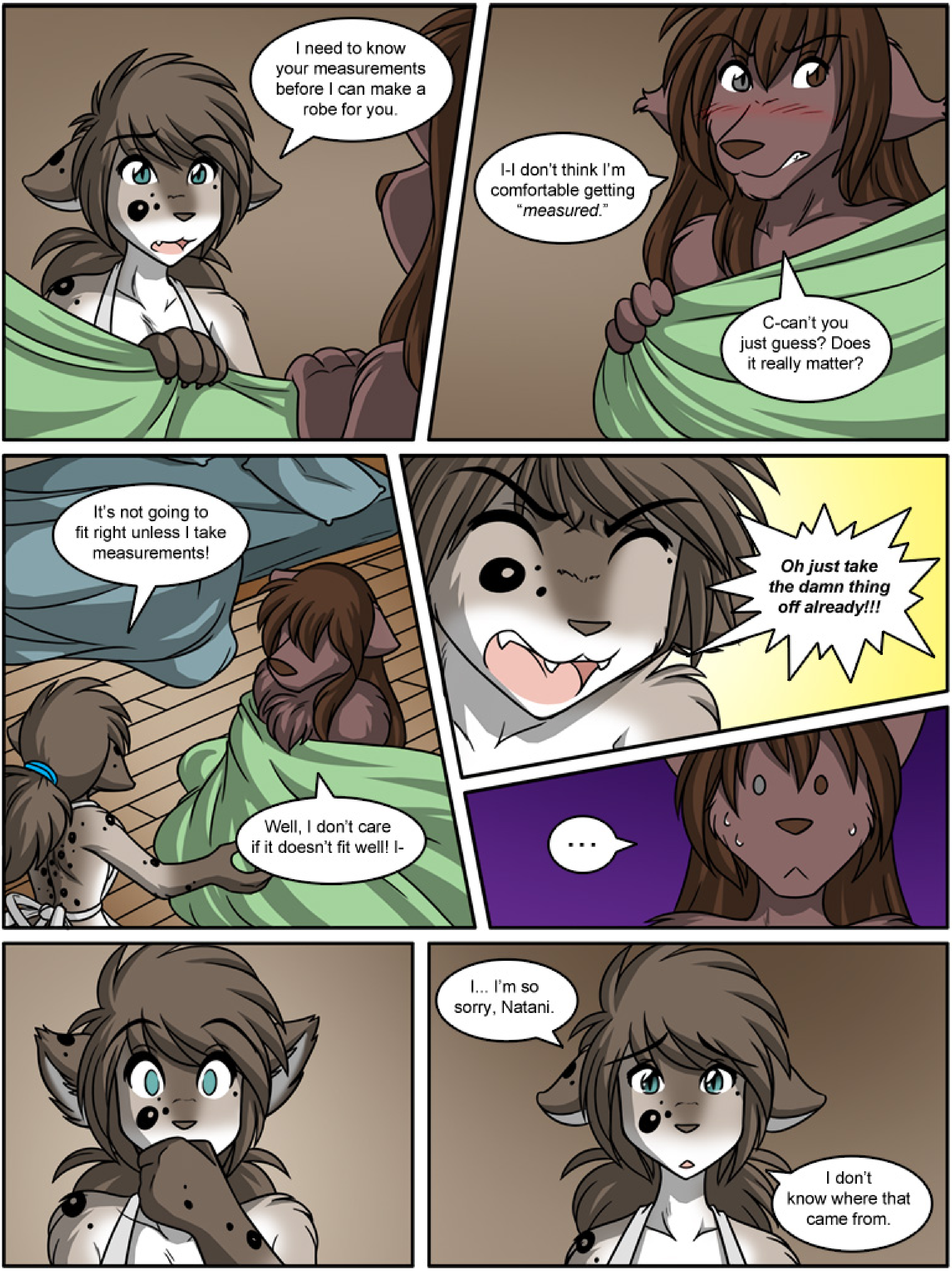
TwoKinds
Chapter Fifteen
Haunted

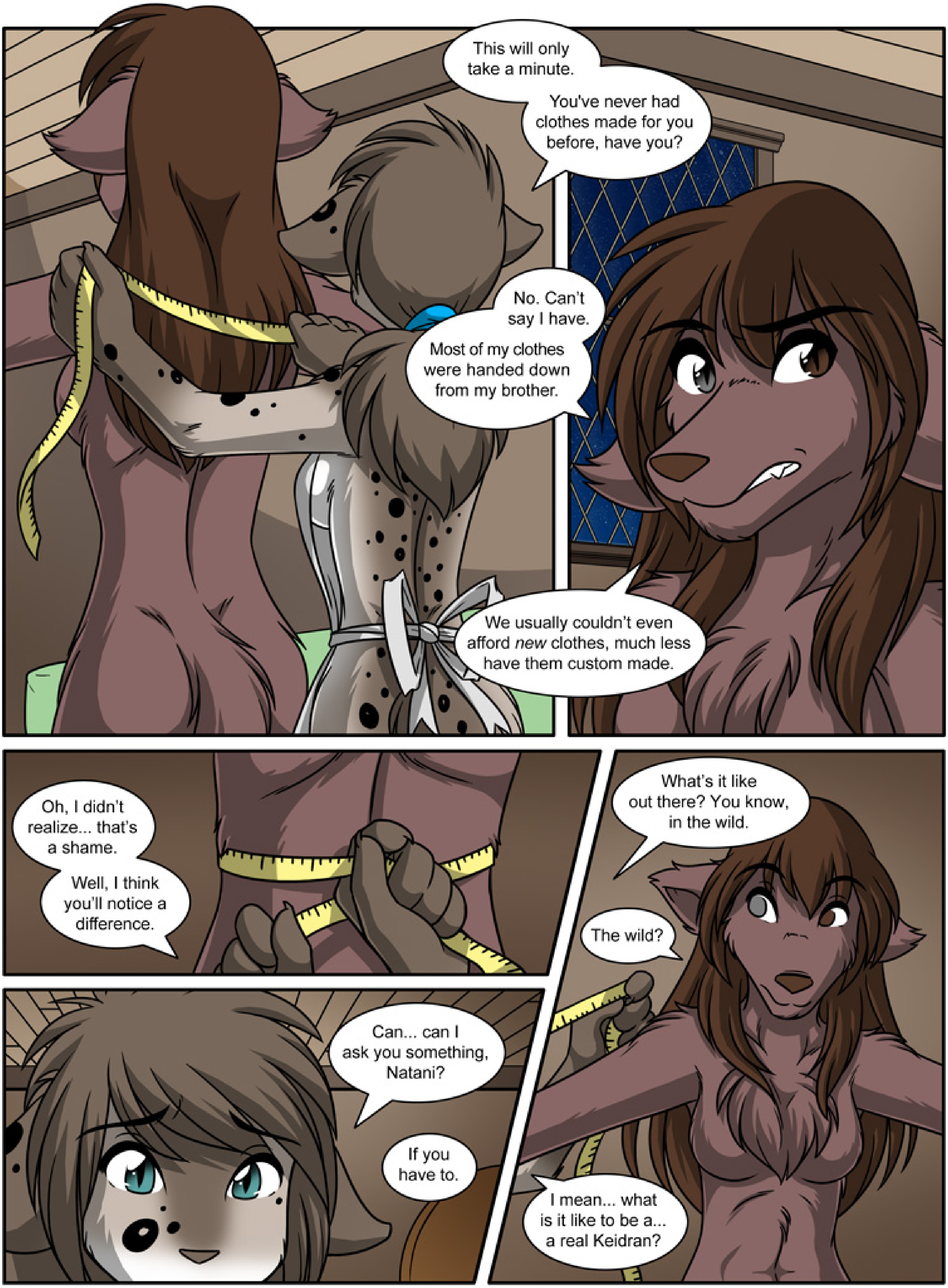

Okay, Keith.
I understand, it's been a long time. I know this is sudden.
I... I shouldn't have expected things to go back to the way they were...
Wait... no!
Laura, I've reconsidered!
Huh?
I don't need more time! I want us to be together again.
You want us-? B-but what about your people?
It doesn't matter anymore! I don't need to stay here. All I want is to return with you!
R-really? You mean it?
Yes!
Oh, thank you, Keith! That's all I've ever wanted to hear.
You have no idea how long I've waited.
I... just...
I wish this was how it happened.
Ah!
SIGH

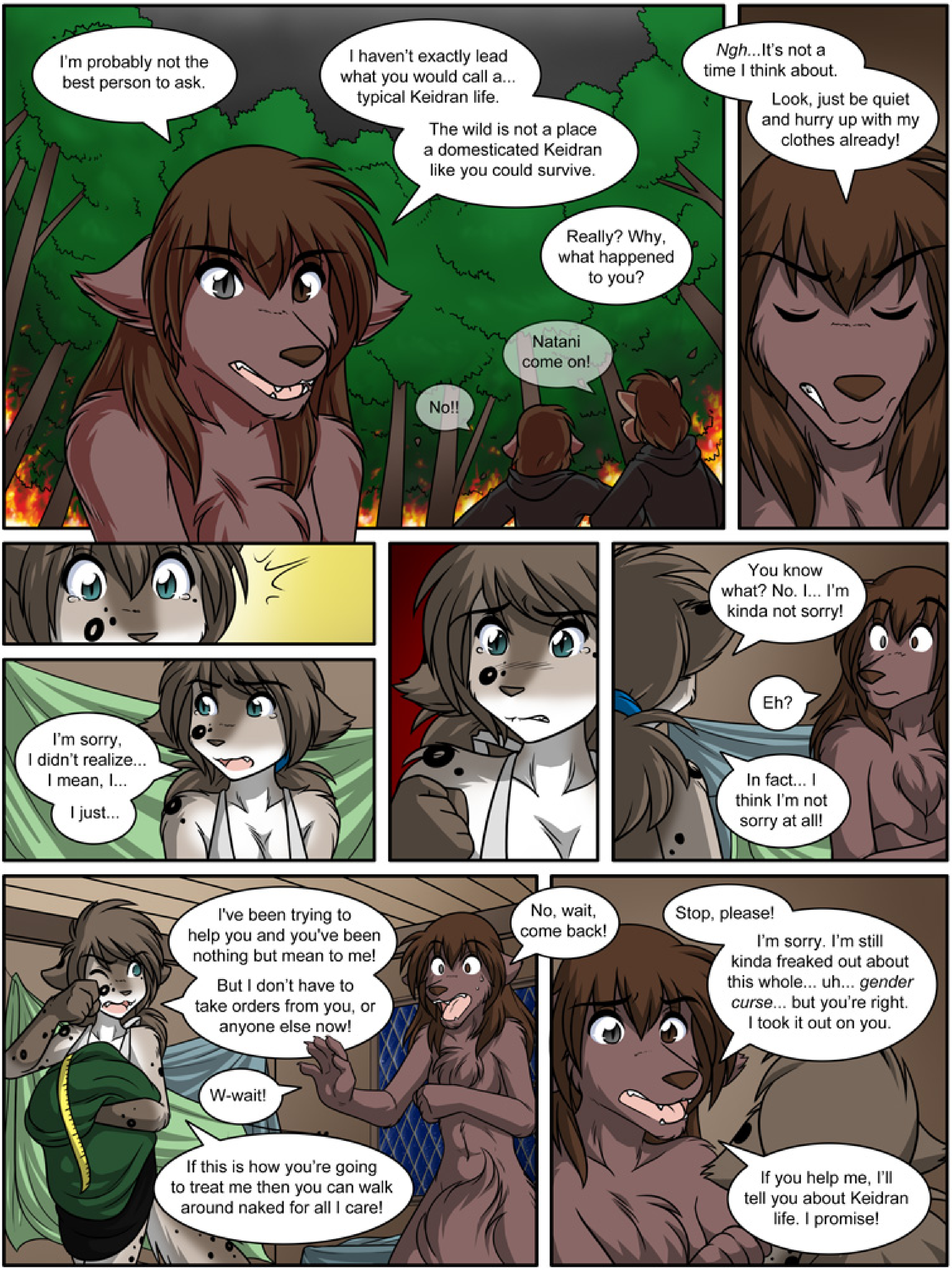

Hmph...
Having trouble sleeping, Keith?
You? What are you doing here? How did you get on the ship?
You don't think the king would send you away without an escort, did you?
I am here to assist you.
From now on, I shall act as your advisor and manservant, as the need arises.
Huh?
Oh... figures they wouldn't trust me to be on my own.
It's not like that at all. Think of me as recompense for your prior banishment.
Right...
Keith, I am sorry about what happened to your fiancé.
I know Laura meant a lot to you. I remember the way your eyes lit up when I informed you she was on the island.
She must have been very special.
...yes, she was.

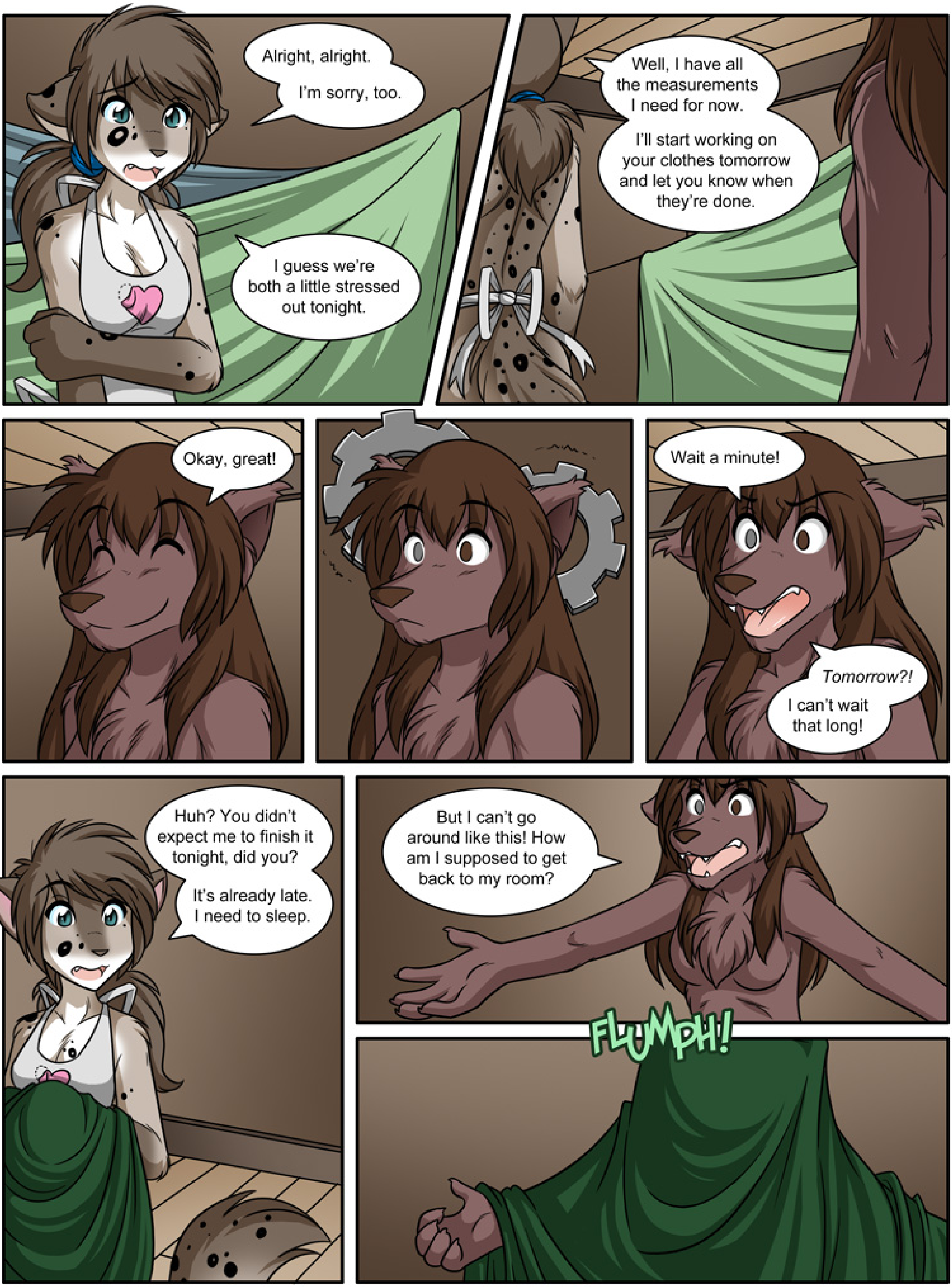

Meanwhile...
One sec... almost... there!
CLACK!
You're free! How does it feel?
I... I don't know how to feel yet. Is this really it? Just like that, I'm free?
Well, there are still a few things Trace and Eric have to work out, but basically, yeah!
Alright, Mike, you're up next! Just give me your...
CLUNK!
Your wrist and then... I'll...
You could take those off this whole time?!
Oh, well... yeah, sure. I mean, they were really loose.
Well why didn't you do that before?
I wasn't supposed to.
Sigh~!
Um, I could put them back on if you'd like...
No, no, it's fine. The moment has passed.
. . . . .
CLACK!

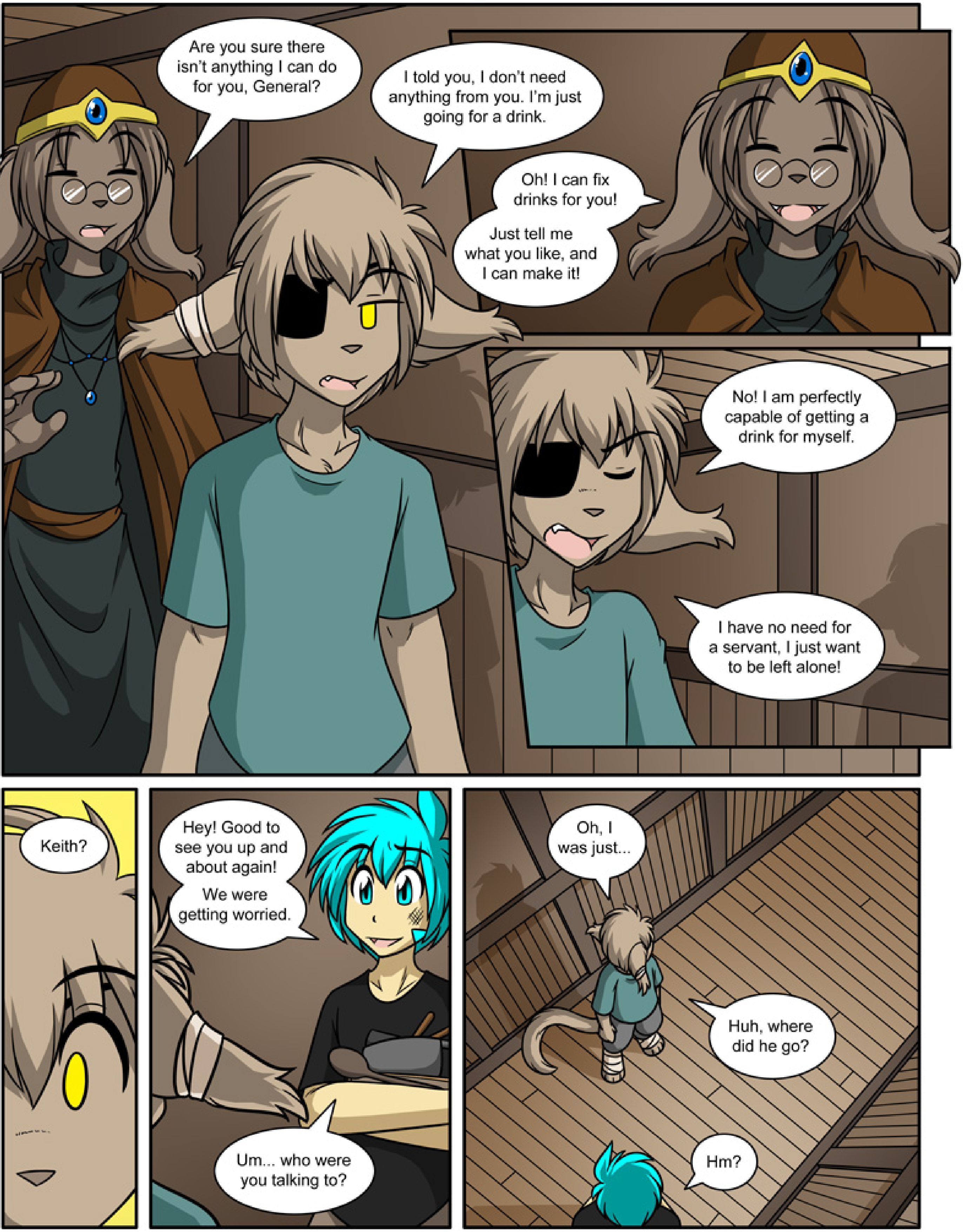

There you are!
It's about time!
Oh, Natani.
Right, sorry. I was... nevermind.
Whatever! Just hurry up and shut the door!
Well, let's get this over with, I need something to wear.
Okay, fine then. We'll get started.
Put that down and lift your arms out.
Huh? W-why? I'd rather just stay right over here, if you don't mind.

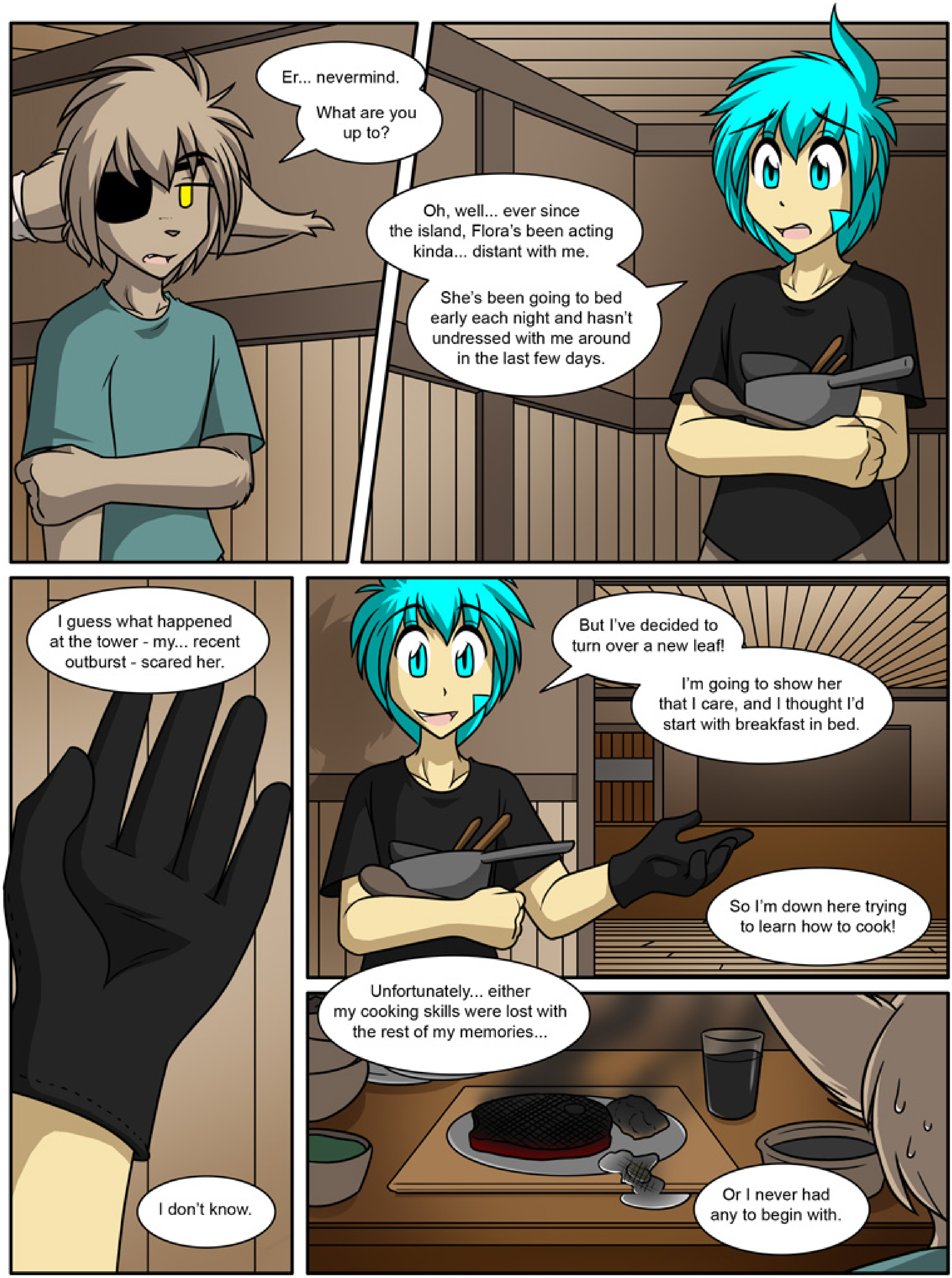

I need to know your measurements before I can make a robe for you.
I-I don't think I'm comfortable getting "*measured.*"
C-can't you just guess? Does it really matter?
It's not going to fit right unless I take measurements!
Well, I don't care if it doesn't fit well! I-
Oh just take the damn thing off already!!!
...
I... I'm so sorry, Natani.
I don't know where that came from.

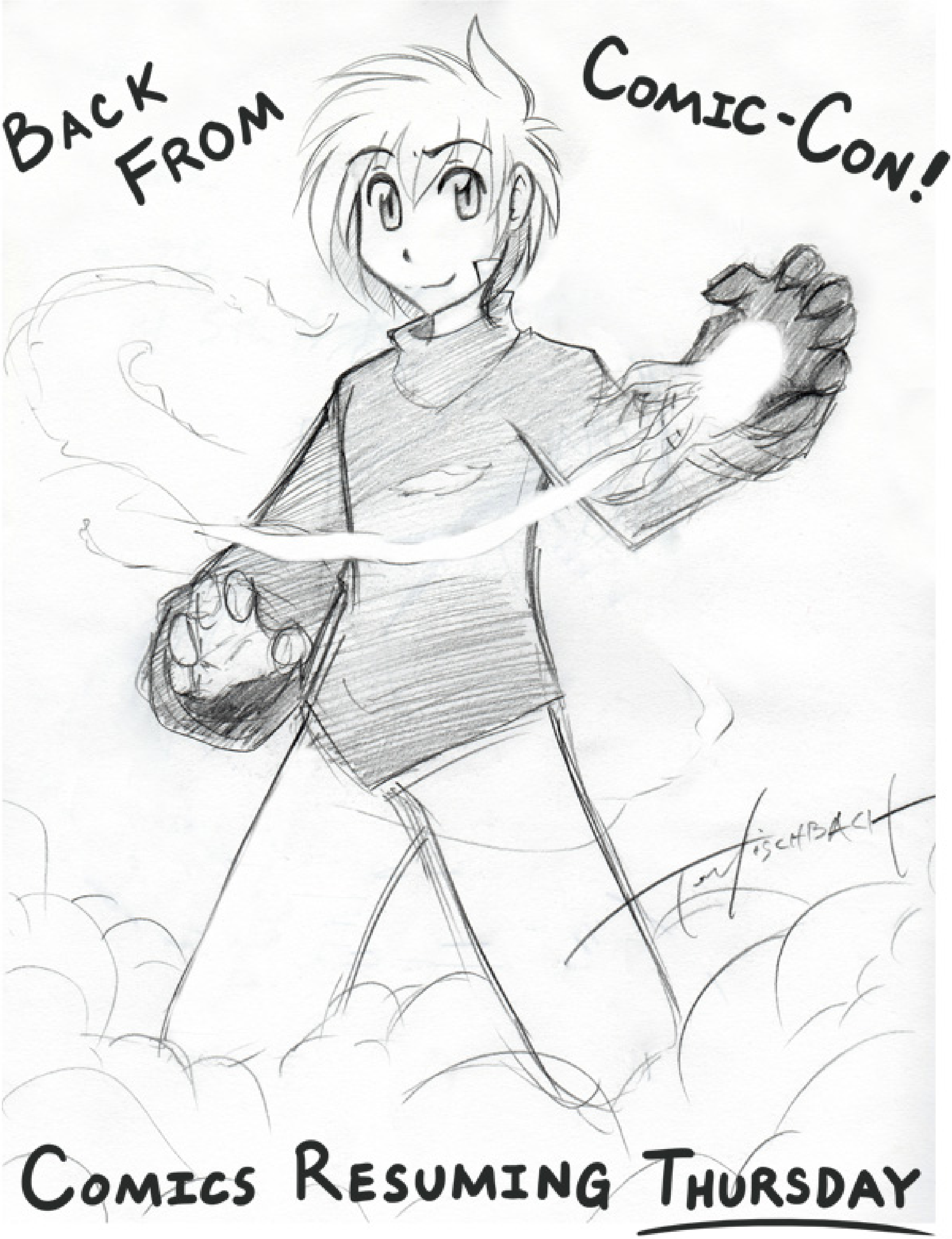

This will only take a minute.
You've never had clothes made for you before, have you?
No. Can't say I have.
Most of my clothes were handed down from my brother.
We usually couldn't even afford *new* clothes, much less have them custom made.
Oh, I didn't realize... that's a shame.
Well, I think you'll notice a difference.
Can... can I ask you something, Natani?
If you have to.
What's it like out there? You know, in the wild.
The wild?
I mean... what is it like to be a... a real Keidran?

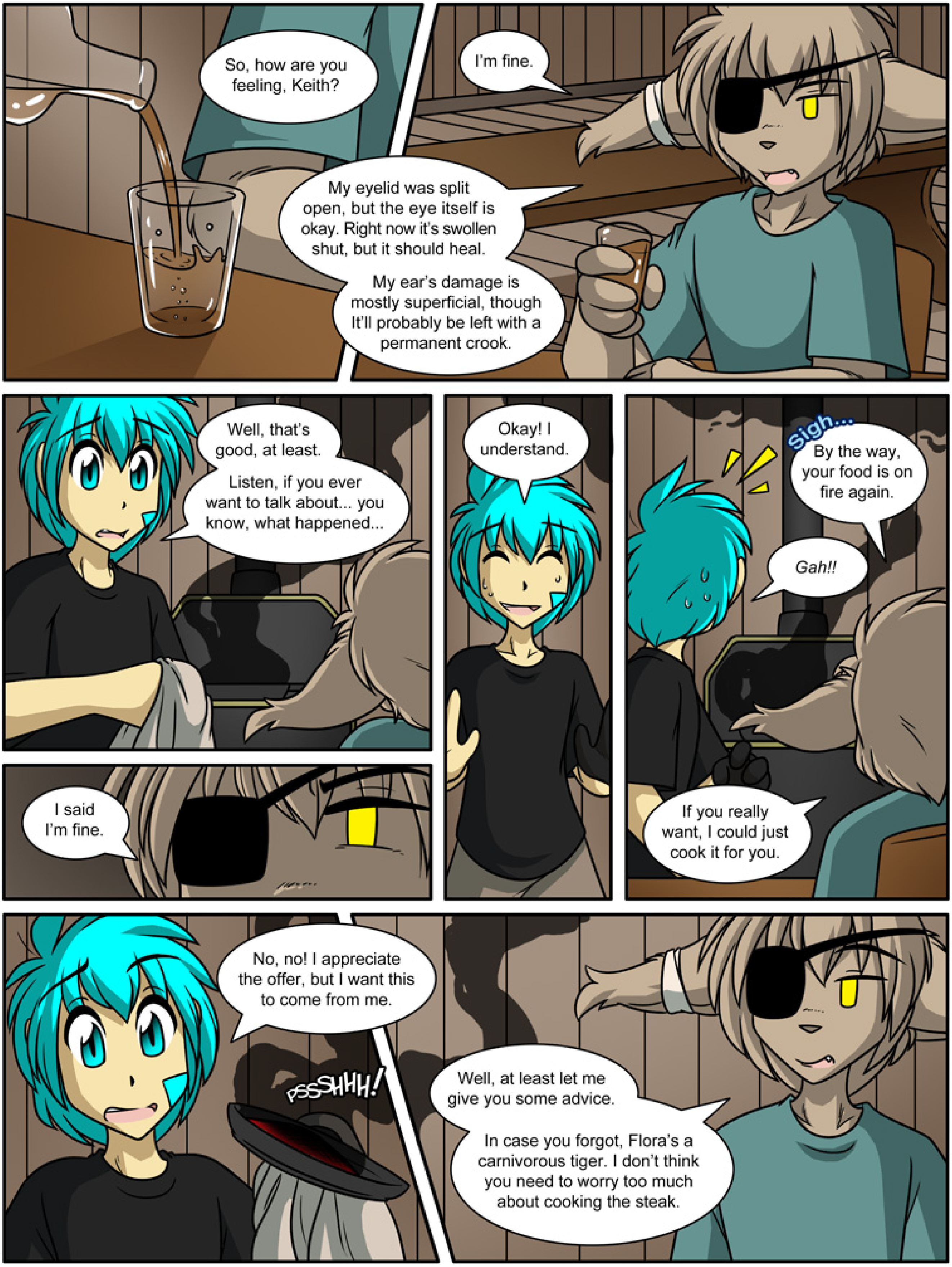

I'm probably not the best person to ask.
I haven't exactly lead what you would call a... typical Keidran life.
The wild is not a place a domesticated Keidran like you could survive.
Really? Why, what happened to you?
Natani come on!
No!!
Ngh...It's not a time I think about.
Look, just be quiet and hurry up with my clothes already!
I'm sorry, I didn't realize... I mean, I...
I just...
You know what? No. I... I'm kinda not sorry!
Eh?
In fact... I think I'm not sorry at all!
I've been trying to help you and you've been nothing but mean to me!
But I don't have to take orders from you, or anyone else now!
W-wait!
If this is how you're going to treat me then you can walk around naked for all I care!
No, wait, come back!
Stop, please!
I'm sorry. I'm still kinda freaked out about this whole... uh... *gender curse*... but you're right. I took it out on you.
If you help me, I'll tell you about Keidran life. I promise!

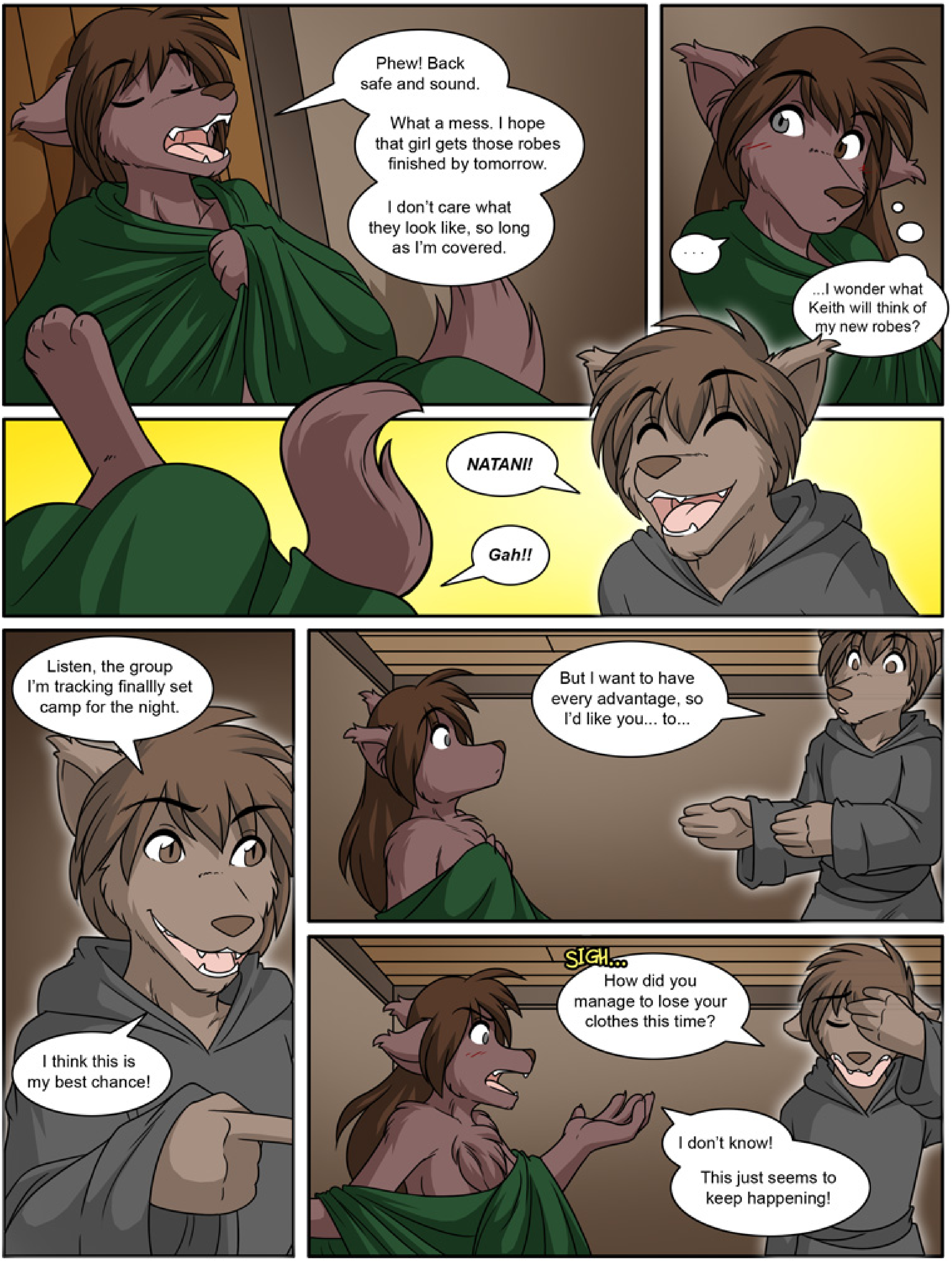

Alright, alright.
I'm sorry, too.
I guess we're both a little stressed out tonight.
Well, I have all the measurements I need for now.
I'll start working on your clothes tomorrow and let you know when they're done.
Okay, great!
Wait a minute!
Tomorrow?!
I can't wait that long!
Huh? You didn't expect me to finish it tonight, did you?
It's already late. I need to sleep.
But I can't go around like this! How am I supposed to get back to my room?
FLUMPH!

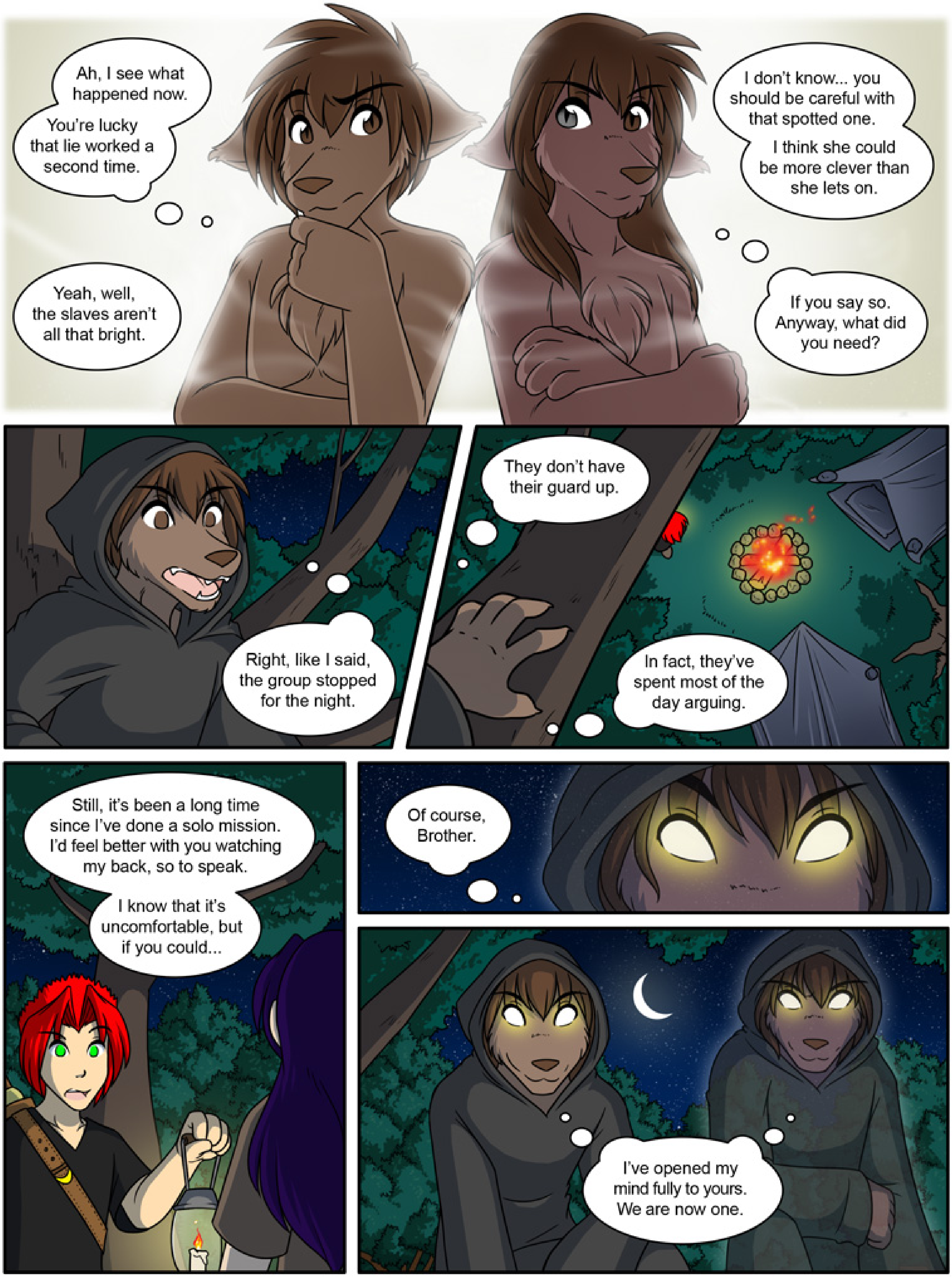

Are you sure there isn't anything I can do for you, General?
I told you, I don't need anything from you. I'm just going for a drink.
Oh! I can fix drinks for you!
Just tell me what you like, and I can make it!
No! I am perfectly capable of getting a drink for myself.
I have no need for a servant, I just want to be left alone!
Keith?
Hey! Good to see you up and about again!
We were getting worried.
Um... who were you talking to?
Oh, I was just...
Huh, where did he go?
Hm?

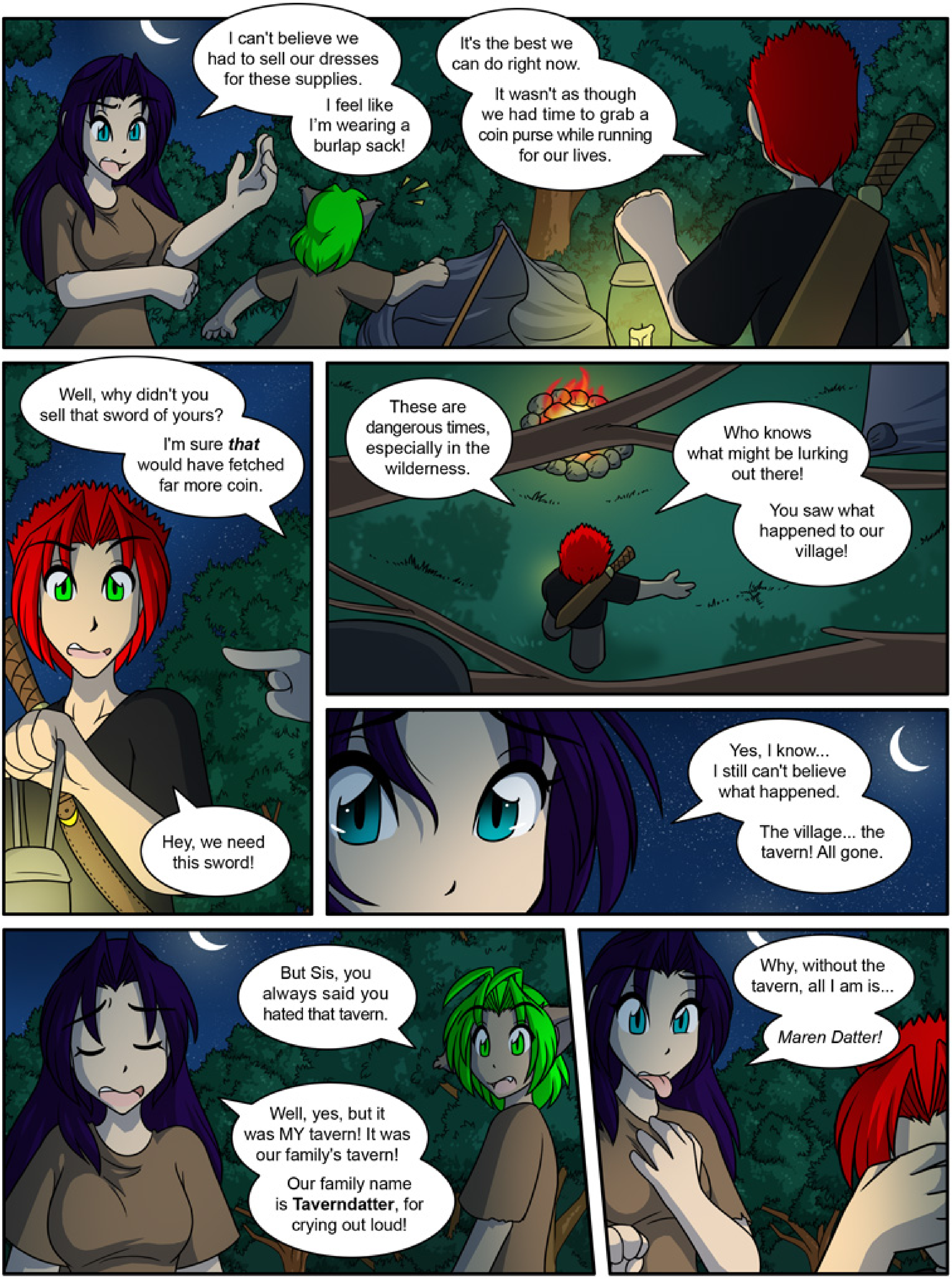

Er... nevermind.
What are you up to?
Oh, well... ever since the island, Flora's been acting kinda... distant with me.
She's been going to bed early each night and hasn't undressed with me around in the last few days.
I guess what happened at the tower - my... recent outburst - scared her.
I don't know.
But I've decided to turn over a new leaf!
I'm going to show her that I care, and I thought I'd start with breakfast in bed.
So I'm down here trying to learn how to cook!
Unfortunately... either my cooking skills were lost with the rest of my memories...
Or I never had any to begin with.

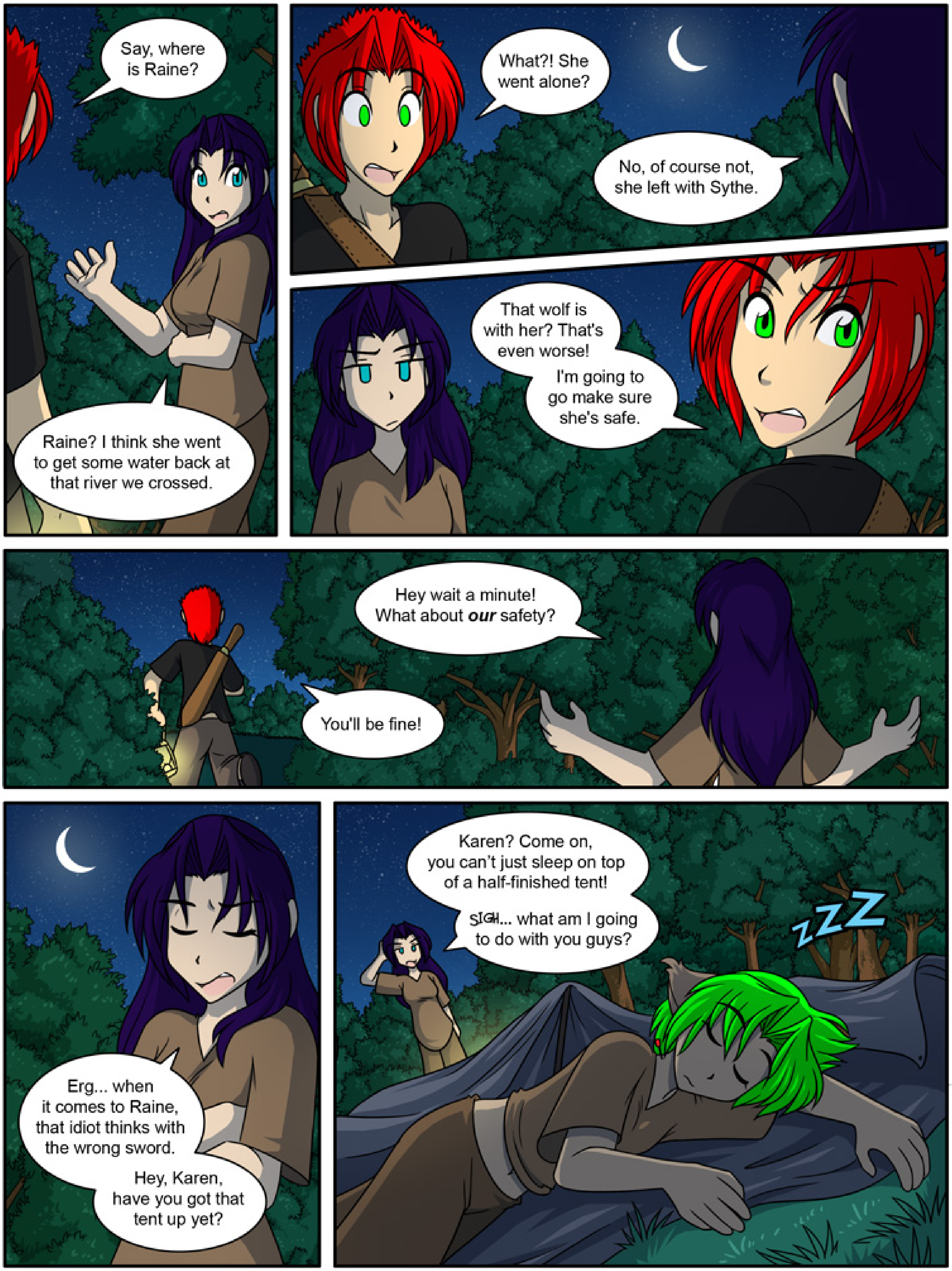

BACK FROM COMIC-CON!
Tom FISCHBACH
COMICS RESUMING THURSDAY

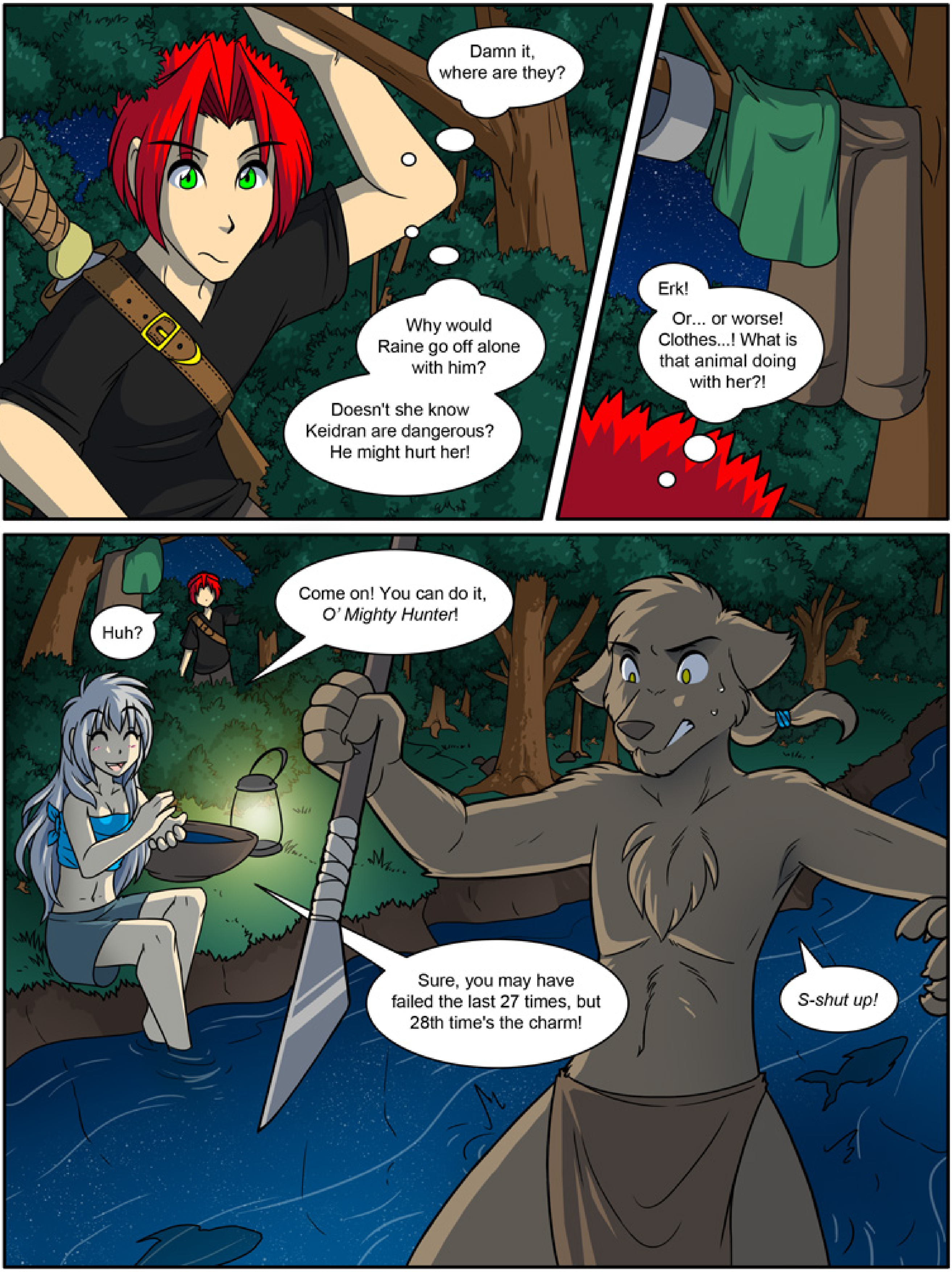

So, how are you feeling, Keith?
I'm fine.
My eyelid was split open, but the eye itself is okay. Right now it's swollen shut, but it should heal.
My ear's damage is mostly superficial, though It'll probably be left with a permanent crook.
Well, that's good, at least.
Listen, if you ever want to talk about... you know, what happened...
I said I'm fine.
Okay! I understand.
Sigh...
By the way, your food is on fire again.
Gah!!
If you really want, I could just cook it for you.
No, no! I appreciate the offer, but I want this to come from me.
PSSSHHH!
Well, at least let me give you some advice.
In case you forgot, Flora's a carnivorous tiger. I don't think you need to worry too much about cooking the steak.

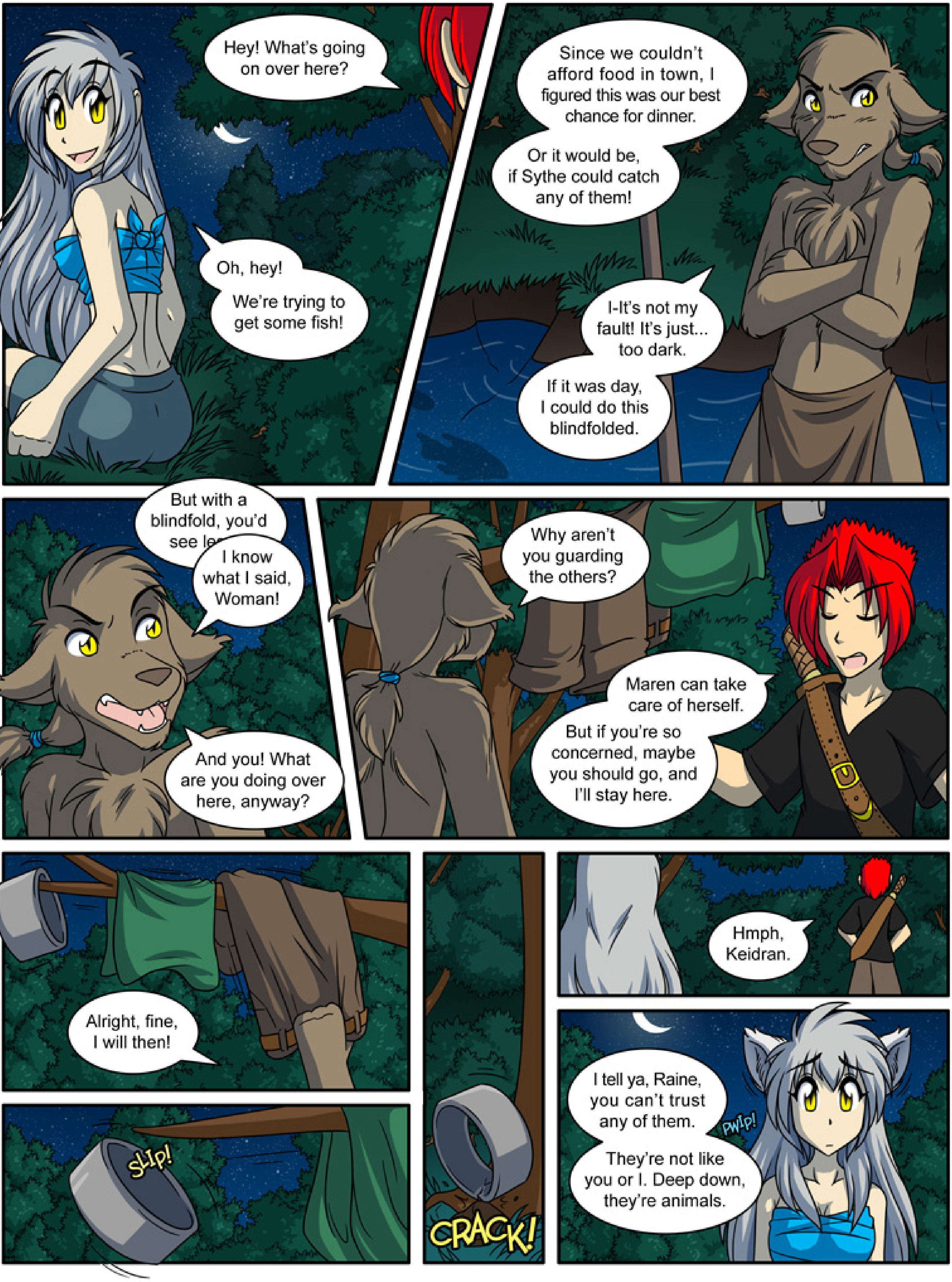

Phew! Back safe and sound.
What a mess. I hope that girl gets those robes finished by tomorrow.
I don't care what they look like, so long as I'm covered.
. . .
...I wonder what Keith will think of my new robes?
NATANI!
Gah!!
Listen, the group I'm tracking finallly set camp for the night.
I think this is my best chance!
But I want to have every advantage, so I'd like you... to...
SIGH...
How did you manage to lose your clothes this time?
I don't know!
This just seems to keep happening!

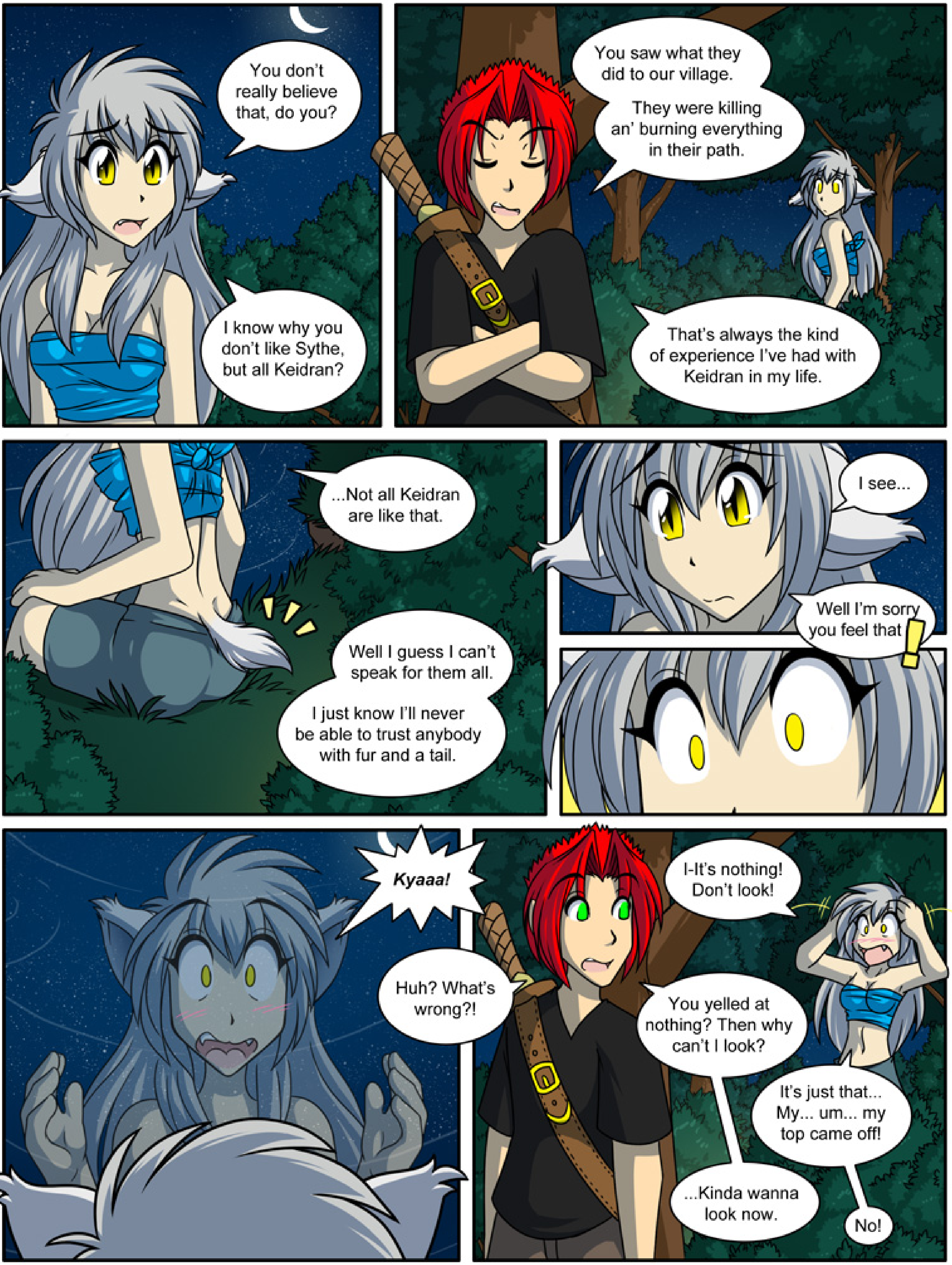

Ah, I see what happened now.
You're lucky that lie worked a second time.
I don't know... you should be careful with that spotted one.
I think she could be more clever than she lets on.
Yeah, well, the slaves aren't all that bright.
If you say so. Anyway, what did you need?
Right, like I said, the group stopped for the night.
They don't have their guard up.
In fact, they've spent most of the day arguing.
Still, it's been a long time since I've done a solo mission. I'd feel better with you watching my back, so to speak.
I know that it's uncomfortable, but if you could...
Of course, Brother.
I've opened my mind fully to yours. We are now one.

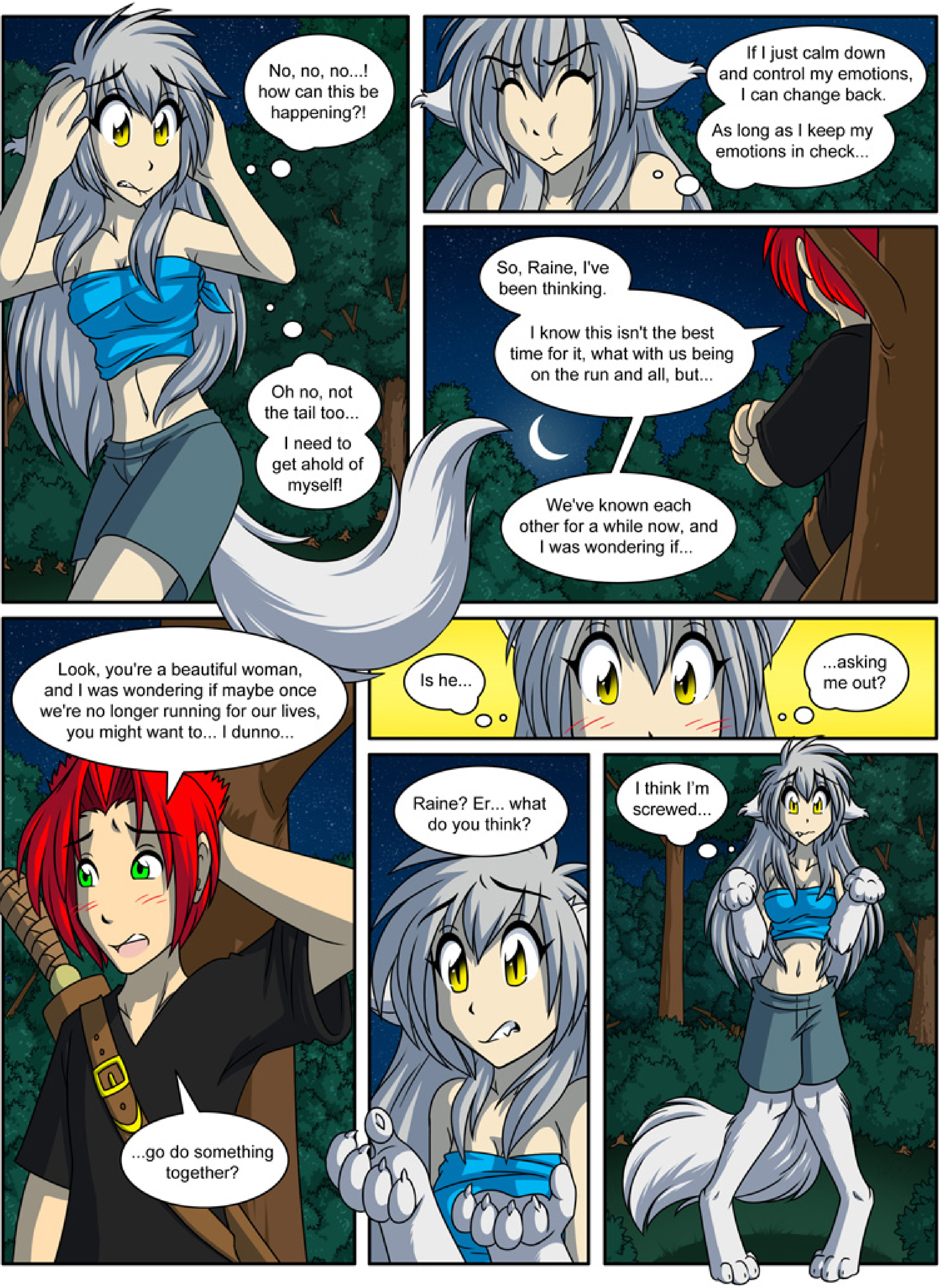

I can't believe we had to sell our dresses for these supplies.
I feel like I'm wearing a burlap sack!
It's the best we can do right now.
It wasn't as though we had time to grab a coin purse while running for our lives.
Well, why didn't you sell that sword of yours?
I'm sure *that* would have fetched far more coin.
Hey, we need this sword!
These are dangerous times, especially in the wilderness.
Who knows what might be lurking out there!
You saw what happened to our village!
Yes, I know... I still can't believe what happened.
The village... the tavern! All gone.
But Sis, you always said you hated that tavern.
Well, yes, but it was MY tavern! It was our family's tavern!
Our family name is **Taverndatter**, for crying out loud!
Why, without the tavern, all I am is...
Maren Datter!

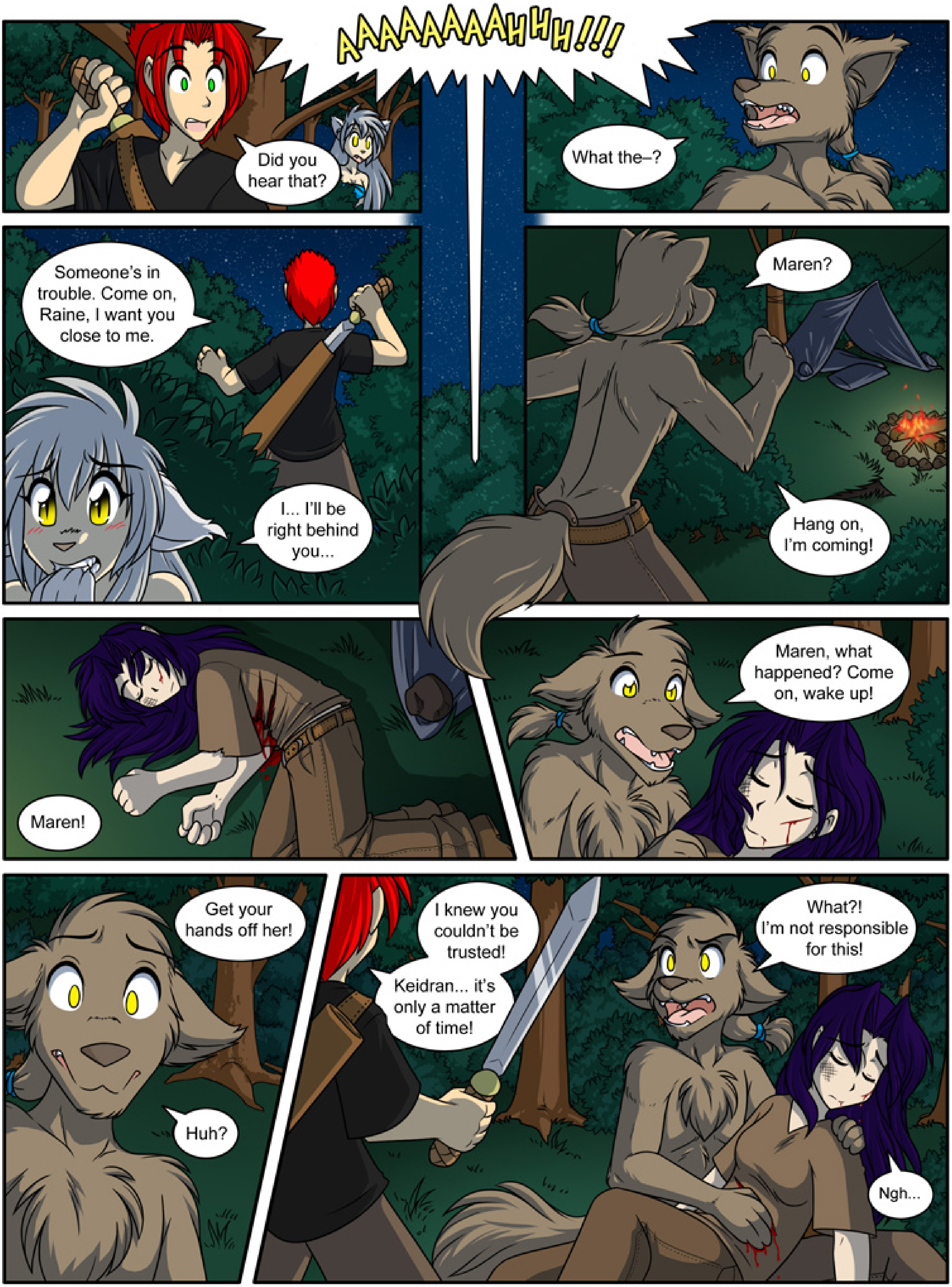

Say, where is Raine?
Raine? I think she went to get some water back at that river we crossed.
What?! She went alone?
No, of course not, she left with Sythe.
That wolf is with her? That's even worse!
I'm going to go make sure she's safe.
Hey wait a minute! What about *our* safety?
You'll be fine!
Erg... when it comes to Raine, that idiot thinks with the wrong sword.
Hey, Karen, have you got that tent up yet?
Karen? Come on, you can't just sleep on top of a half-finished tent!
SIGH... what am I going to do with you guys?
ZZZ

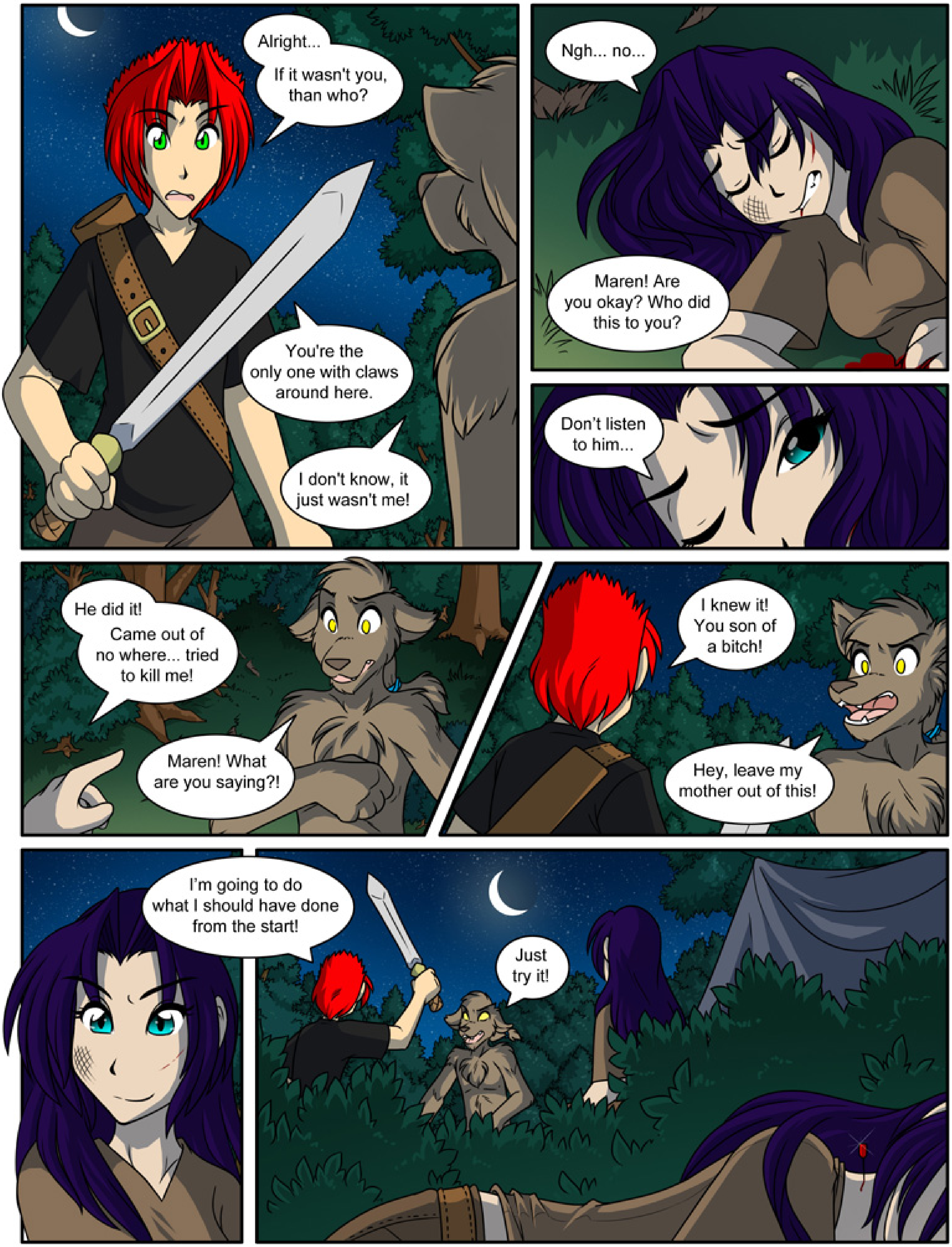

Damn it, where are they?
Why would Raine go off alone with him?
Doesn't she know Keidran are dangerous? He might hurt her!
Erk!
Or... or worse! Clothes...! What is that animal doing with her?!
Huh?
Come on! You can do it, *O' Mighty Hunter*!
Sure, you may have failed the last 27 times, but 28th time's the charm!
S-shut up!

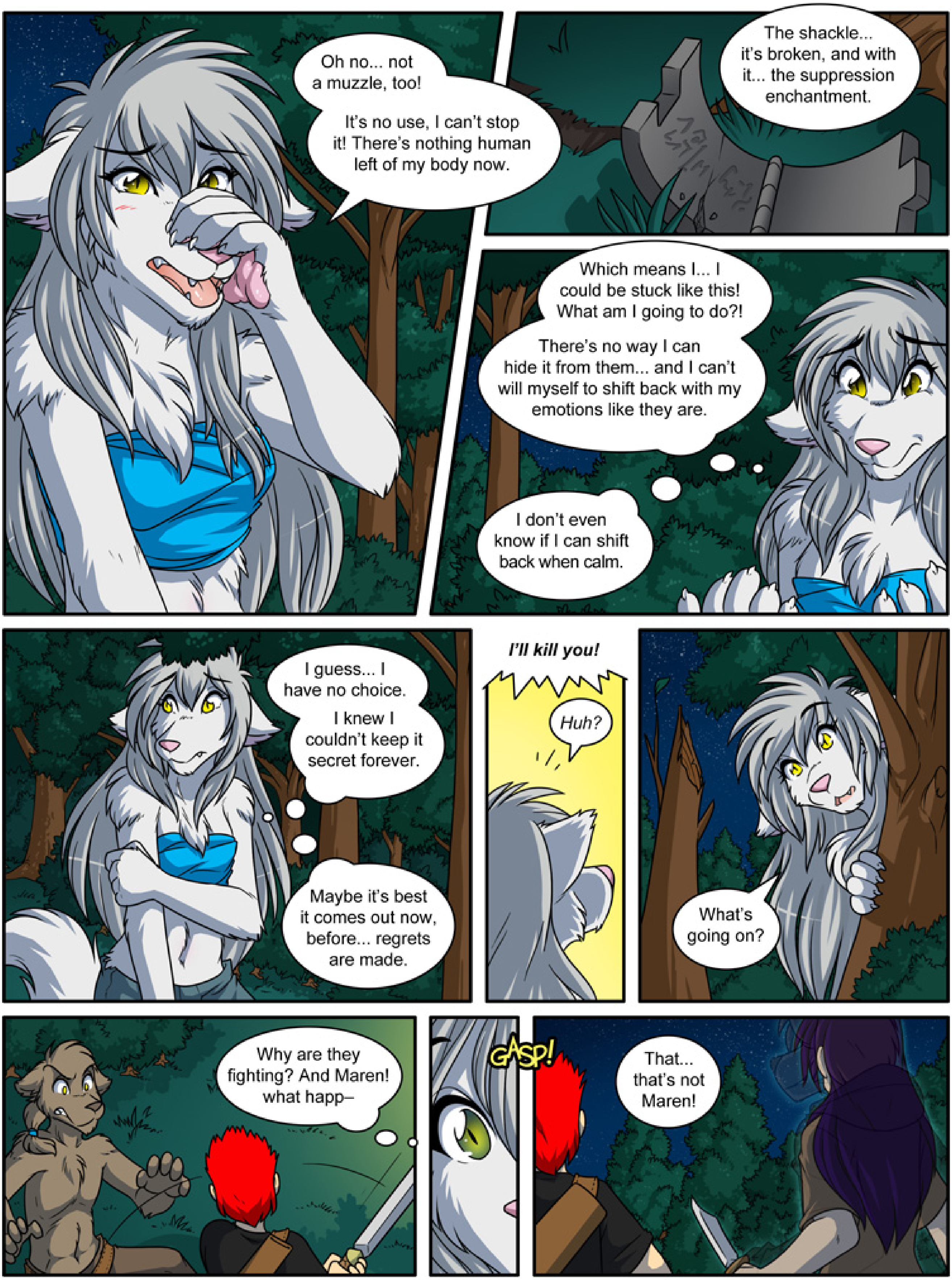

Hey! What's going on over here?
Oh, hey!
We're trying to get some fish!
Since we couldn't afford food in town, I figured this was our best chance for dinner.
Or it would be, if Sythe could catch any of them!
I-It's not my fault! It's just... too dark.
If it was day, I could do this blindfolded.
But with a blindfold, you'd see le
I know what I said, Woman!
And you! What are you doing over here, anyway?
Why aren't you guarding the others?
Maren can take care of herself.
But if you're so concerned, maybe you should go, and I'll stay here.
Alright, fine, I will then!
SLIP!
CRACK!
Hmph, Keidran.
I tell ya, Raine, you can't trust any of them.
PWIP!
They're not like you or I. Deep down, they're animals.

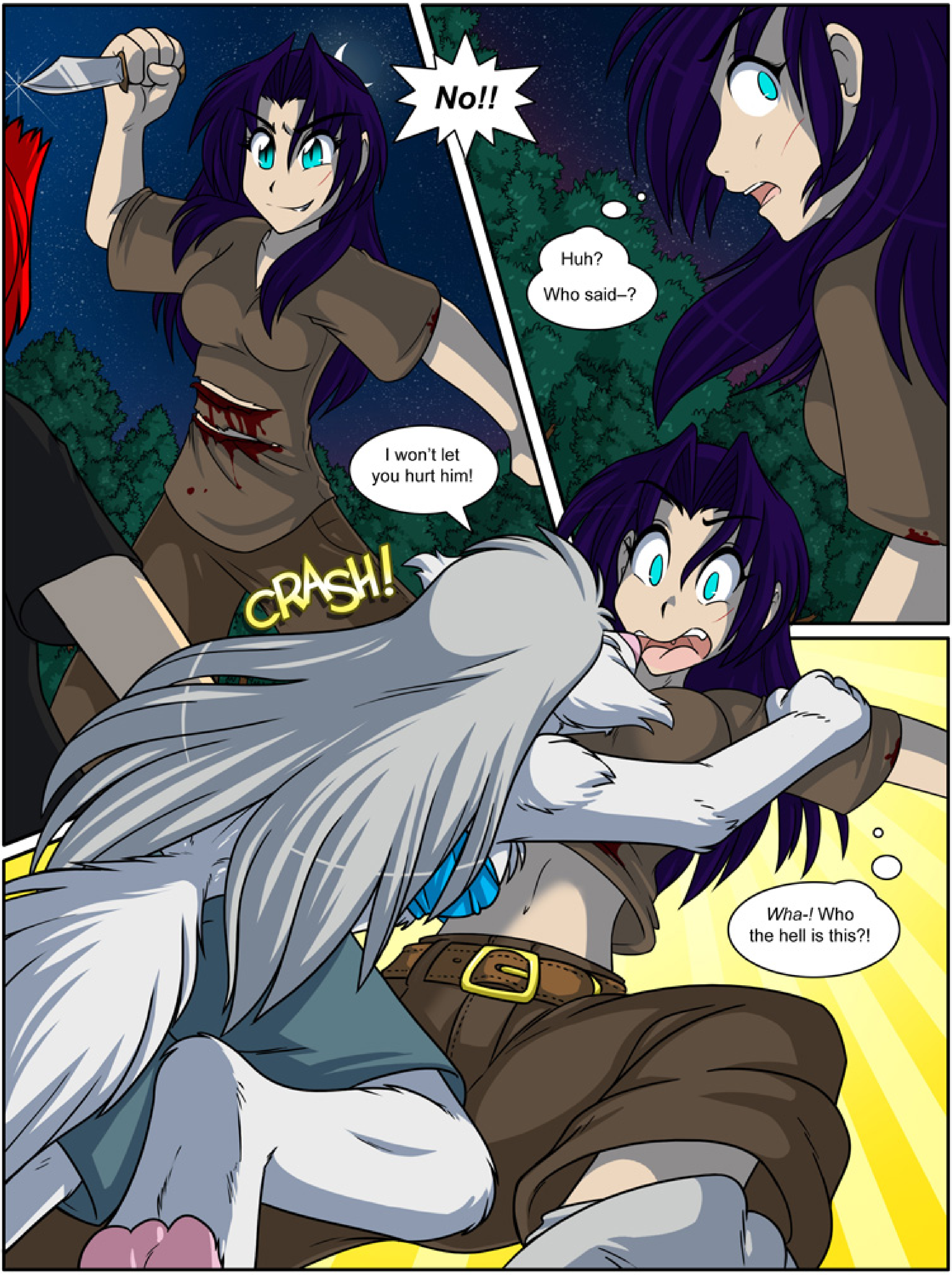

You don't really believe that, do you?
I know why you don't like Sythe, but all Keidran?
You saw what they did to our village.
They were killing an' burning everything in their path.
That's always the kind of experience I've had with Keidran in my life.
...Not all Keidran are like that.
Well I guess I can't speak for them all.
I just know I'll never be able to trust anybody with fur and a tail.
I see...
Well I'm sorry you feel that
!
Kyaaa!
Huh? What's wrong?!
I-It's nothing! Don't look!
You yelled at nothing? Then why can't I look?
It's just that... My... um... my top came off!
...Kinda wanna look now.
No!

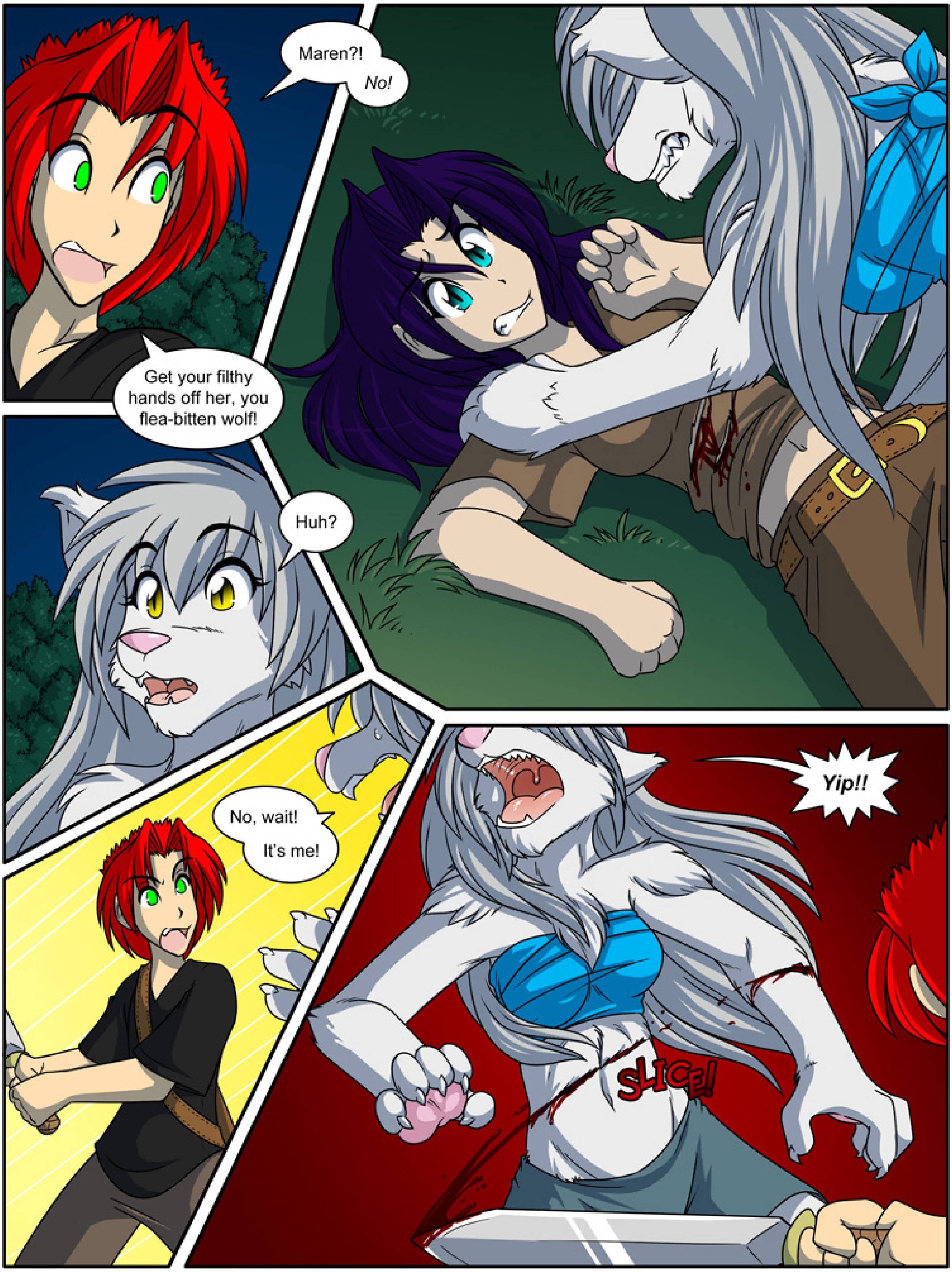

No, no, no...! how can this be happening?!
If I just calm down and control my emotions, I can change back.
As long as I keep my emotions in check...
Oh no, not the tail too...
I need to get ahold of myself!
So, Raine, I've been thinking.
I know this isn't the best time for it, what with us being on the run and all, but...
We've known each other for a while now, and I was wondering if...
Look, you're a beautiful woman, and I was wondering if maybe once we're no longer running for our lives, you might want to... I dunno...
...go do something together?
Is he...
...asking me out?
Raine? Er... what do you think?
I think I'm screwed...

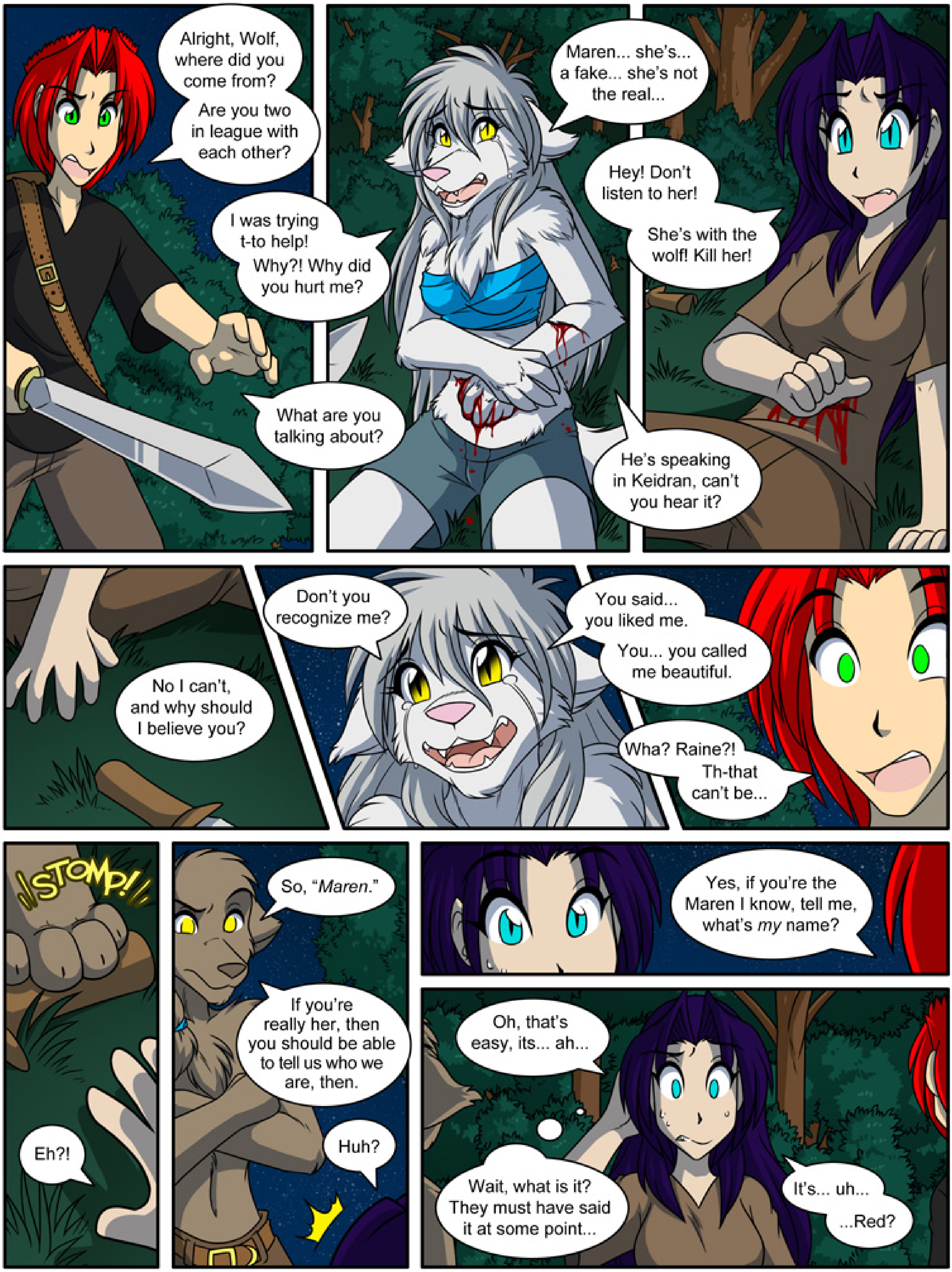

AAAAAAAHHH!!!
Did you hear that?
What the–?
Someone's in trouble. Come on, Raine, I want you close to me.
I... I'll be right behind you...
Maren?
Hang on, I'm coming!
Maren!
Maren, what happened? Come on, wake up!
Get your hands off her!
Huh?
I knew you couldn't be trusted!
Keidran... it's only a matter of time!
What?! I'm not responsible for this!
Ngh...

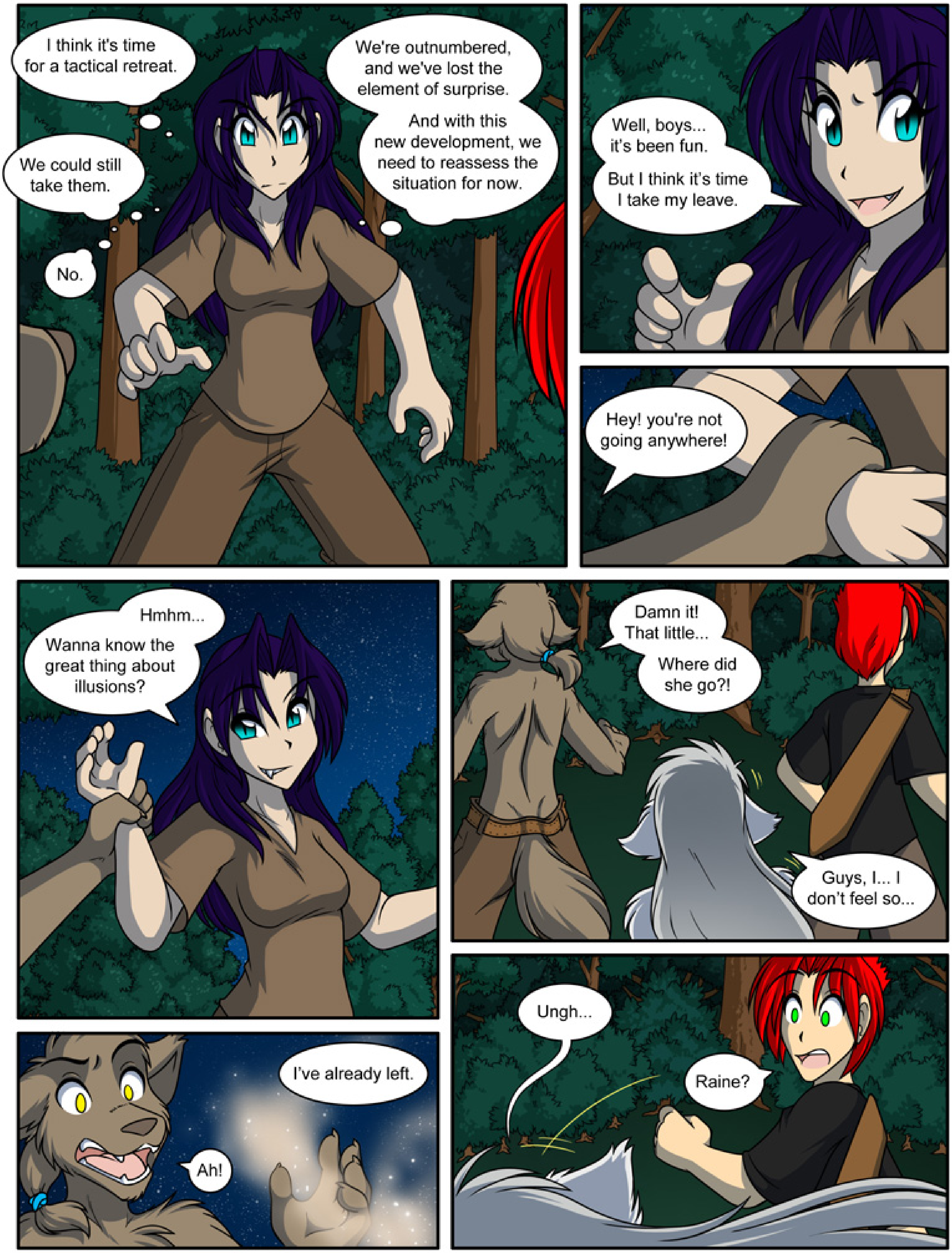

Alright...
If it wasn't you, than who?
You're the only one with claws around here.
I don't know, it just wasn't me!
Ngh... no...
Maren! Are you okay? Who did this to you?
Don't listen to him...
He did it!
Came out of no where... tried to kill me!
Maren! What are you saying?!
I knew it! You son of a bitch!
Hey, leave my mother out of this!
I'm going to do what I should have done from the start!
Just try it!

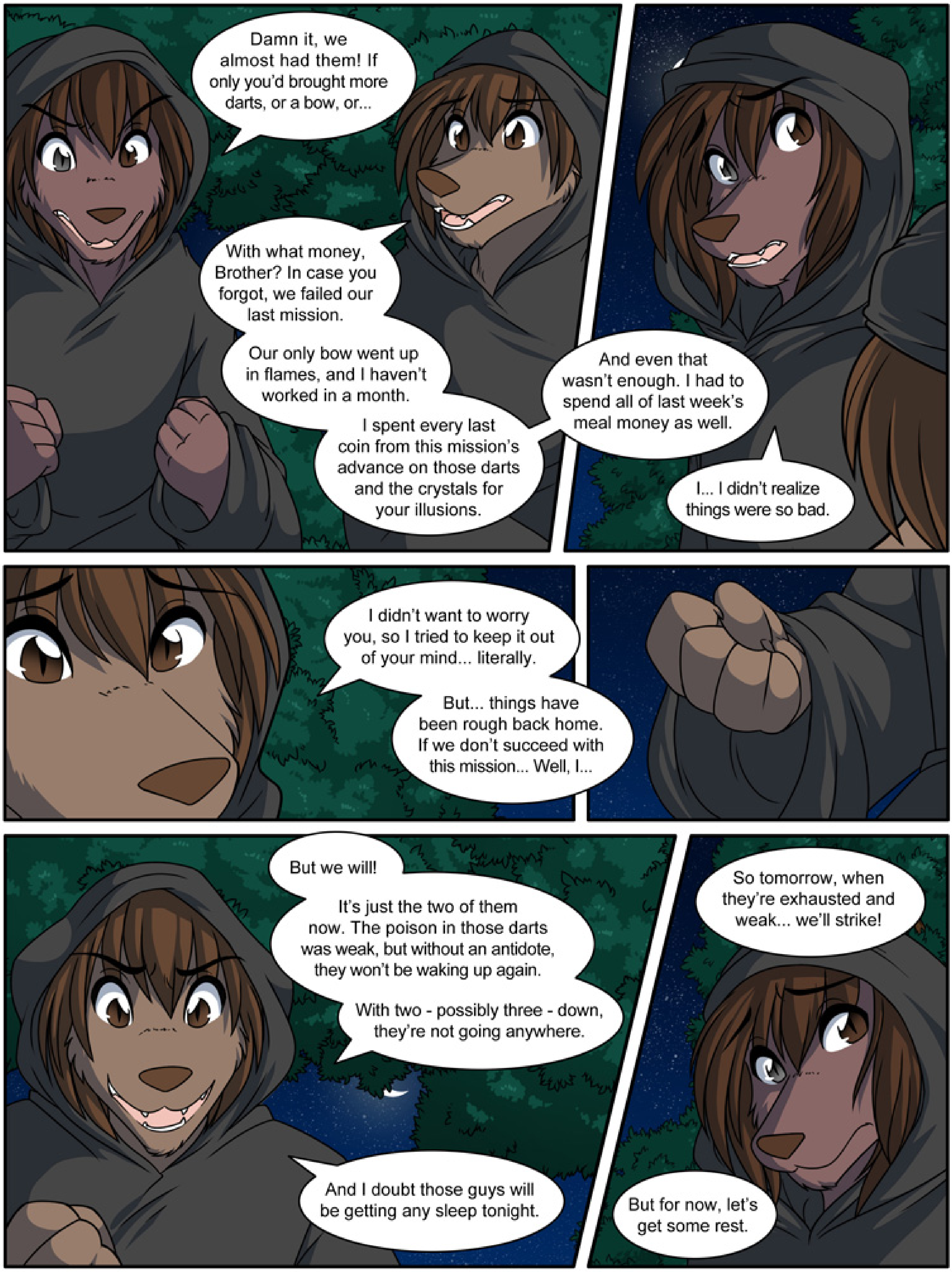

Oh no... not a muzzle, too!
It's no use, I can't stop it! There's nothing human left of my body now.
The shackle... it's broken, and with it... the suppression enchantment.
Which means I... I could be stuck like this! What am I going to do?!
There's no way I can hide it from them... and I can't will myself to shift back with my emotions like they are.
I don't even know if I can shift back when calm.
I guess... I have no choice.
I knew I couldn't keep it secret forever.
Maybe it's best it comes out now, before... regrets are made.
I'll kill you!
Huh?
What's going on?
Why are they fighting? And Maren! what happ–
GASP!
That... that's not Maren!

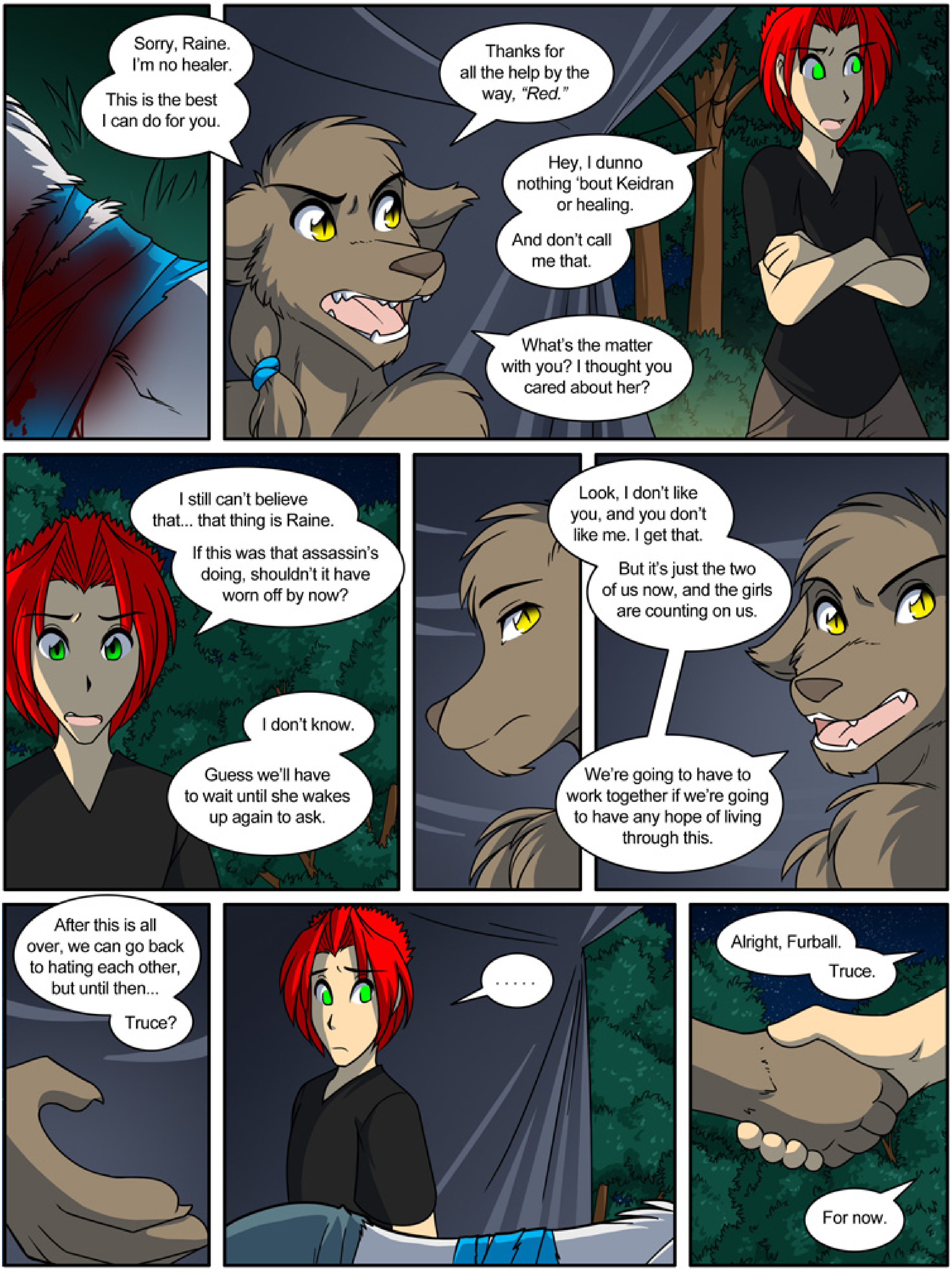

No!!
I won't let you hurt him!
Huh?
Who said–?
CRASH!
Wha-! Who the hell is this?!

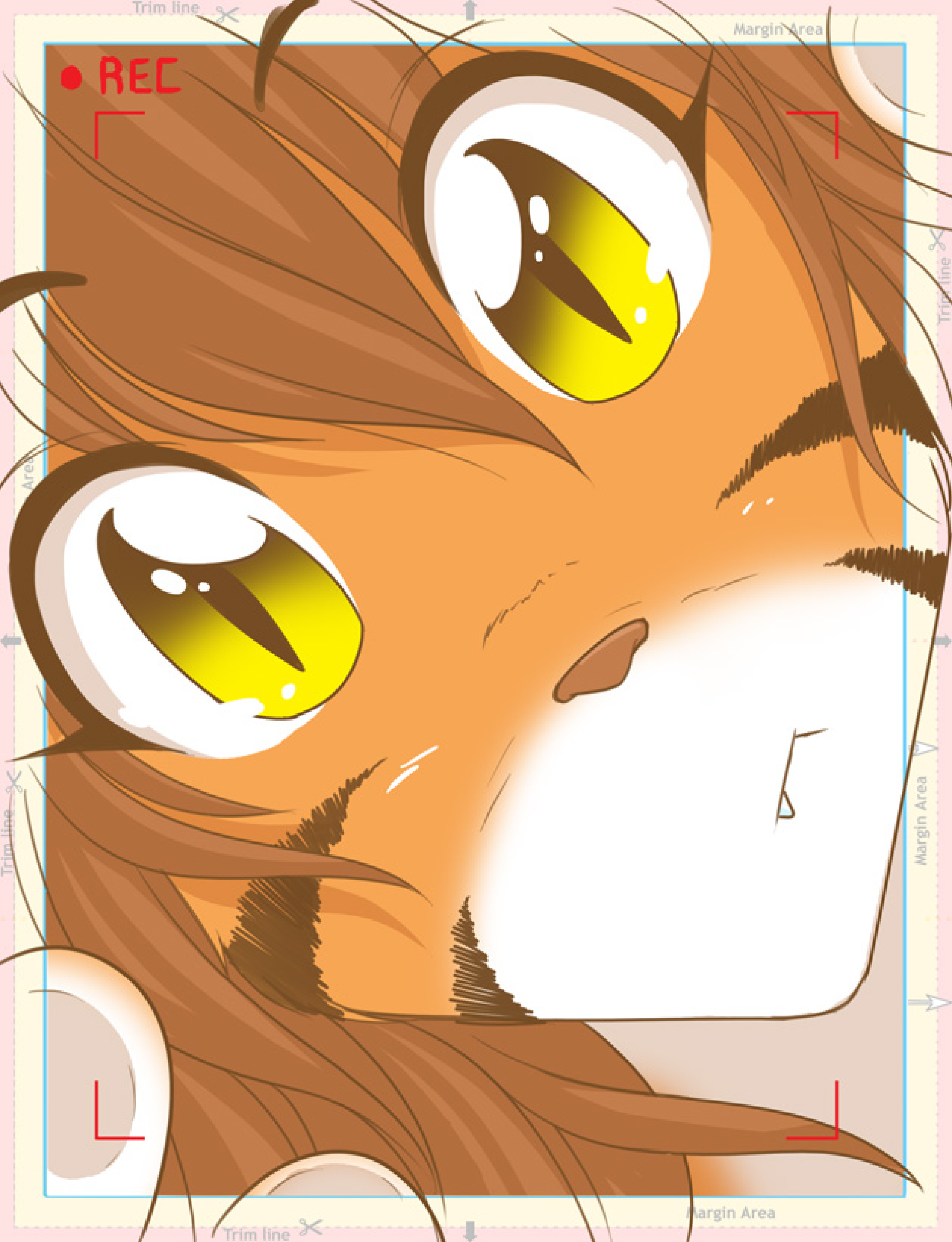

Maren?!
No!
Get your filthy hands off her, you flea-bitten wolf!
Huh?
No, wait!
It's me!
Yip!!
SLICE!


Alright, Wolf, where did you come from?
Are you two in league with each other?
Maren... she's... a fake... she's not the real...
I was trying t-to help!
Why?! Why did you hurt me?
Hey! Don't listen to her!
She's with the wolf! Kill her!
What are you talking about?
He's speaking in Keidran, can't you hear it?
No I can't, and why should I believe you?
Don't you recognize me?
You said... you liked me.
You... you called me beautiful.
Wha? Raine?!
Th-that can't be...
STOMP!
Eh?!
So, "*Maren*."
If you're really her, then you should be able to tell us who we are, then.
Huh?
Yes, if you're the Maren I know, tell me, what's *my* name?
Oh, that's easy, its... ah...
Wait, what is it? They must have said it at some point...
It's... uh...
...Red?


I think it's time for a tactical retreat.
We could still take them.
No.
We're outnumbered, and we've lost the element of surprise.
And with this new development, we need to reassess the situation for now.
Well, boys... it's been fun.
But I think it's time I take my leave.
Hey! you're not going anywhere!
Hmhm...
Wanna know the great thing about illusions?
Damn it! That little...
Where did she go?!
Guys, I... I don't feel so...
I've already left.
Ah!
Ungh...
Raine?


Damn it, we almost had them! If only you'd brought more darts, or a bow, or...
With what money, Brother? In case you forgot, we failed our last mission.
Our only bow went up in flames, and I haven't worked in a month.
I spent every last coin from this mission's advance on those darts and the crystals for your illusions.
And even that wasn't enough. I had to spend all of last week's meal money as well.
I... I didn't realize things were so bad.
I didn't want to worry you, so I tried to keep it out of your mind... literally.
But... things have been rough back home. If we don't succeed with this mission... Well, I...
But we will!
It's just the two of them now. The poison in those darts was weak, but without an antidote, they won't be waking up again.
With two - possibly three - down, they're not going anywhere.
And I doubt those guys will be getting any sleep tonight.
So tomorrow, when they're exhausted and weak... we'll strike!
But for now, let's get some rest.


Sorry, Raine. I'm no healer.
This is the best I can do for you.
Thanks for all the help by the way, *"Red."*
Hey, I dunno nothing 'bout Keidran or healing.
And don't call me that.
What's the matter with you? I thought you cared about her?
I still can't believe that... that thing is Raine.
If this was that assassin's doing, shouldn't it have worn off by now?
I don't know.
Guess we'll have to wait until she wakes up again to ask.
Look, I don't like you, and you don't like me. I get that.
But it's just the two of us now, and the girls are counting on us.
We're going to have to work together if we're going to have any hope of living through this.
After this is all over, we can go back to hating each other, but until then...
Truce?
.....
Alright, Furball.
Truce.
For now.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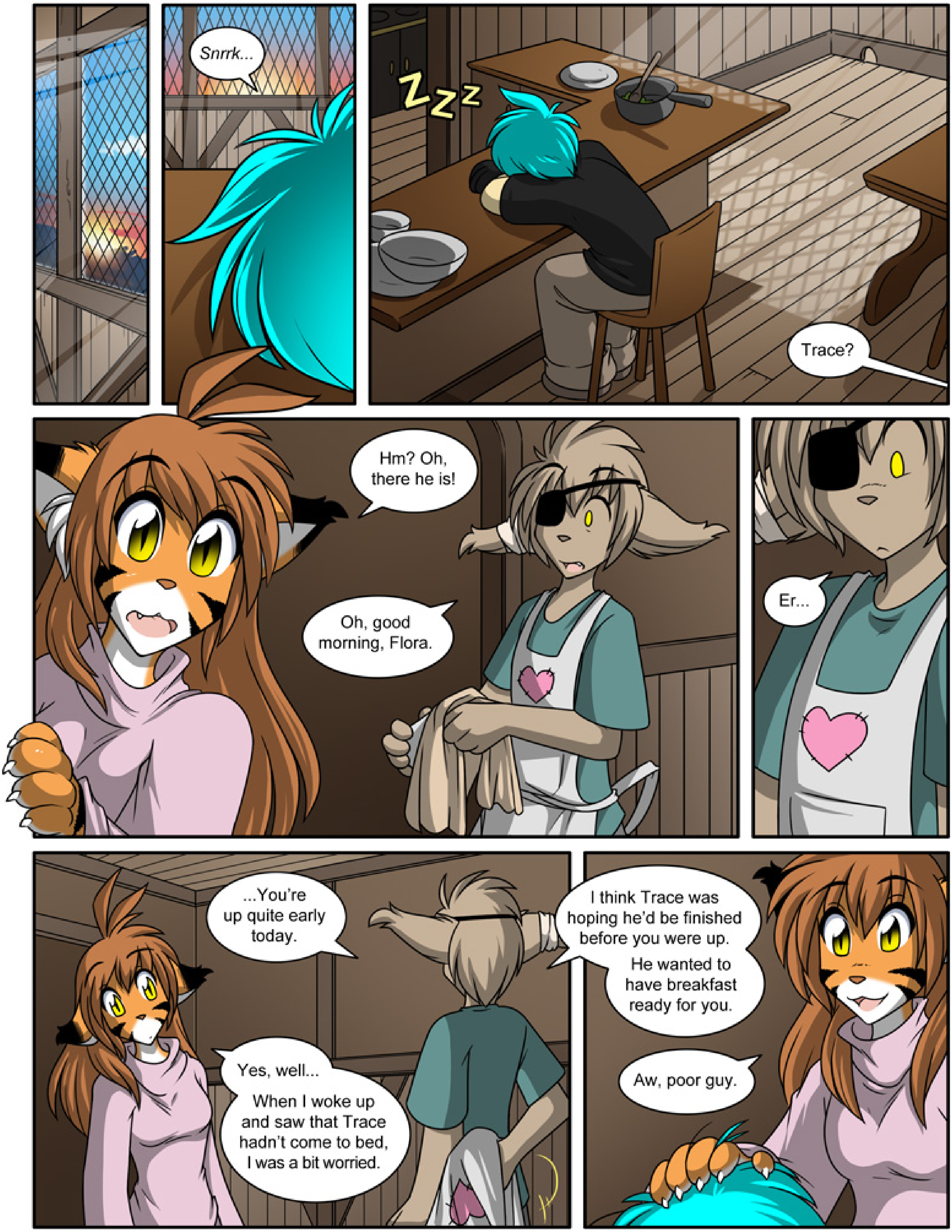
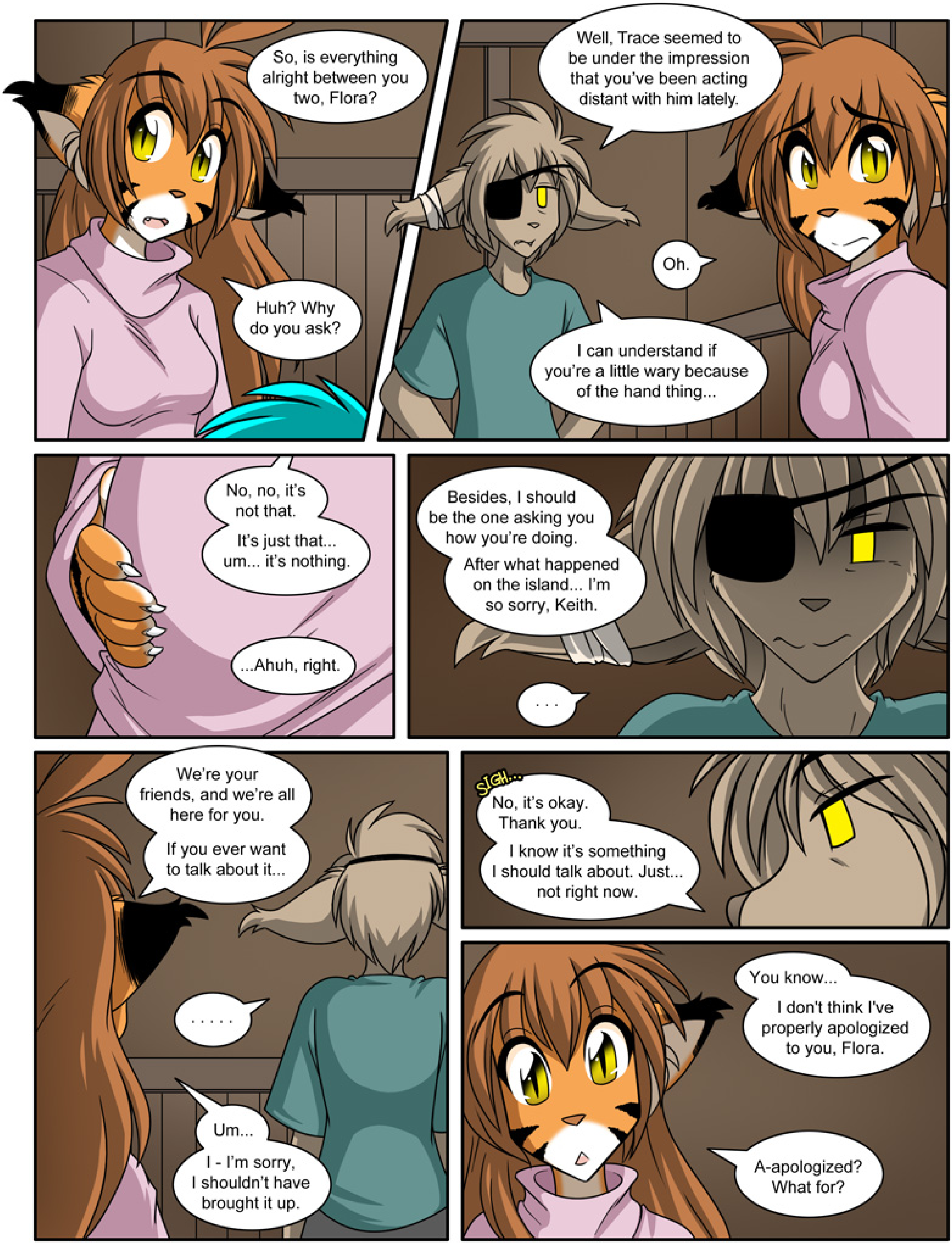
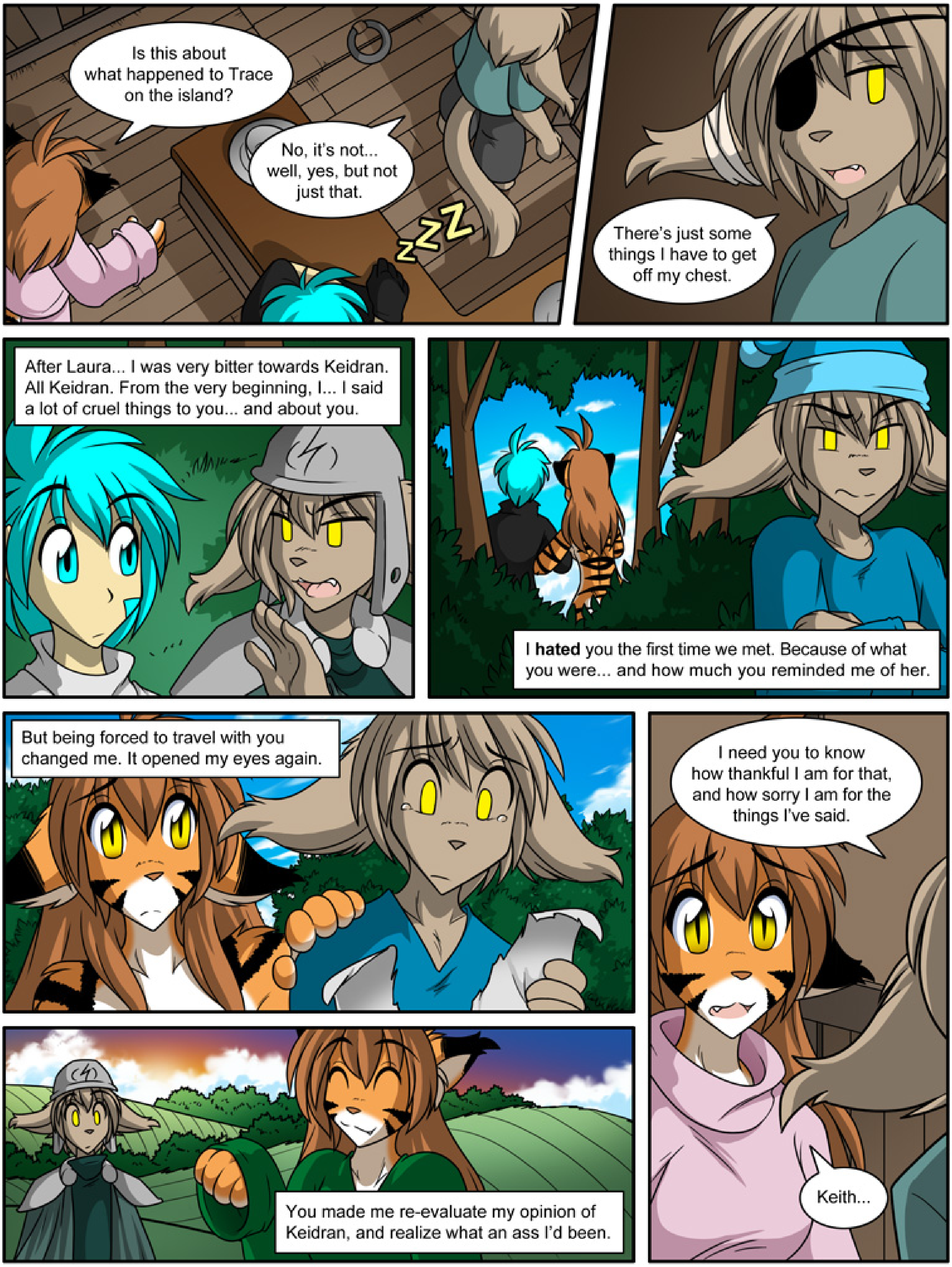
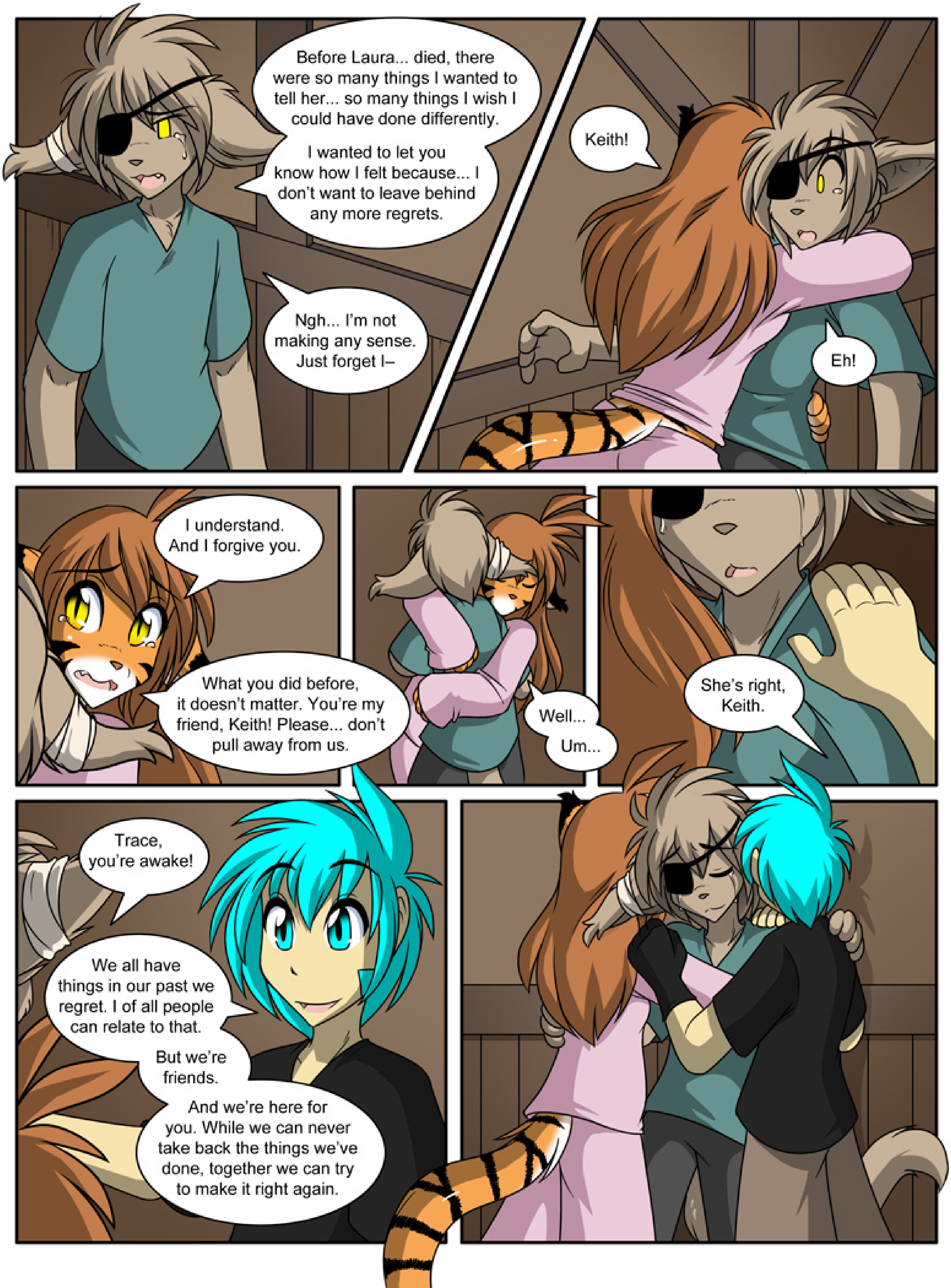

Snrrk...
ZZZ
Trace?
Hm? Oh, there he is!
Oh, good morning, Flora.
Er...
...You're up quite early today.
Yes, well...
When I woke up and saw that Trace hadn't come to bed, I was a bit worried.
I think Trace was hoping he'd be finished before you were up.
He wanted to have breakfast ready for you.
Aw, poor guy.

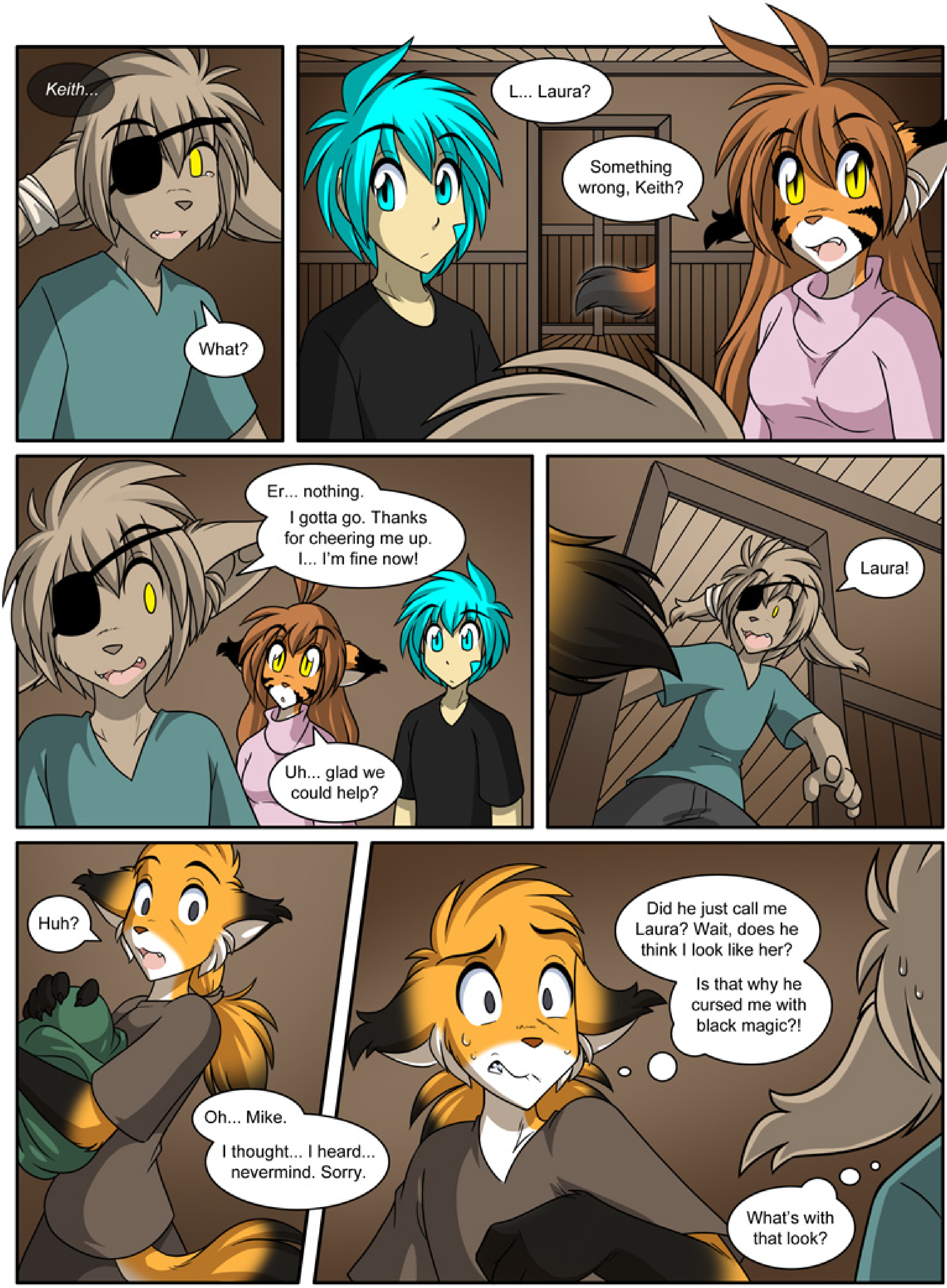
TwoKinds
9th Anniversary

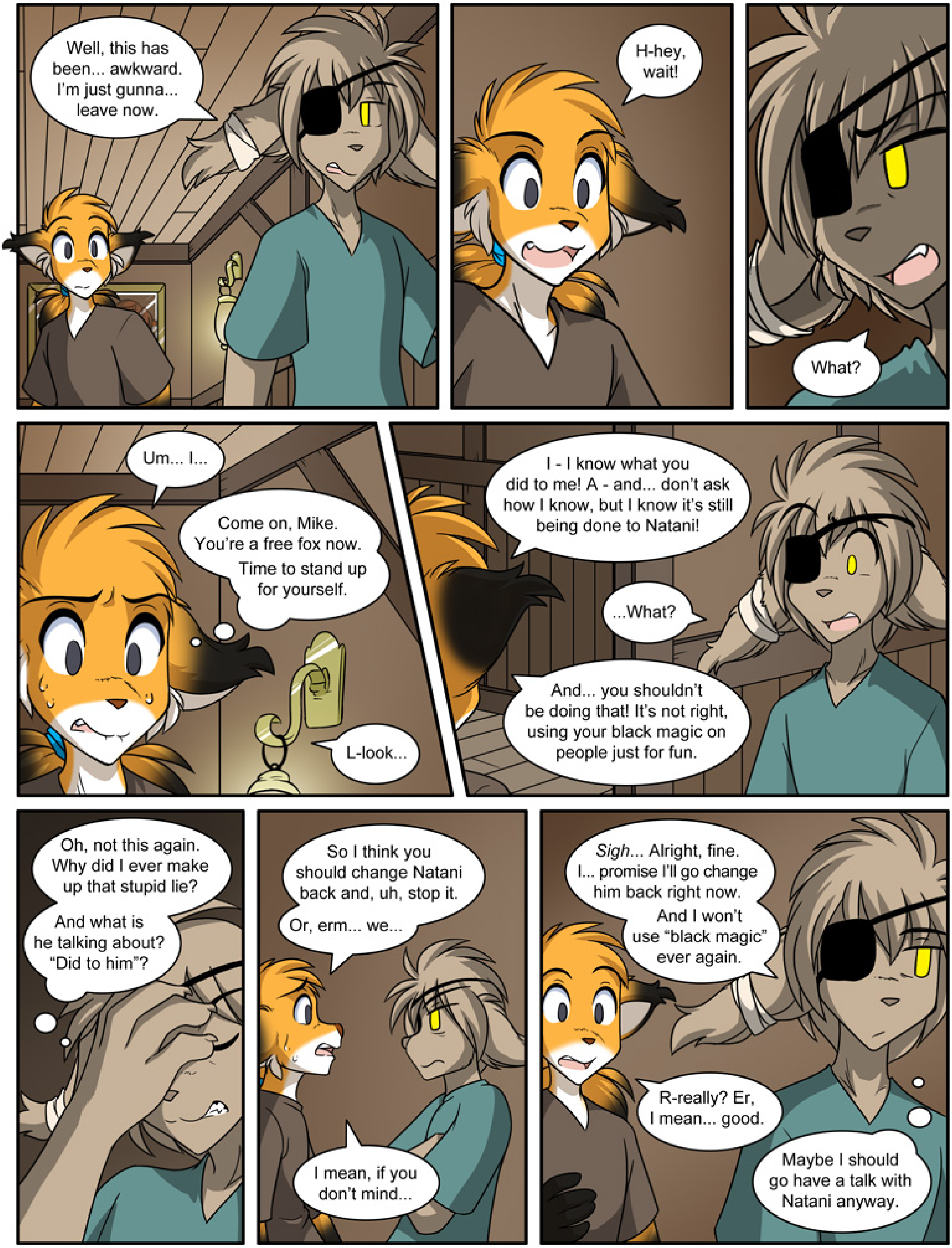

So, is everything alright between you two, Flora?
Huh? Why do you ask?
Well, Trace seemed to be under the impression that you've been acting distant with him lately.
Oh.
I can understand if you're a little wary because of the hand thing...
No, no, it's not that.
It's just that... um... it's nothing.
...Ahuh, right.
Besides, I should be the one asking you how you're doing.
After what happened on the island... I'm so sorry, Keith.
. . .
We're your friends, and we're all here for you.
If you ever want to talk about it...
. . . . .
Um...
I - I'm sorry, I shouldn't have brought it up.
SIGH...
No, it's okay. Thank you.
I know it's something I should talk about. Just... not right now.
You know...
I don't think I've properly apologized to you, Flora.
A-apologized? What for?

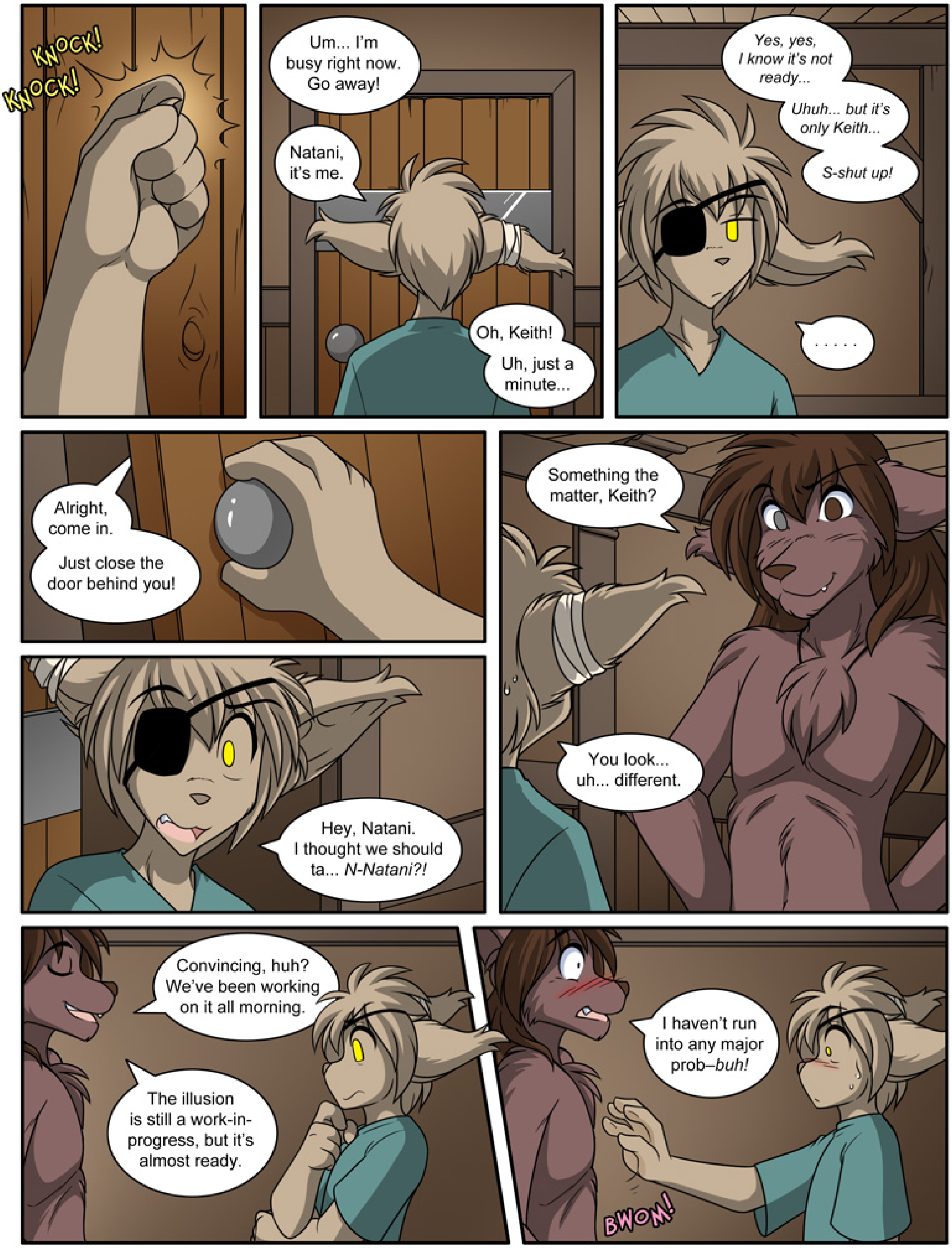

Is this about what happened to Trace on the island?
No, it's not... well, yes, but not just that.
ZZZ
There's just some things I have to get off my chest.
After Laura... I was very bitter towards Keidran. All Keidran. From the very beginning, I... I said a lot of cruel things to you... and about you.
I **hated** you the first time we met. Because of what you were... and how much you reminded me of her.
But being forced to travel with you changed me. It opened my eyes again.
I need you to know how thankful I am for that, and how sorry I am for the things I've said.
You made me re-evaluate my opinion of Keidran, and realize what an ass I'd been.
Keith...

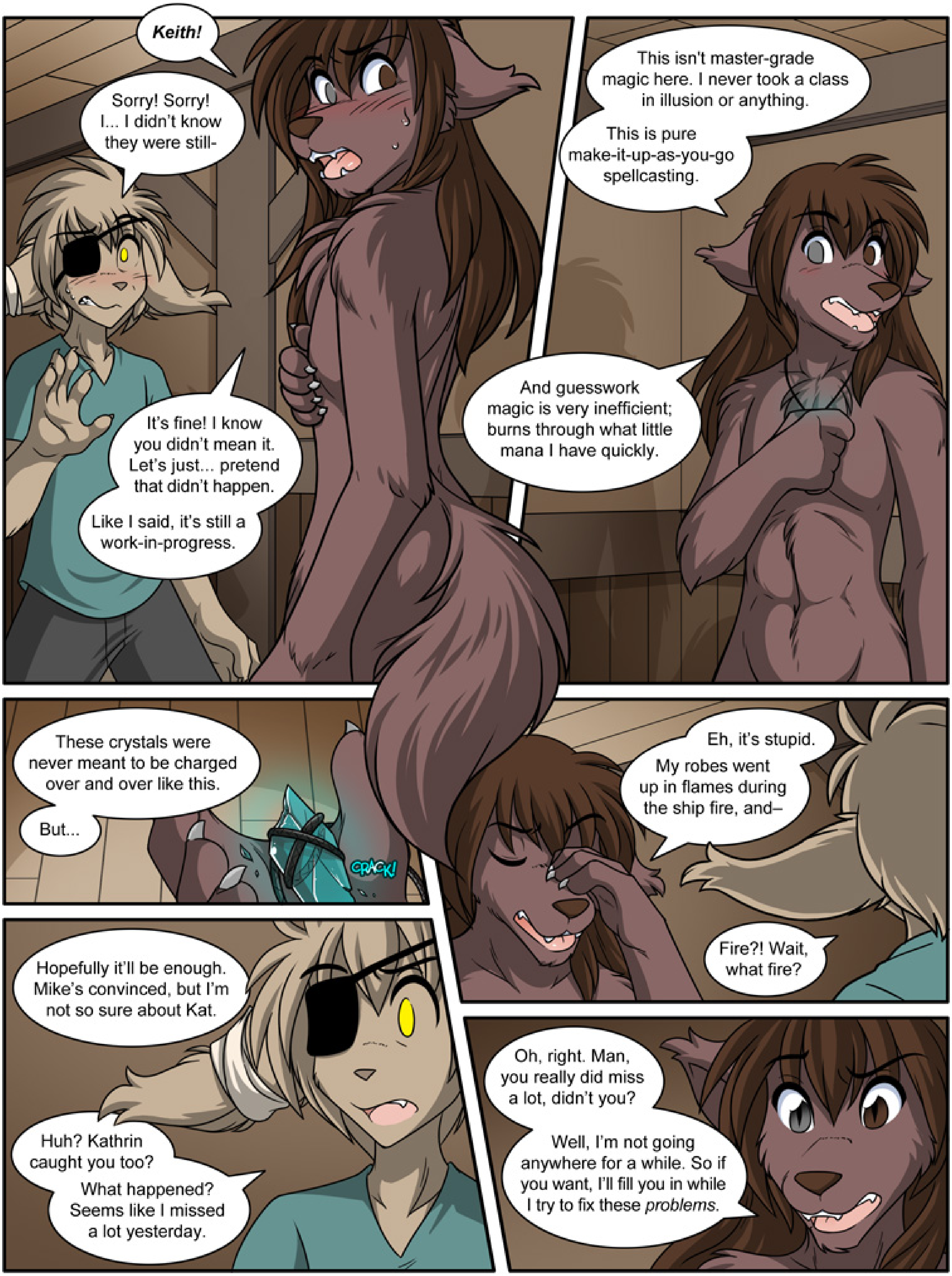
HAPPY
HALLOWEEN!

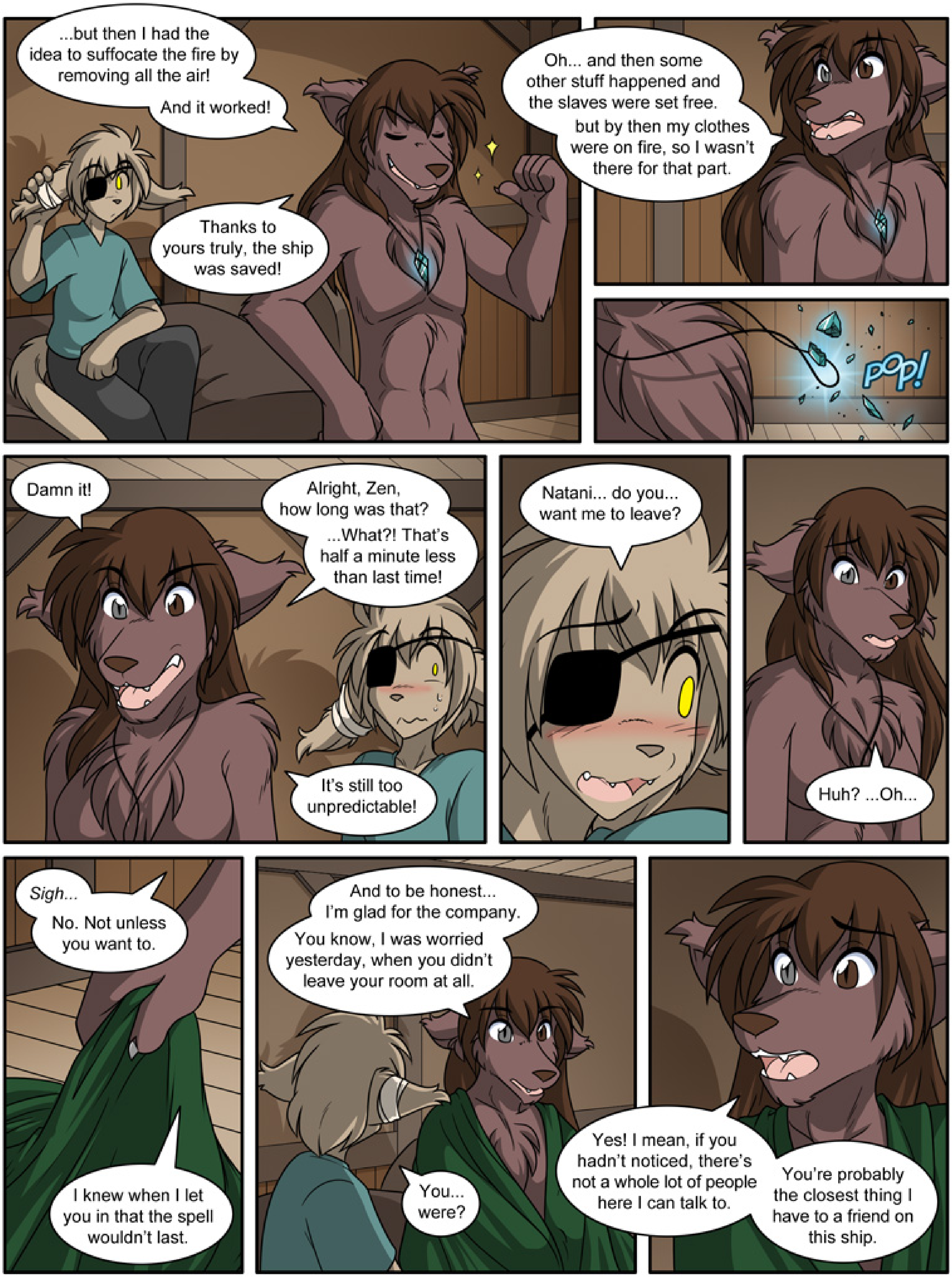

Before Laura... died, there were so many things I wanted to tell her... so many things I wish I could have done differently.
I wanted to let you know how I felt because... I don't want to leave behind any more regrets.
Ngh... I'm not making any sense. Just forget I–
Keith!
Eh!
I understand. And I forgive you.
What you did before, it doesn't matter. You're my friend, Keith! Please... don't pull away from us.
Well...
Um...
She's right, Keith.
Trace, you're awake!
We all have things in our past we regret. I of all people can relate to that.
But we're friends.
And we're here for you. While we can never take back the things we've done, together we can try to make it right again.

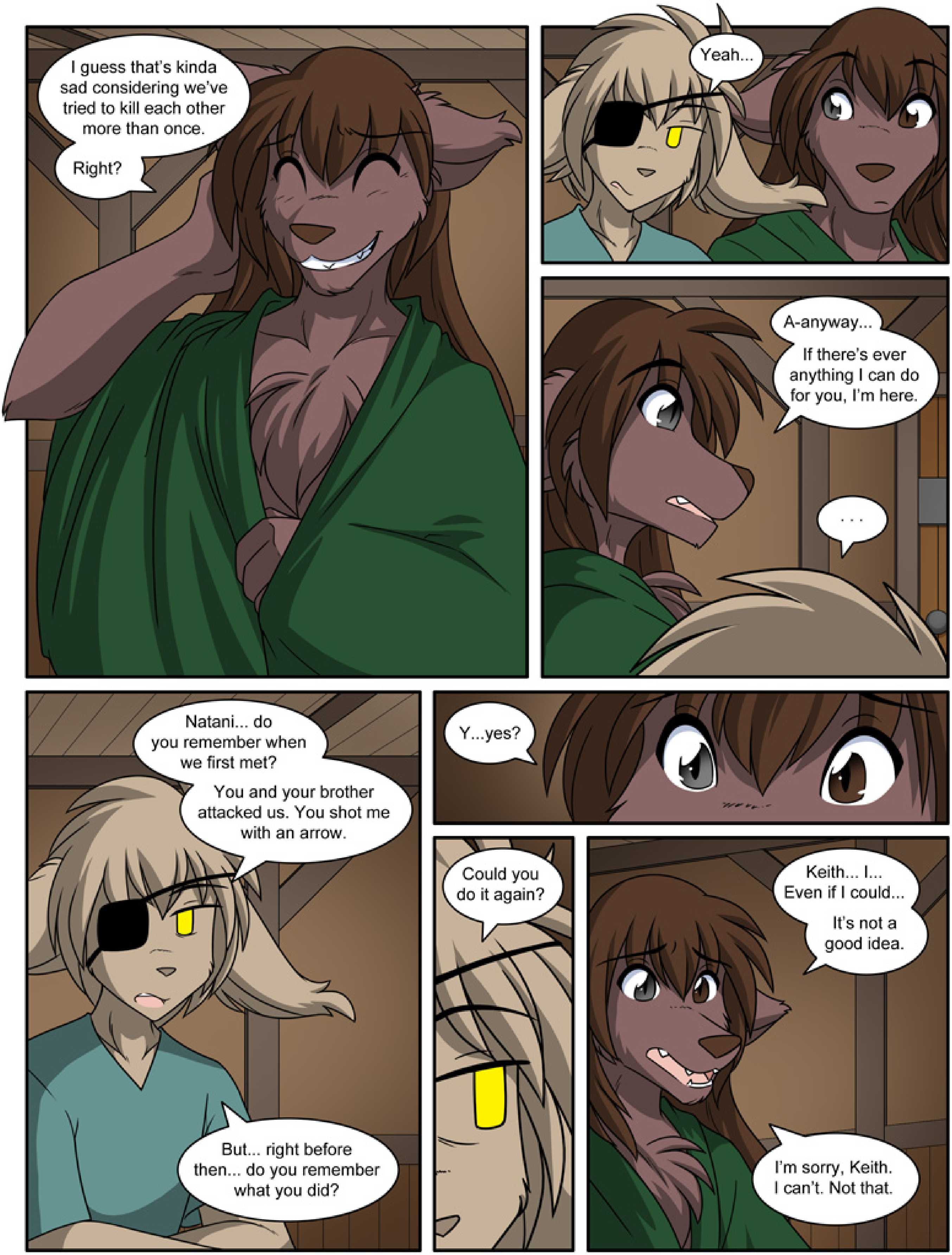

Keith...
What?
L... Laura?
Something wrong, Keith?
Er... nothing.
I gotta go. Thanks for cheering me up. I... I'm fine now!
Uh... glad we could help?
Laura!
Huh?
Oh... Mike.
I thought... I heard... nevermind. Sorry.
Did he just call me Laura? Wait, does he think I look like her?
Is that why he cursed me with black magic?!
What's with that look?

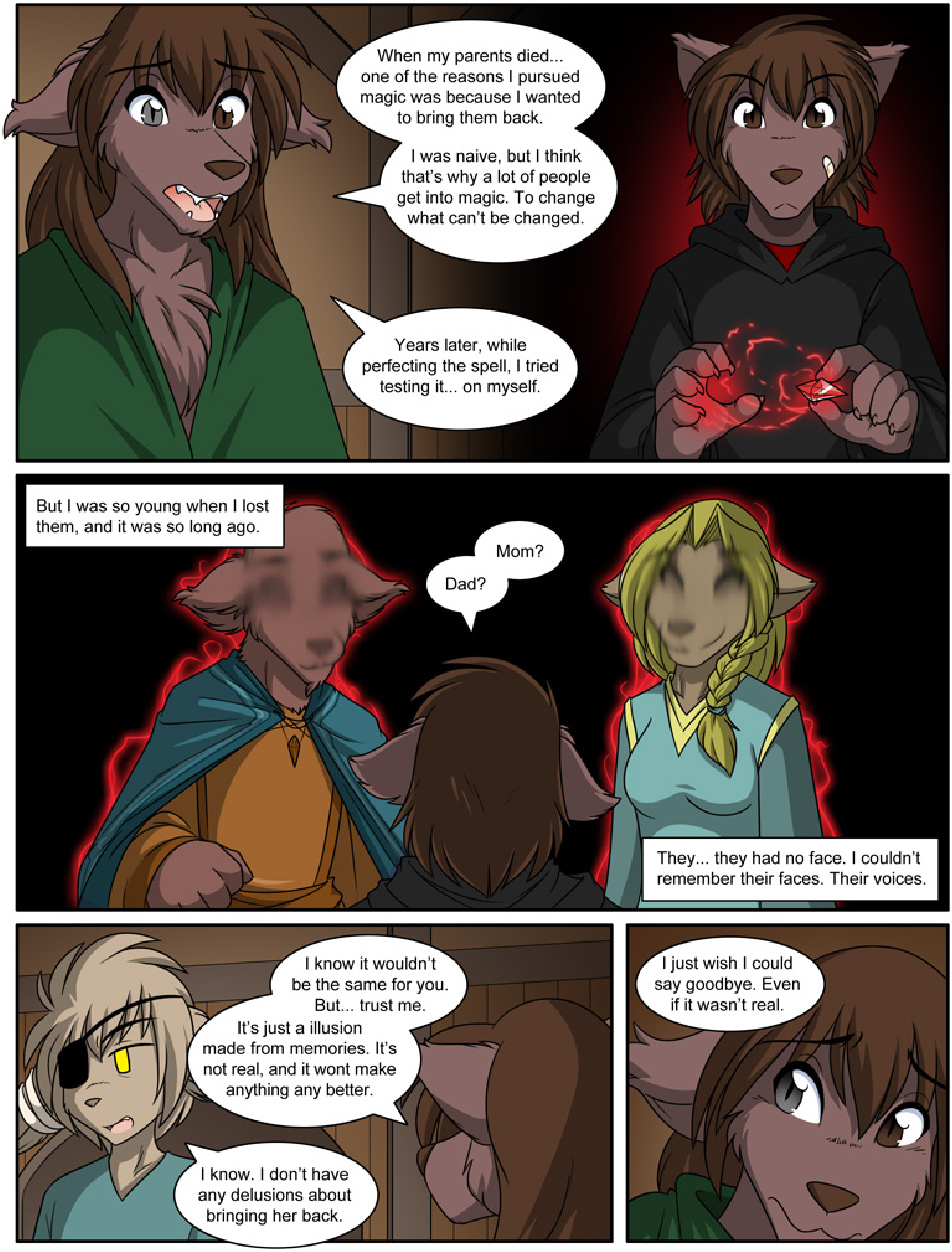

Well, this has been... awkward. I'm just gunna... leave now.
H-hey, wait!
What?
Um... I...
Come on, Mike. You're a free fox now. Time to stand up for yourself.
L-look...
I - I know what you did to me! A - and... don't ask how I know, but I know it's still being done to Natani!
...What?
And... you shouldn't be doing that! It's not right, using your black magic on people just for fun.
Oh, not this again. Why did I ever make up that stupid lie?
And what is he talking about? "Did to him"?
So I think you should change Natani back and, uh, stop it.
Or, erm... we...
I mean, if you don't mind...
Sigh... Alright, fine. I... promise I'll go change him back right now.
And I won't use "black magic" ever again.
R-really? Er, I mean... good.
Maybe I should go have a talk with Natani anyway.

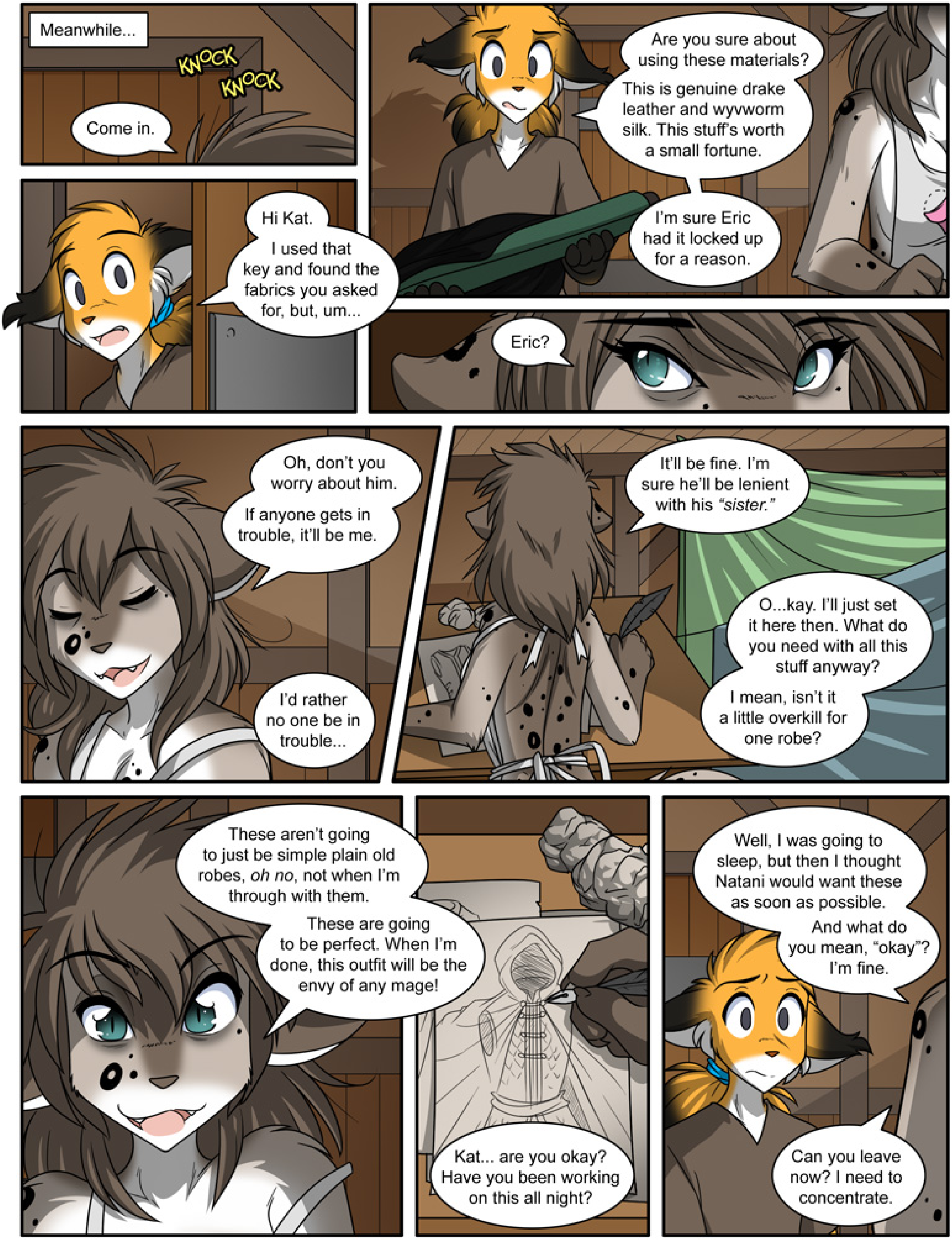

KNOCK!
KNOCK!
Um... I'm busy right now. Go away!
Natani, it's me.
Oh, Keith!
Uh, just a minute...
Yes, yes, I know it's not ready...
Uhuh... but it's only Keith...
S-shut up!
. . . . .
Alright, come in.
Just close the door behind you!
Hey, Natani. I thought we should ta... *N-Natani?!*
Something the matter, Keith?
You look... uh... different.
Convincing, huh? We've been working on it all morning.
The illusion is still a work-in-progress, but it's almost ready.
I haven't run into any major prob–*buh!*
BWOM!

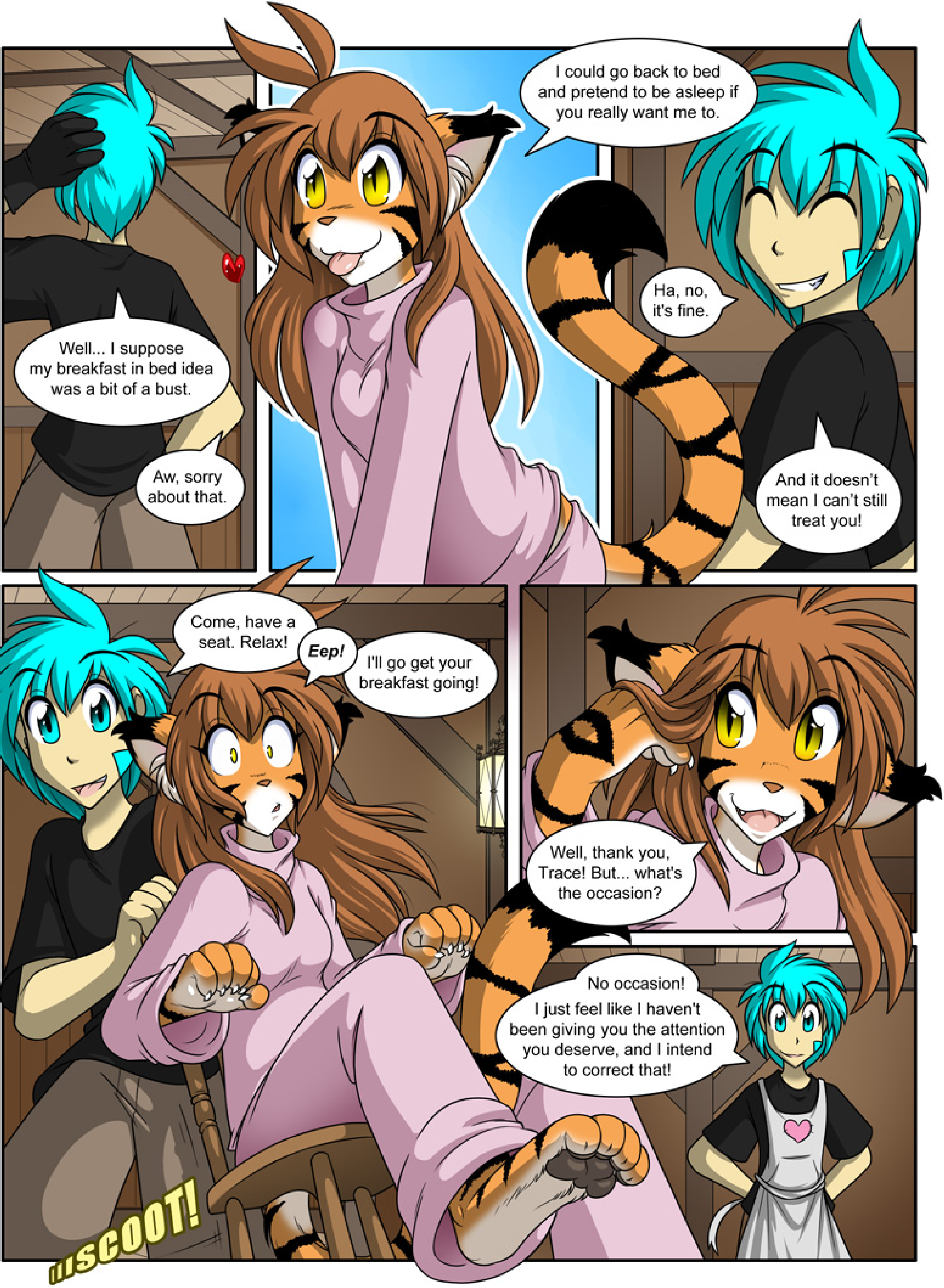

Keith!
Sorry! Sorry! I... I didn't know they were still-
It's fine! I know you didn't mean it. Let's just... pretend that didn't happen.
Like I said, it's still a work-in-progress.
This isn't master-grade magic here. I never took a class in illusion or anything.
This is pure make-it-up-as-you-go spellcasting.
And guesswork magic is very inefficient; burns through what little mana I have quickly.
These crystals were never meant to be charged over and over like this.
But...
CRACK!
Eh, it's stupid.
My robes went up in flames during the ship fire, and–
Fire?! Wait, what fire?
Hopefully it'll be enough. Mike's convinced, but I'm not so sure about Kat.
Huh? Kathrin caught you too?
What happened? Seems like I missed a lot yesterday.
Oh, right. Man, you really did miss a lot, didn't you?
Well, I'm not going anywhere for a while. So if you want, I'll fill you in while I try to fix these *problems*.

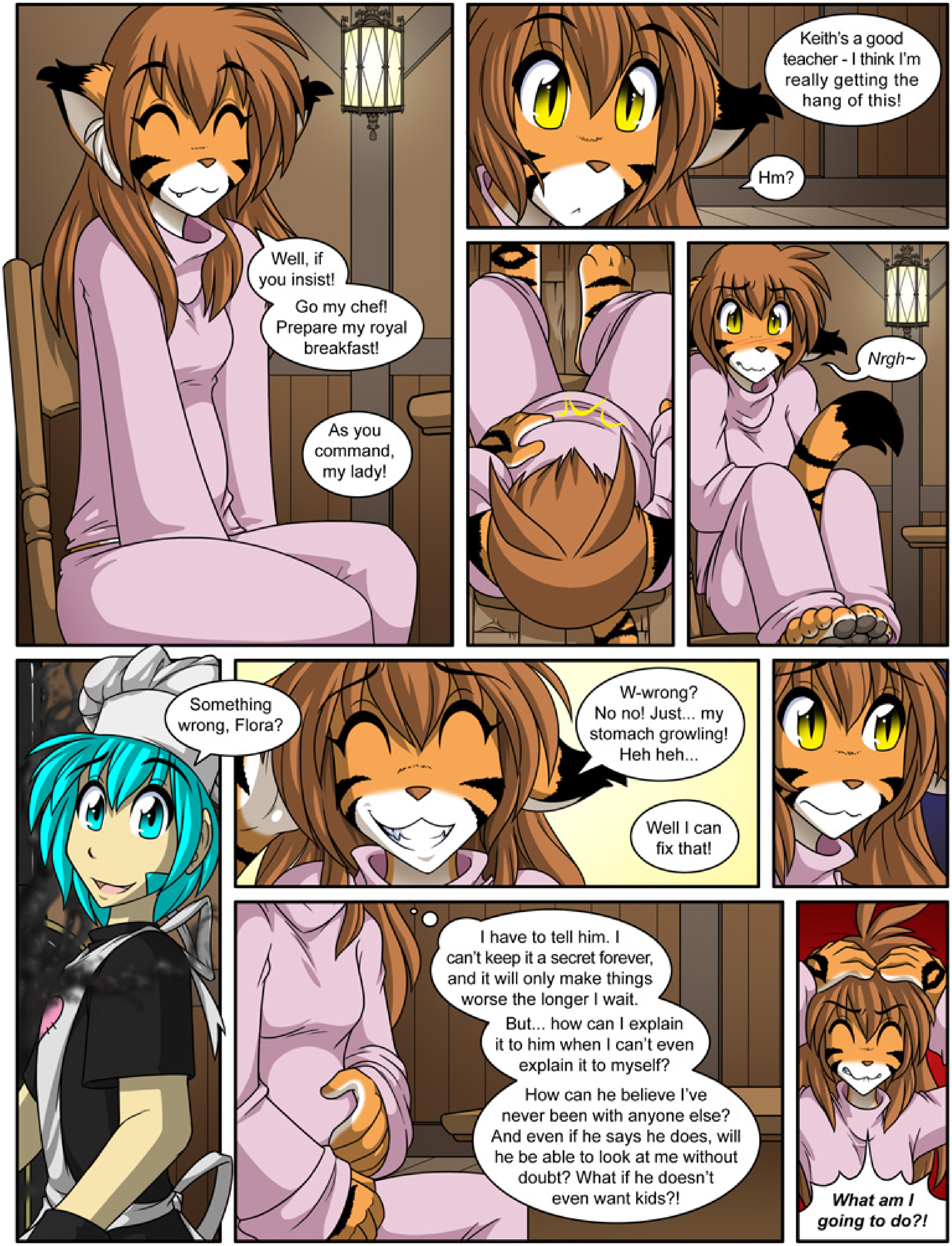

...but then I had the idea to suffocate the fire by removing all the air!
And it worked!
Thanks to yours truly, the ship was saved!
Oh... and then some other stuff happened and the slaves were set free.
but by then my clothes were on fire, so I wasn't there for that part.
POP!
Damn it!
Alright, Zen, how long was that?
...What?! That's half a minute less than last time!
It's still too unpredictable!
Natani... do you... want me to leave?
Huh? ...Oh...
Sigh...
No. Not unless you want to.
I knew when I let you in that the spell wouldn't last.
And to be honest... I'm glad for the company.
You know, I was worried yesterday, when you didn't leave your room at all.
You... were?
Yes! I mean, if you hadn't noticed, there's not a whole lot of people here I can talk to.
You're probably the closest thing I have to a friend on this ship.

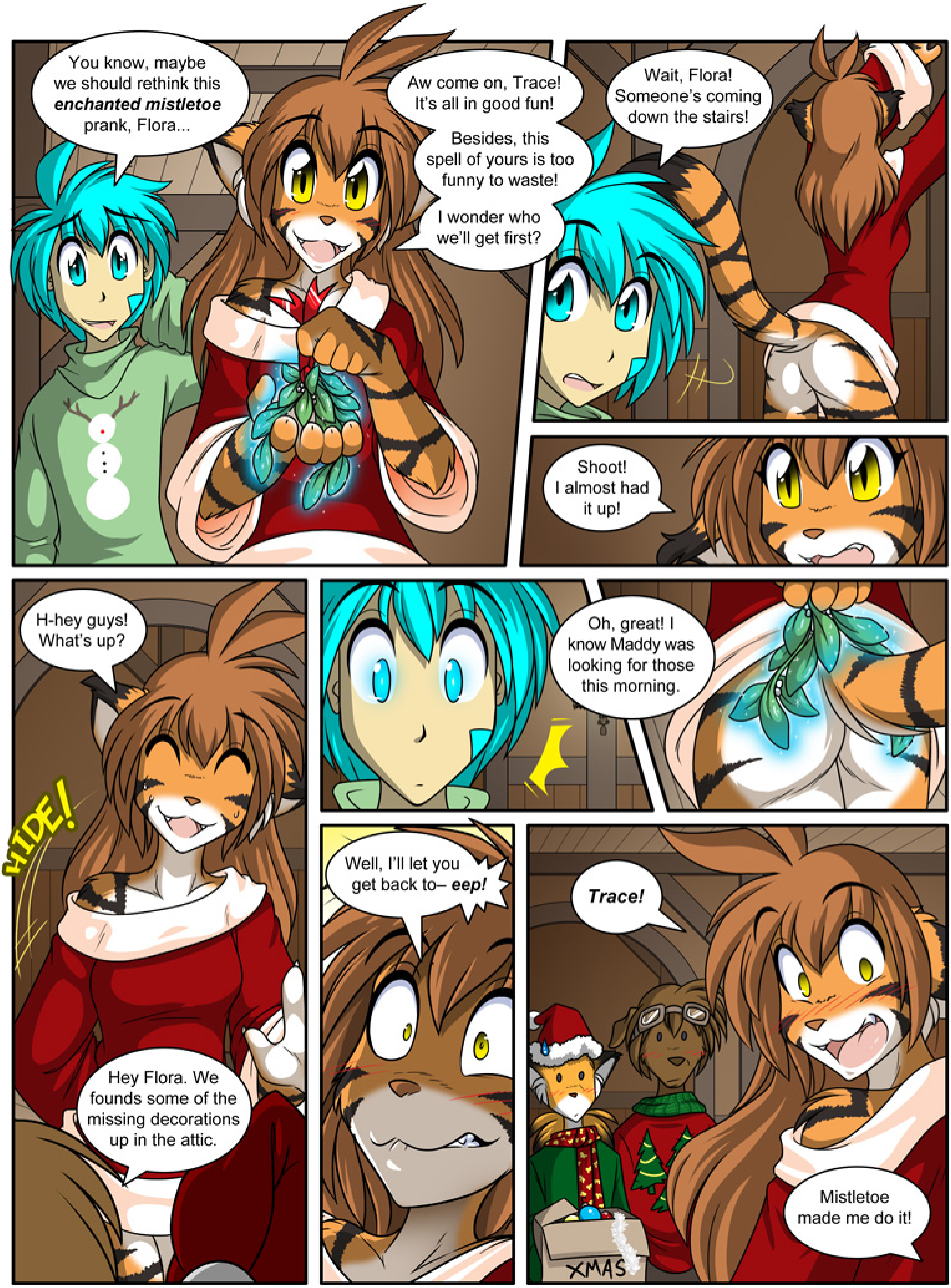

I guess that's kinda sad considering we've tried to kill each other more than once.
Right?
Yeah...
A-anyway...
If there's ever anything I can do for you, I'm here.
. . .
Natani... do you remember when we first met?
You and your brother attacked us. You shot me with an arrow.
But... right before then... do you remember what you did?
Y...yes?
Could you do it again?
Keith... I... Even if I could...
It's not a good idea.
I'm sorry, Keith. I can't. Not that.

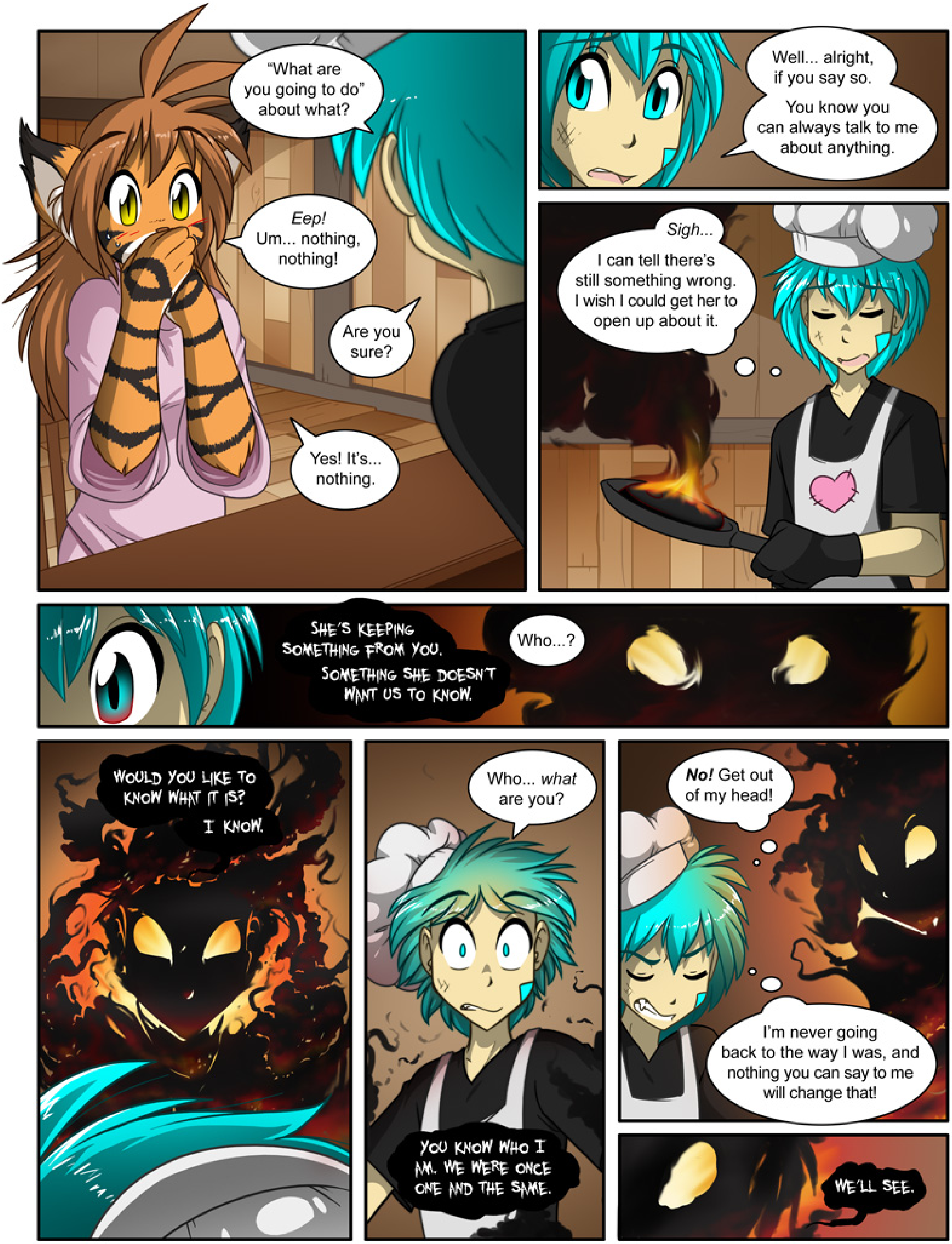

When my parents died... one of the reasons I pursued magic was because I wanted to bring them back.
I was naive, but I think that's why a lot of people get into magic. To change what can't be changed.
Years later, while perfecting the spell, I tried testing it... on myself.
But I was so young when I lost them, and it was so long ago.
Mom?
Dad?
They... they had no face. I couldn't remember their faces. Their voices.
I know it wouldn't be the same for you. But... trust me.
It's just a illusion made from memories. It's not real, and it wont make anything any better.
I know. I don't have any delusions about bringing her back.
I just wish I could say goodbye. Even if it wasn't real.

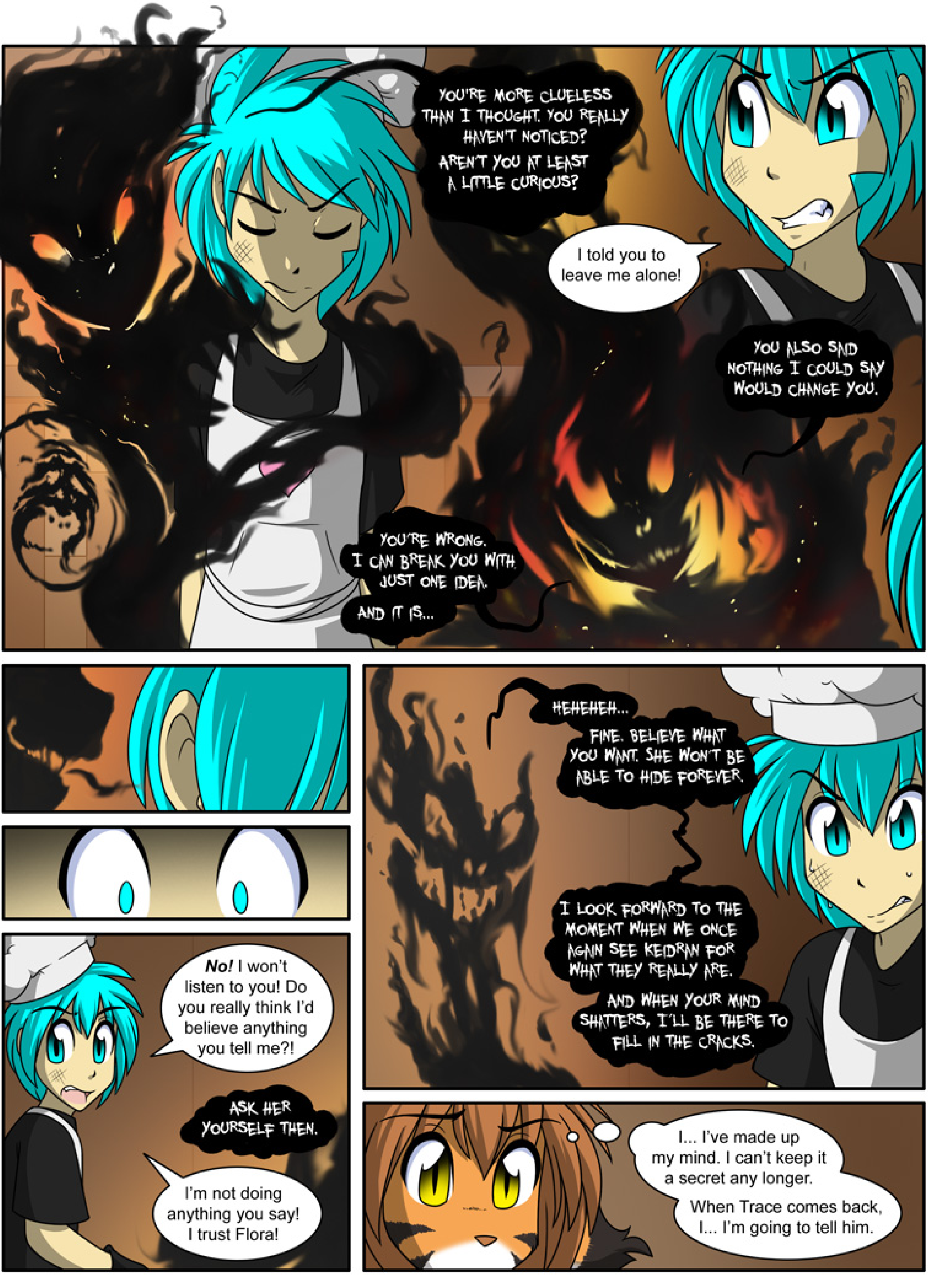

Meanwhile...
KNOCK KNOCK
Come in.
Hi Kat.
I used that key and found the fabrics you asked for, but, um...
Are you sure about using these materials?
This is genuine drake leather and wyvworm silk. This stuff's worth a small fortune.
I'm sure Eric had it locked up for a reason.
Eric?
Oh, don't you worry about him.
If anyone gets in trouble, it'll be me.
I'd rather no one be in trouble...
It'll be fine. I'm sure he'll be lenient with his *"sister."*
O...kay. I'll just set it here then. What do you need with all this stuff anyway?
I mean, isn't it a little overkill for one robe?
These aren't going to just be simple plain old robes, *oh no*, not when I'm through with them.
These are going to be perfect. When I'm done, this outfit will be the envy of any mage!
Kat... are you okay? Have you been working on this all night?
Well, I was going to sleep, but then I thought Natani would want these as soon as possible.
And what do you mean, "okay"? I'm fine.
Can you leave now? I need to concentrate.

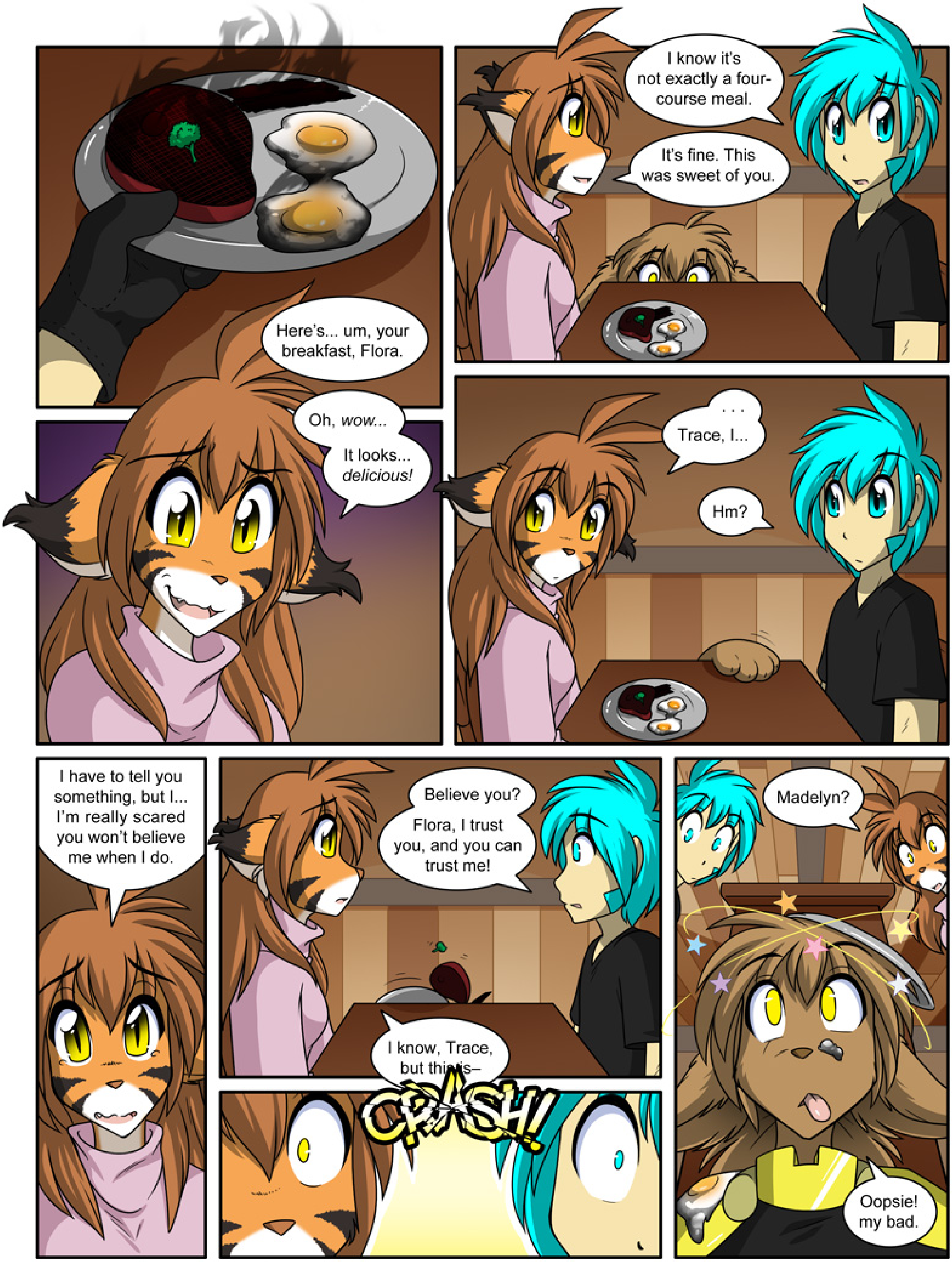

Well... I suppose my breakfast in bed idea was a bit of a bust.
Aw, sorry about that.
I could go back to bed and pretend to be asleep if you really want me to.
Ha, no, it's fine.
And it doesn't mean I can't still treat you!
Come, have a seat. Relax!
Eep!
I'll go get your breakfast going!
!!!SCOOT!
Well, thank you, Trace! But... what's the occasion?
No occasion! I just feel like I haven't been giving you the attention you deserve, and I intend to correct that!

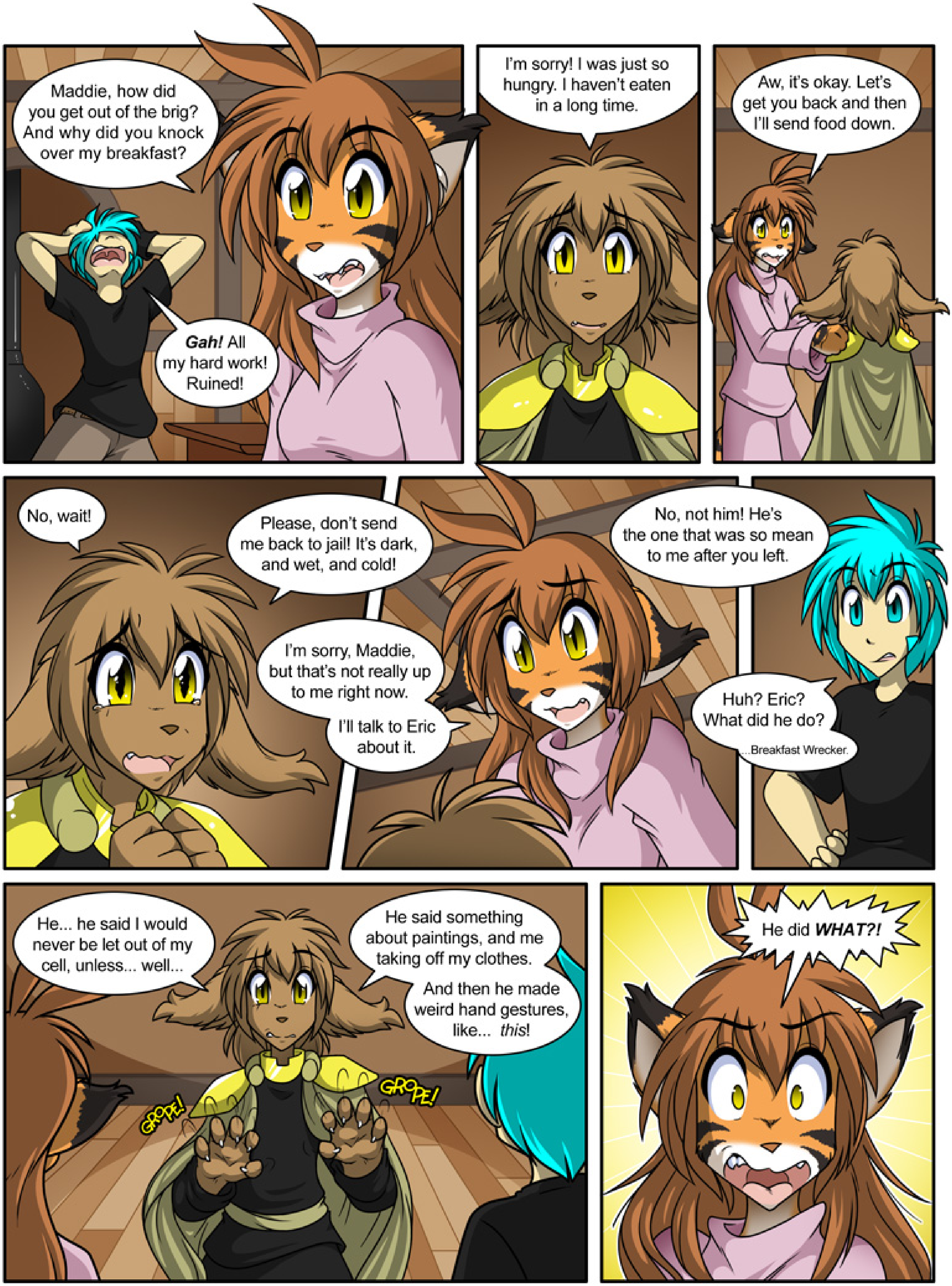

Well, if you insist!
Go my chef! Prepare my royal breakfast!
As you command, my lady!
Keith's a good teacher - I think I'm really getting the hang of this!
Hm?
Nrgh~
Something wrong, Flora?
W-wrong? No no! Just... my stomach growling! Heh heh...
Well I can fix that!
I have to tell him. I can't keep it a secret forever, and it will only make things worse the longer I wait.
But... how can I explain it to him when I can't even explain it to myself?
How can he believe I've never been with anyone else? And even if he says he does, will he be able to look at me without doubt? What if he doesn't even want kids?!
What am I going to do?!

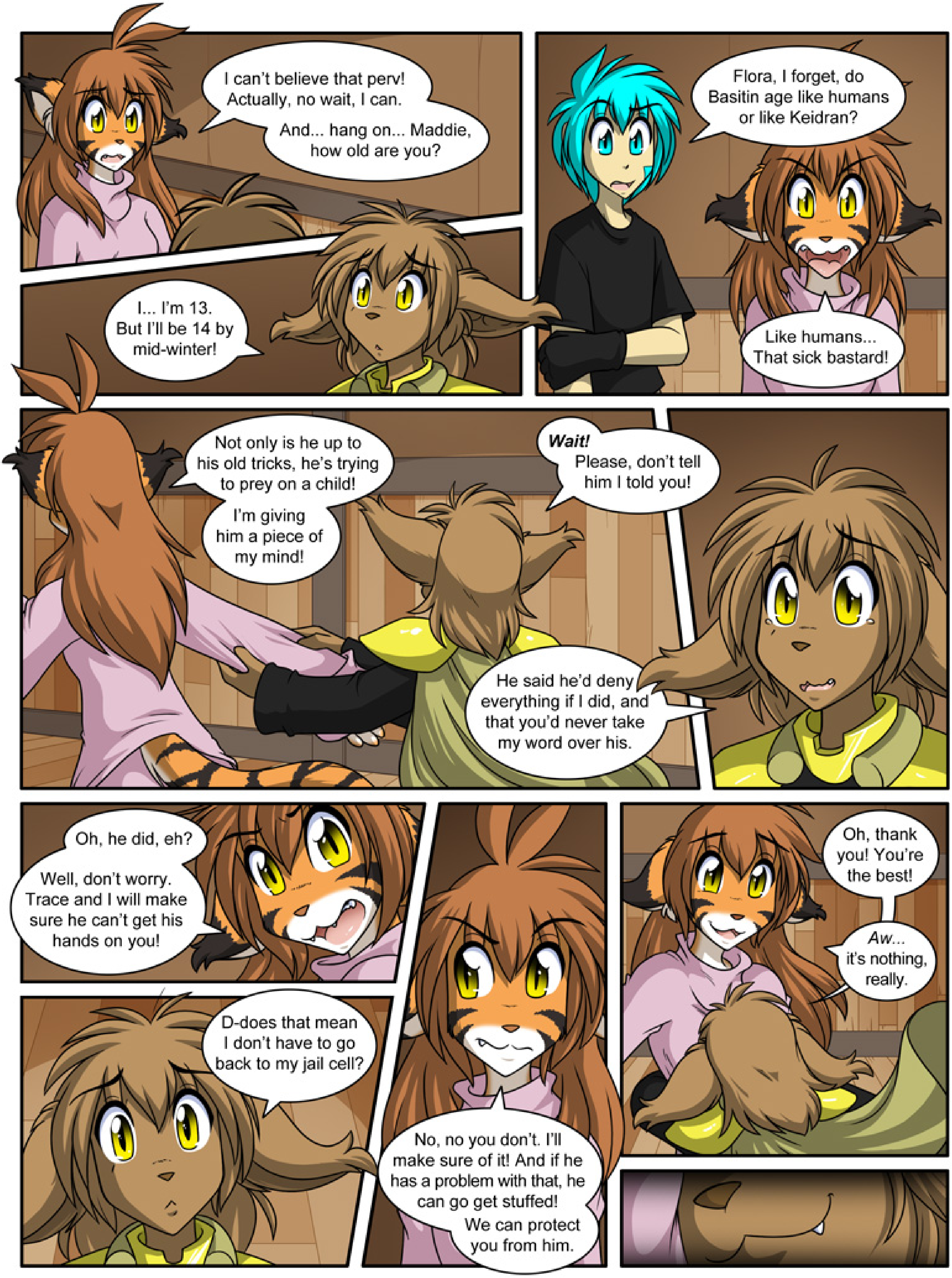

You know, maybe we should rethink this ***enchanted mistletoe*** prank, Flora...
Aw come on, Trace! It's all in good fun!
Besides, this spell of yours is too funny to waste!
I wonder who we'll get first?
Wait, Flora! Someone's coming down the stairs!
Shoot! I almost had it up!
H-hey guys! What's up?
HIDE!
Hey Flora. We founds some of the missing decorations up in the attic.
Oh, great! I know Maddy was looking for those this morning.
Well, I'll let you get back to– ***eep!***
Trace!
XMAS
Mistletoe made me do it!

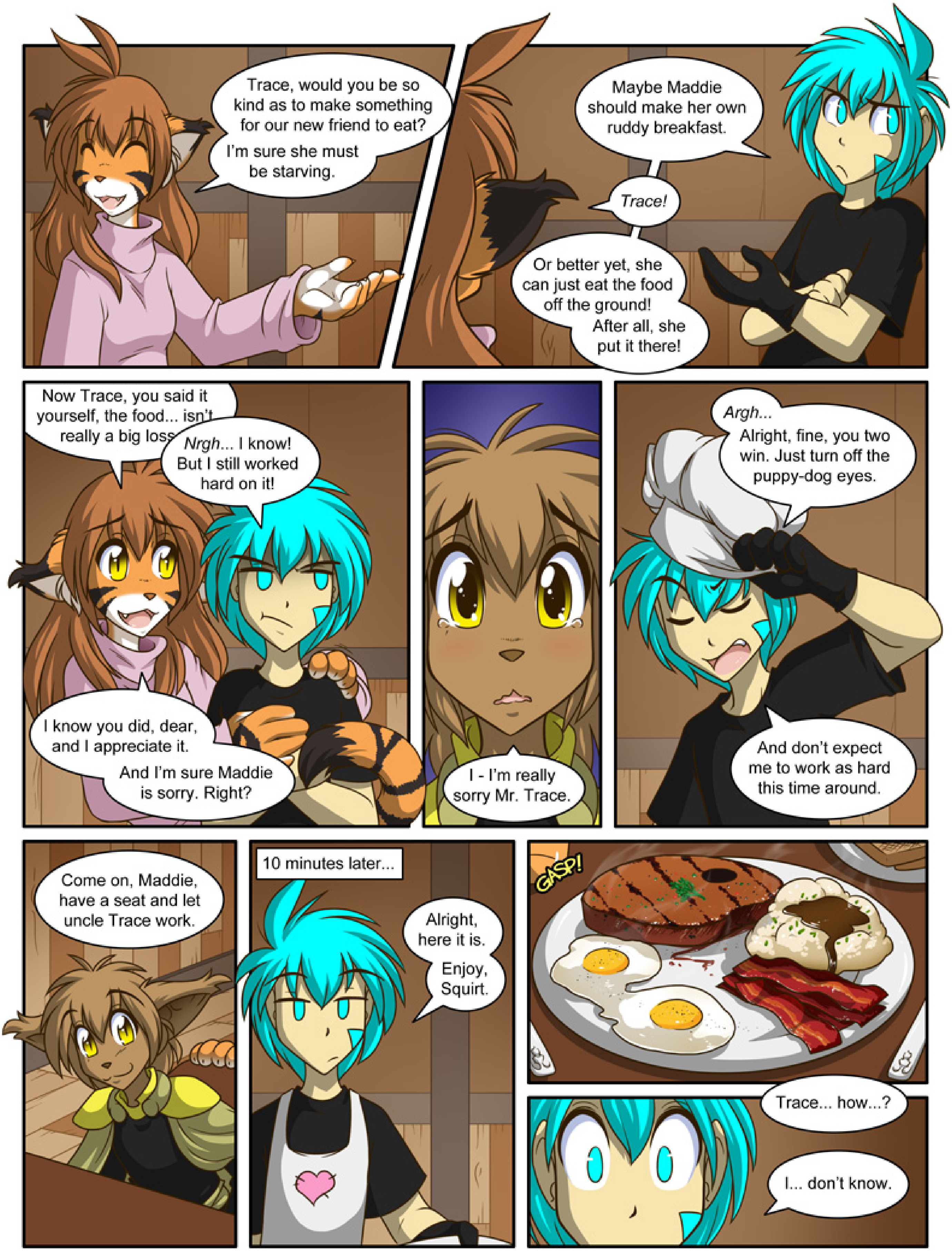

"What are you going to do" about what?
Eep! Um... nothing, nothing!
Are you sure?
Yes! It's... nothing.
Well... alright, if you say so.
You know you can always talk to me about anything.
Sigh...
I can tell there's still something wrong. I wish I could get her to open up about it.
SHE'S KEEPING SOMETHING FROM YOU.
SOMETHING SHE DOESN'T WANT US TO KNOW.
Who...?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IT IS?
I KNOW.
Who... *what* are you?
YOU KNOW WHO I AM. WE WERE ONCE ONE AND THE SAME.
No! Get out of my head!
I'm never going back to the way I was, and nothing you can say to me will change that!
WE'LL SEE.

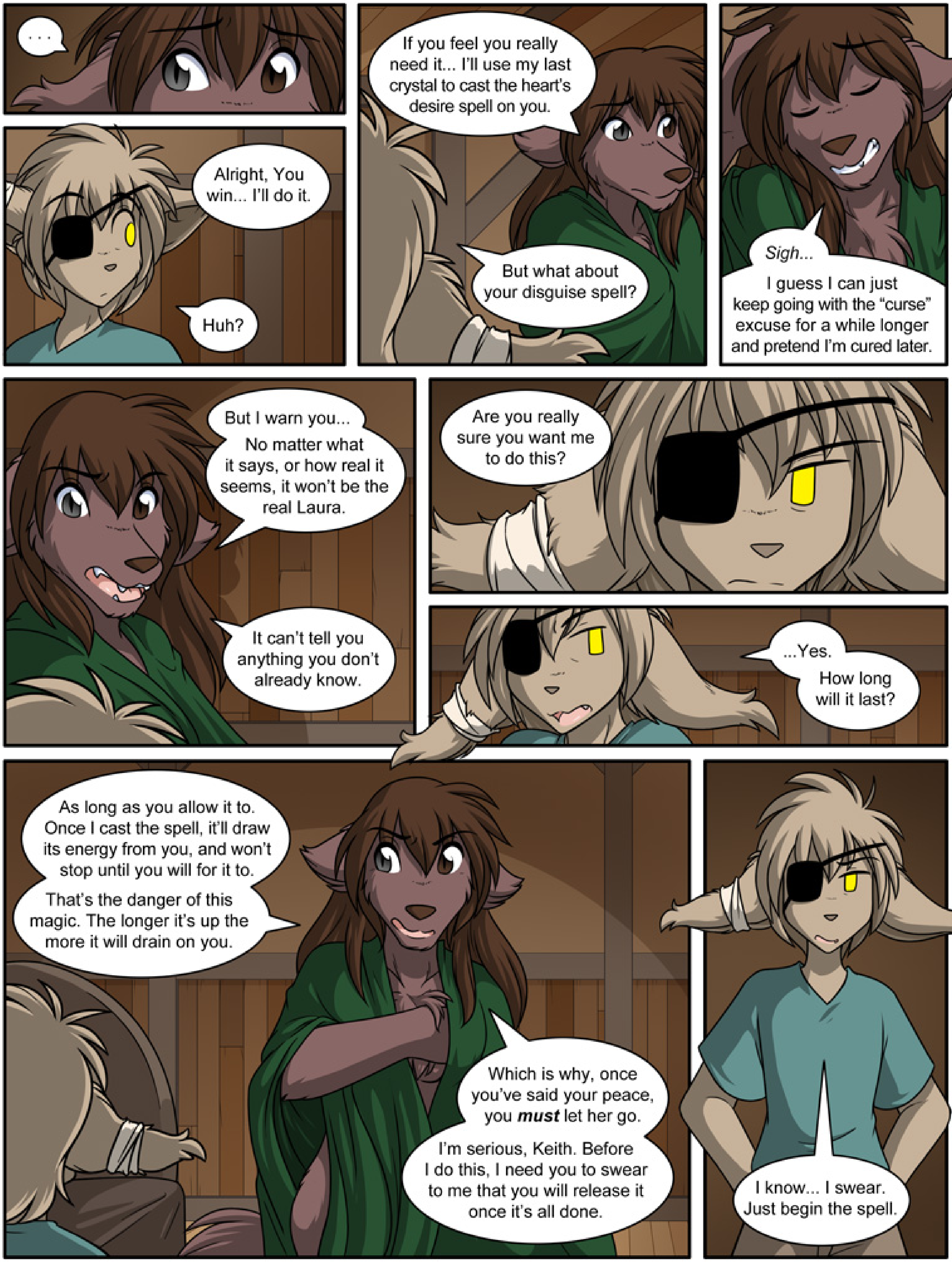

YOU'RE MORE CLUELESS THAN I THOUGHT. YOU REALLY HAVEN'T NOTICED?
AREN'T YOU AT LEAST A LITTLE CURIOUS?
I told you to leave me alone!
YOU ALSO SAID NOTHING I COULD SAY WOULD CHANGE YOU.
YOU'RE WRONG. I CAN BREAK YOU WITH JUST ONE IDEA.
AND IT IS...
HEHEHEH...
FINE. BELIEVE WHAT YOU WANT. SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO HIDE FOREVER.
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE MOMENT WHEN WE ONCE AGAIN SEE KEIDRAN FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE.
AND WHEN YOUR MIND SHATTERS, I'LL BE THERE TO FILL IN THE CRACKS.
No! I won't listen to you! Do you really think I'd believe anything you tell me?!
ASK HER YOURSELF THEN.
I'm not doing anything you say! I trust Flora!
I... I've made up my mind. I can't keep it a secret any longer.
When Trace comes back, I... I'm going to tell him.

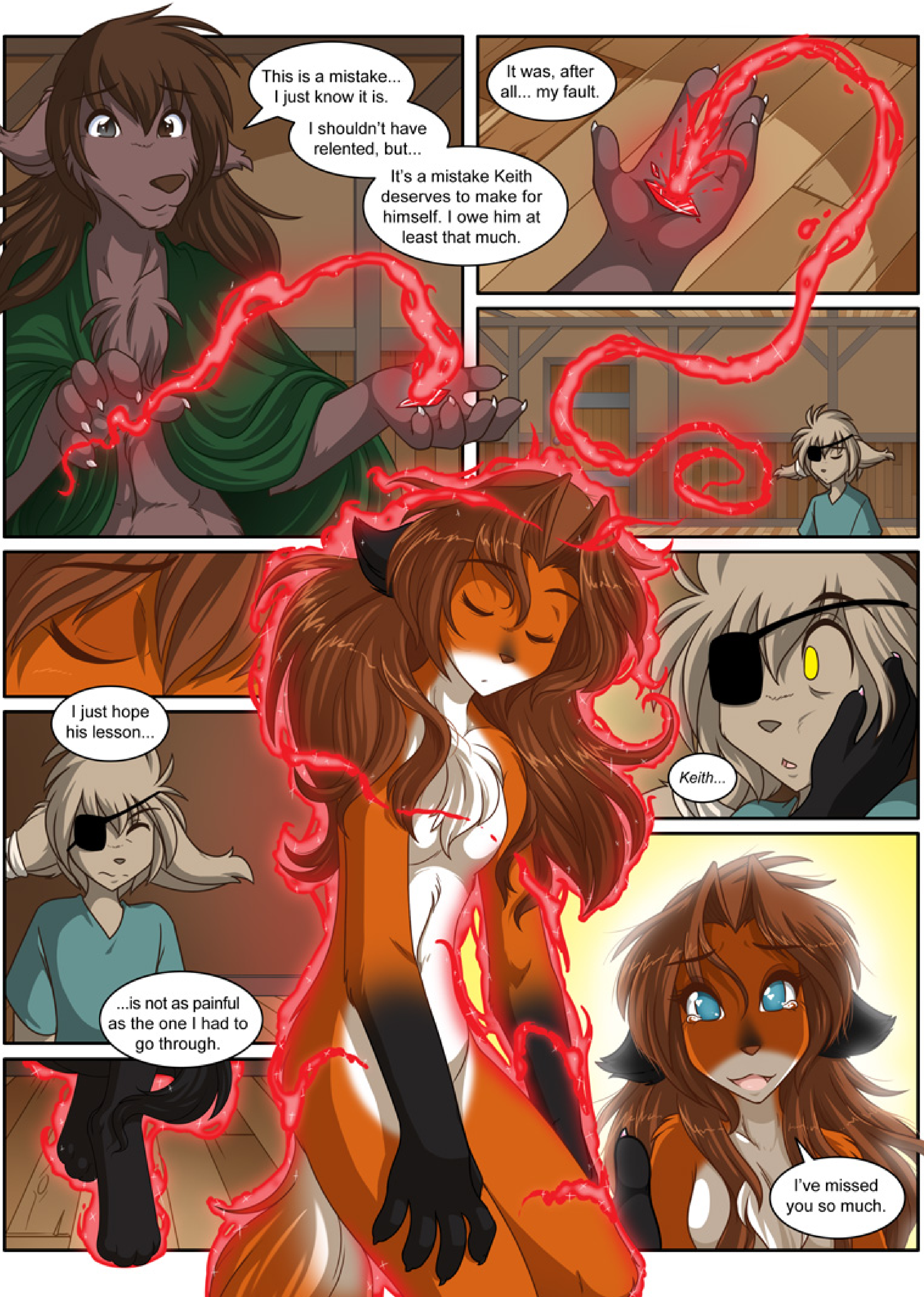

Here's... um, your breakfast, Flora.
Oh, *wow*... It looks... *delicious!*
I know it's not exactly a four-course meal.
It's fine. This was sweet of you.
. . .
Trace, I...
Hm?
I have to tell you something, but I... I'm really scared you won't believe me when I do.
Believe you? Flora, I trust you, and you can trust me!
I know, Trace, but this is–
CRASH!
Madelyn?
Oopsie! my bad.

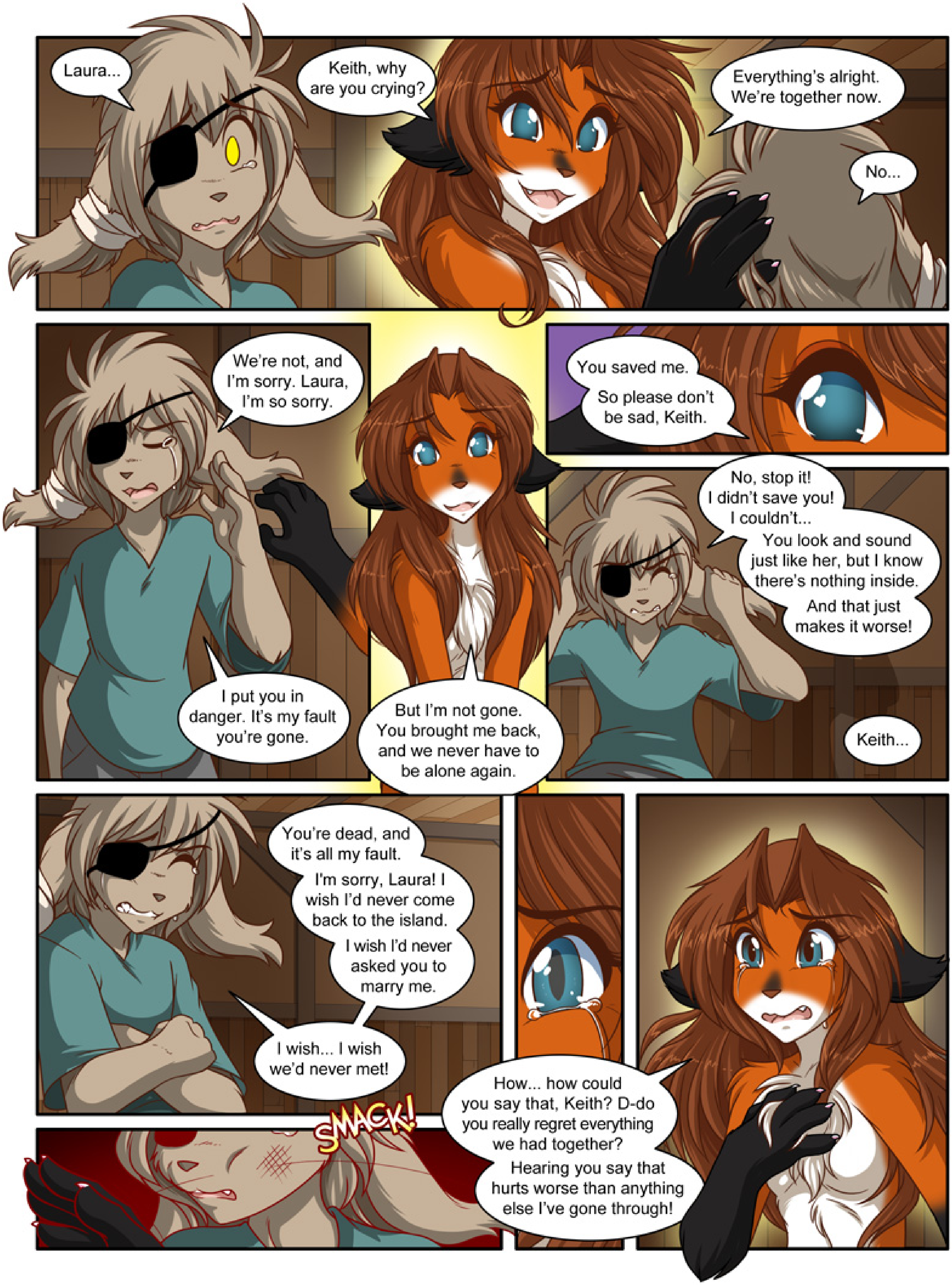

Maddie, how did you get out of the brig? And why did you knock over my breakfast?
Gah! All my hard work! Ruined!
I'm sorry! I was just so hungry. I haven't eaten in a long time.
Aw, it's okay. Let's get you back and then I'll send food down.
No, wait!
Please, don't send me back to jail! It's dark, and wet, and cold!
I'm sorry, Maddie, but that's not really up to me right now.
I'll talk to Eric about it.
No, not him! He's the one that was so mean to me after you left.
Huh? Eric? What did he do?
...Breakfast Wrecker.
He... he said I would never be let out of my cell, unless... well...
He said something about paintings, and me taking off my clothes.
And then he made weird hand gestures, like... *this*!
GROPE!
GROPE!
He did ***WHAT?!***

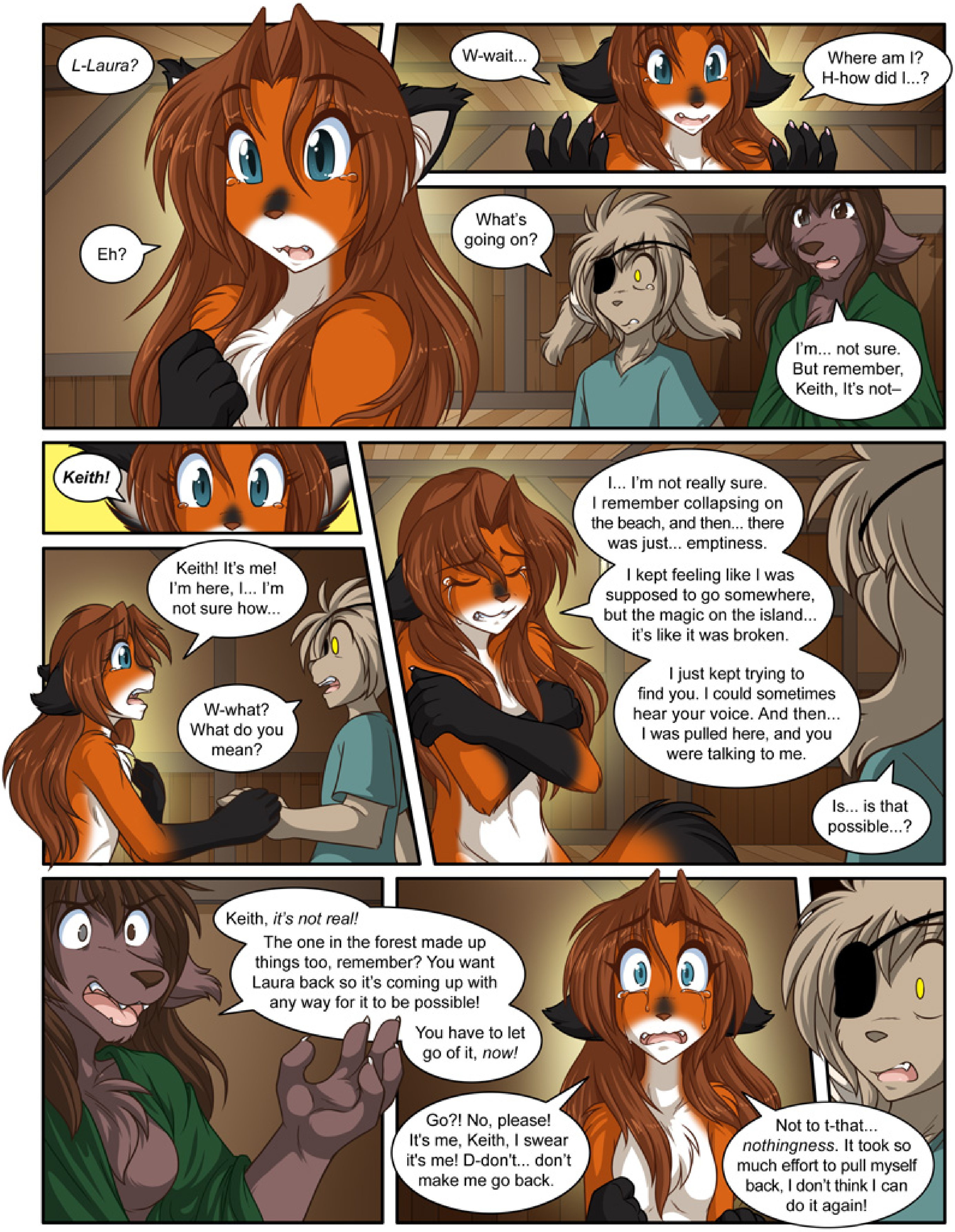

I can't believe that perv! Actually, no wait, I can.
And... hang on... Maddie, how old are you?
I... I'm 13. But I'll be 14 by mid-winter!
Flora, I forget, do Basitin age like humans or like Keidran?
Like humans... That sick bastard!
Not only is he up to his old tricks, he's trying to prey on a child!
I'm giving him a piece of my mind!
Wait! Please, don't tell him I told you!
He said he'd deny everything if I did, and that you'd never take my word over his.
Oh, he did, eh?
Well, don't worry. Trace and I will make sure he can't get his hands on you!
D-does that mean I don't have to go back to my jail cell?
No, no you don't. I'll make sure of it! And if he has a problem with that, he can go get stuffed!
We can protect you from him.
Oh, thank you! You're the best!
Aw... it's nothing, really.

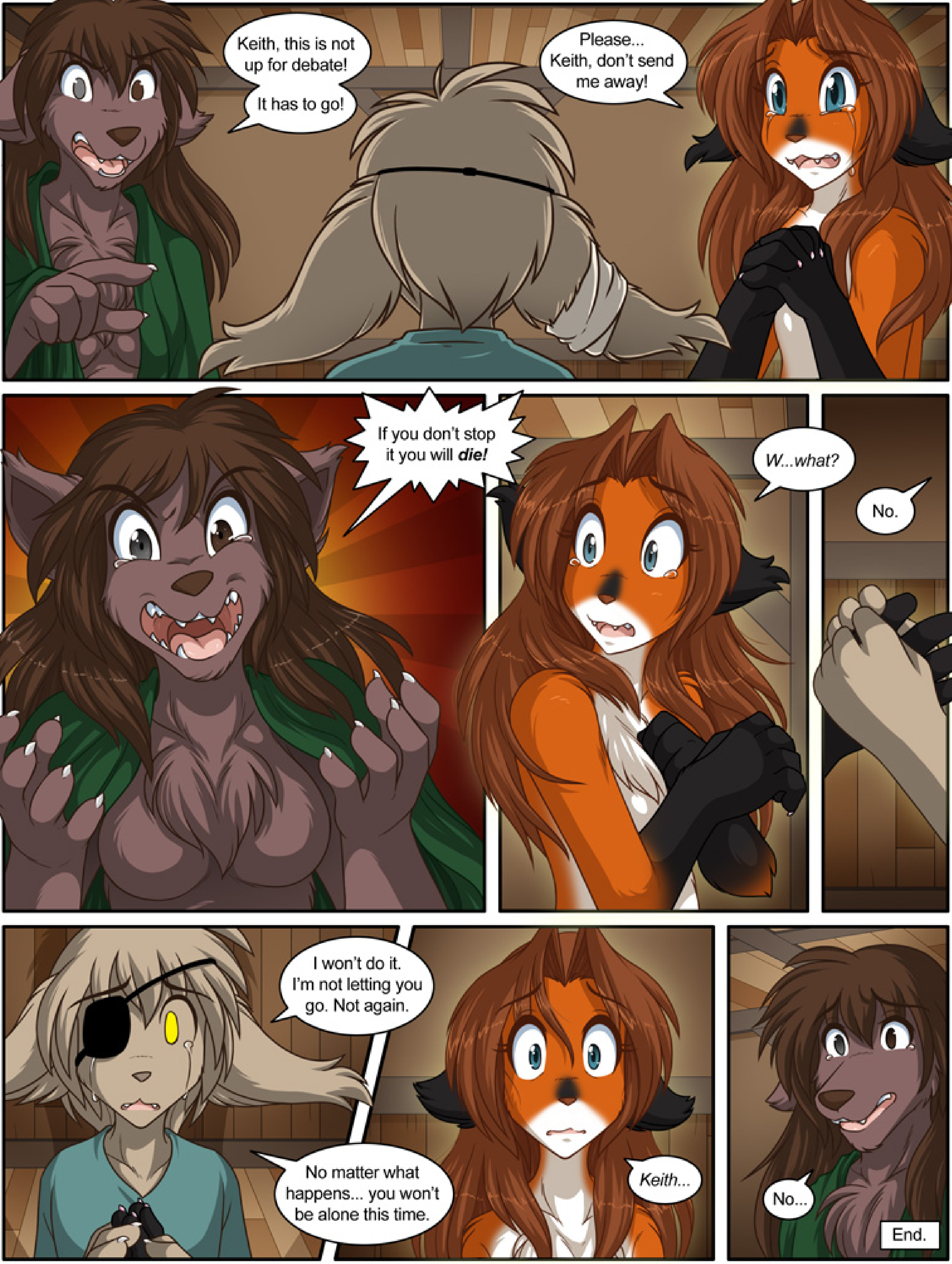

Trace, would you be so kind as to make something for our new friend to eat?
I'm sure she must be starving.
Maybe Maddie should make her own ruddy breakfast.
Trace!
Or better yet, she can just eat the food off the ground!
After all, she put it there!
Now Trace, you said it yourself, the food... isn't really a big loss.
Nrgh... I know! But I still worked hard on it!
I know you did, dear, and I appreciate it.
And I'm sure Maddie is sorry. Right?
I - I'm really sorry Mr. Trace.
Argh...
Alright, fine, you two win. Just turn off the puppy-dog eyes.
And don't expect me to work as hard this time around.
Come on, Maddie, have a seat and let uncle Trace work.
10 minutes later...
Alright, here it is.
Enjoy, Squirt.
GASP!
Trace... how...?
I... don't know.


. . .
Alright, You win... I'll do it.
Huh?
If you feel you really need it... I'll use my last crystal to cast the heart's desire spell on you.
But what about your disguise spell?
Sigh...
I guess I can just keep going with the "curse" excuse for a while longer and pretend I'm cured later.
But I warn you... No matter what it says, or how real it seems, it won't be the real Laura.
It can't tell you anything you don't already know.
Are you really sure you want me to do this?
...Yes. How long will it last?
As long as you allow it to. Once I cast the spell, it'll draw its energy from you, and won't stop until you will for it to.
That's the danger of this magic. The longer it's up the more it will drain on you.
Which is why, once you've said your peace, you ***must*** let her go.
I'm serious, Keith. Before I do this, I need you to swear to me that you will release it once it's all done.
I know... I swear. Just begin the spell.


This is a mistake... I just know it is.
I shouldn't have relented, but...
It's a mistake Keith deserves to make for himself. I owe him at least that much.
It was, after all... my fault.
I just hope his lesson...
...is not as painful as the one I had to go through.
Keith...
I've missed you so much.


Laura...
Keith, why are you crying?
Everything's alright. We're together now.
No...
We're not, and I'm sorry. Laura, I'm so sorry.
You saved me.
So please don't be sad, Keith.
No, stop it! I didn't save you! I couldn't...
You look and sound just like her, but I know there's nothing inside.
And that just makes it worse!
I put you in danger. It's my fault you're gone.
But I'm not gone. You brought me back, and we never have to be alone again.
Keith...
You're dead, and it's all my fault.
I'm sorry, Laura! I wish I'd never come back to the island.
I wish I'd never asked you to marry me.
I wish... I wish we'd never met!
SMACK!
How... how could you say that, Keith? D-do you really regret everything we had together?
Hearing you say that hurts worse than anything else I've gone through!

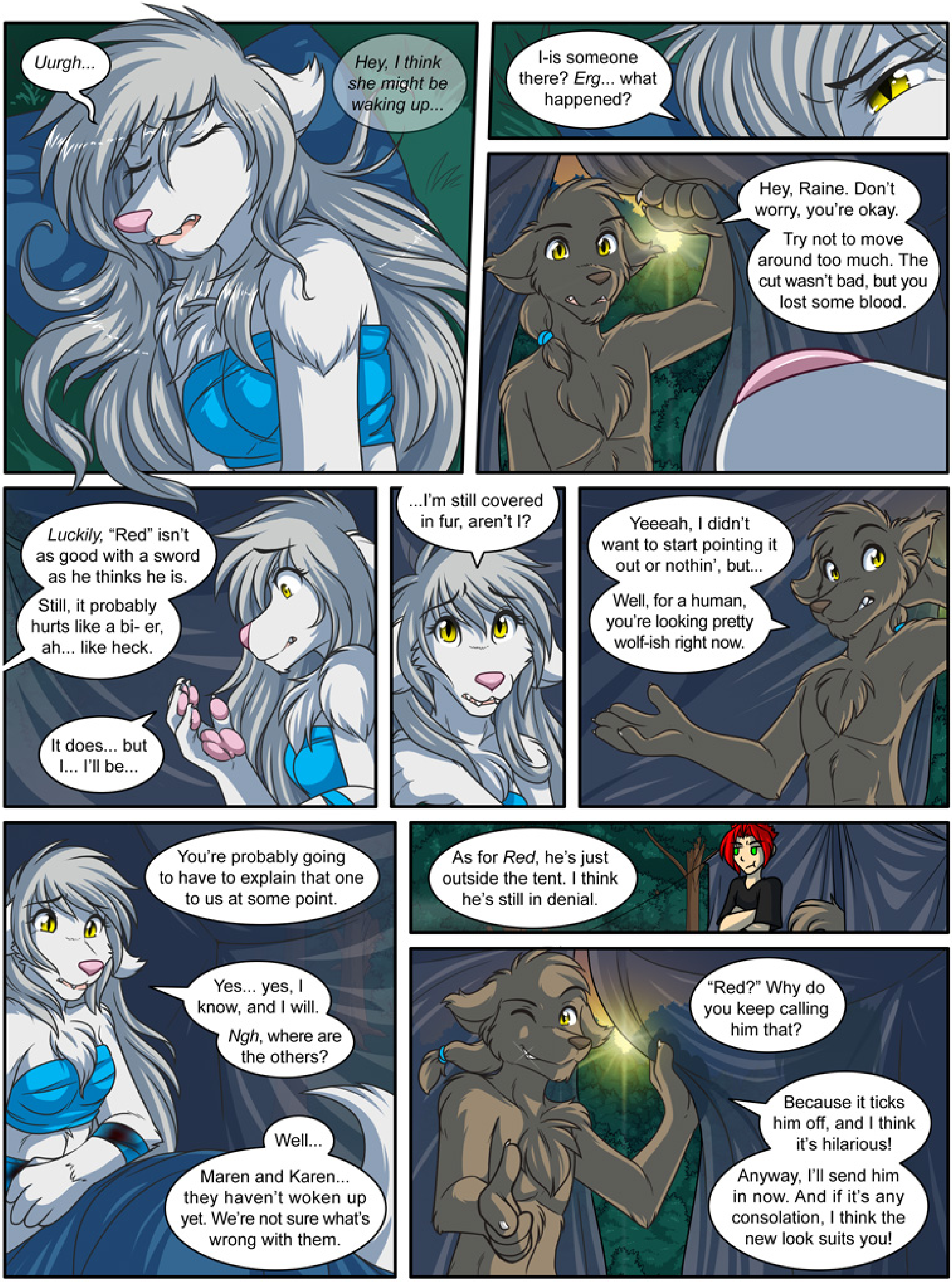

L-Laura?
Eh?
W-wait...
Where am I? H-how did I...?
What's going on?
I'm... not sure. But remember, Keith, It's not–
Keith!
Keith! It's me! I'm here, I... I'm not sure how...
W-what? What do you mean?
I... I'm not really sure. I remember collapsing on the beach, and then... there was just... emptiness.
I kept feeling like I was supposed to go somewhere, but the magic on the island... it's like it was broken.
I just kept trying to find you. I could sometimes hear your voice. And then... I was pulled here, and you were talking to me.
Is... is that possible...?
Keith, *it's not real!*
The one in the forest made up things too, remember? You want Laura back so it's coming up with any way for it to be possible!
You have to let go of it, *now!*
Go?! No, please! It's me, Keith, I swear it's me! D-don't... don't make me go back.
Not to t-that... *nothingness*. It took so much effort to pull myself back, I don't think I can do it again!

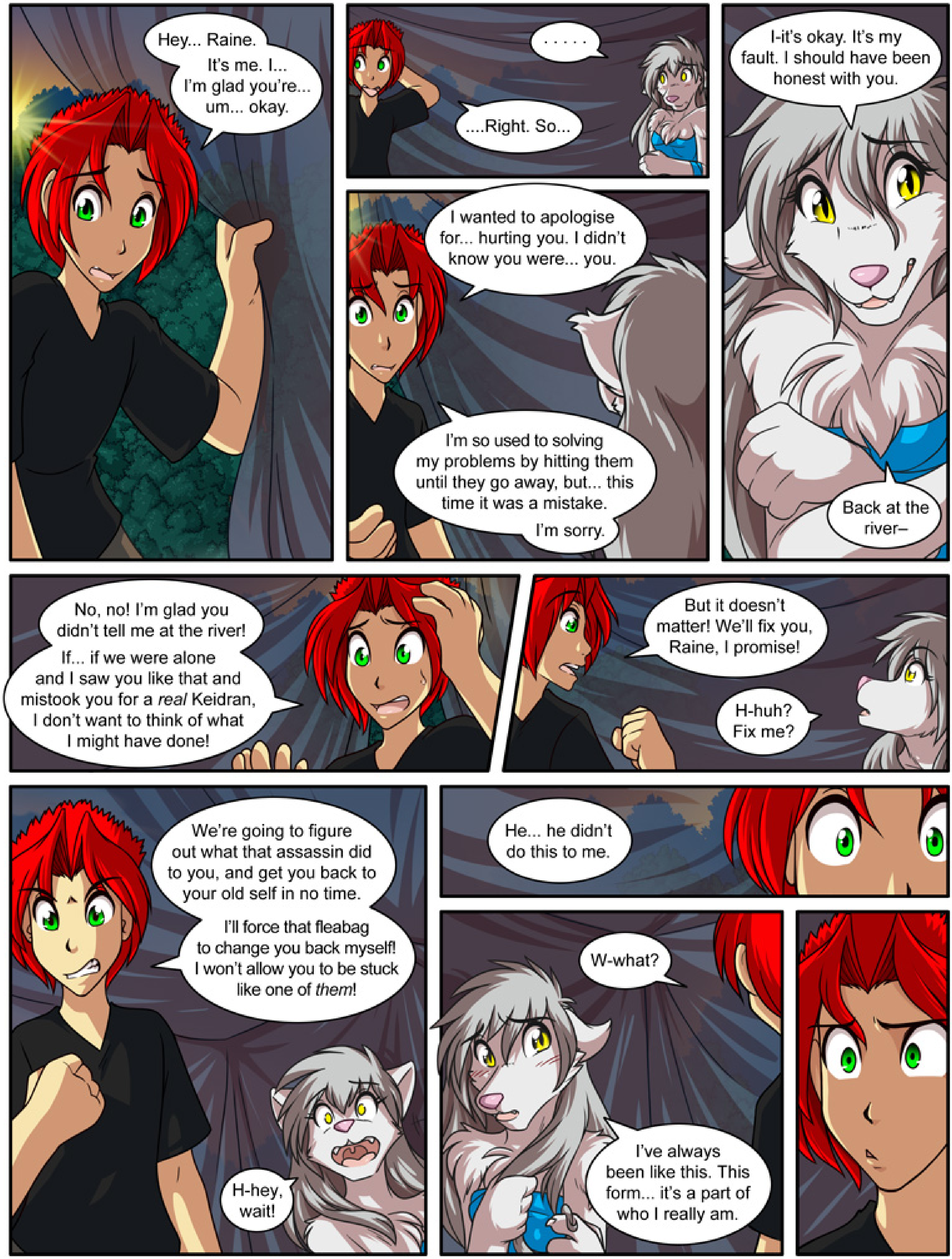

Keith, this is not up for debate!
It has to go!
Please... Keith, don't send me away!
If you don't stop it you will *die!*
W...what?
No.
I won't do it. I'm not letting you go. Not again.
No matter what happens... you won't be alone this time.
Keith...
No...
End.

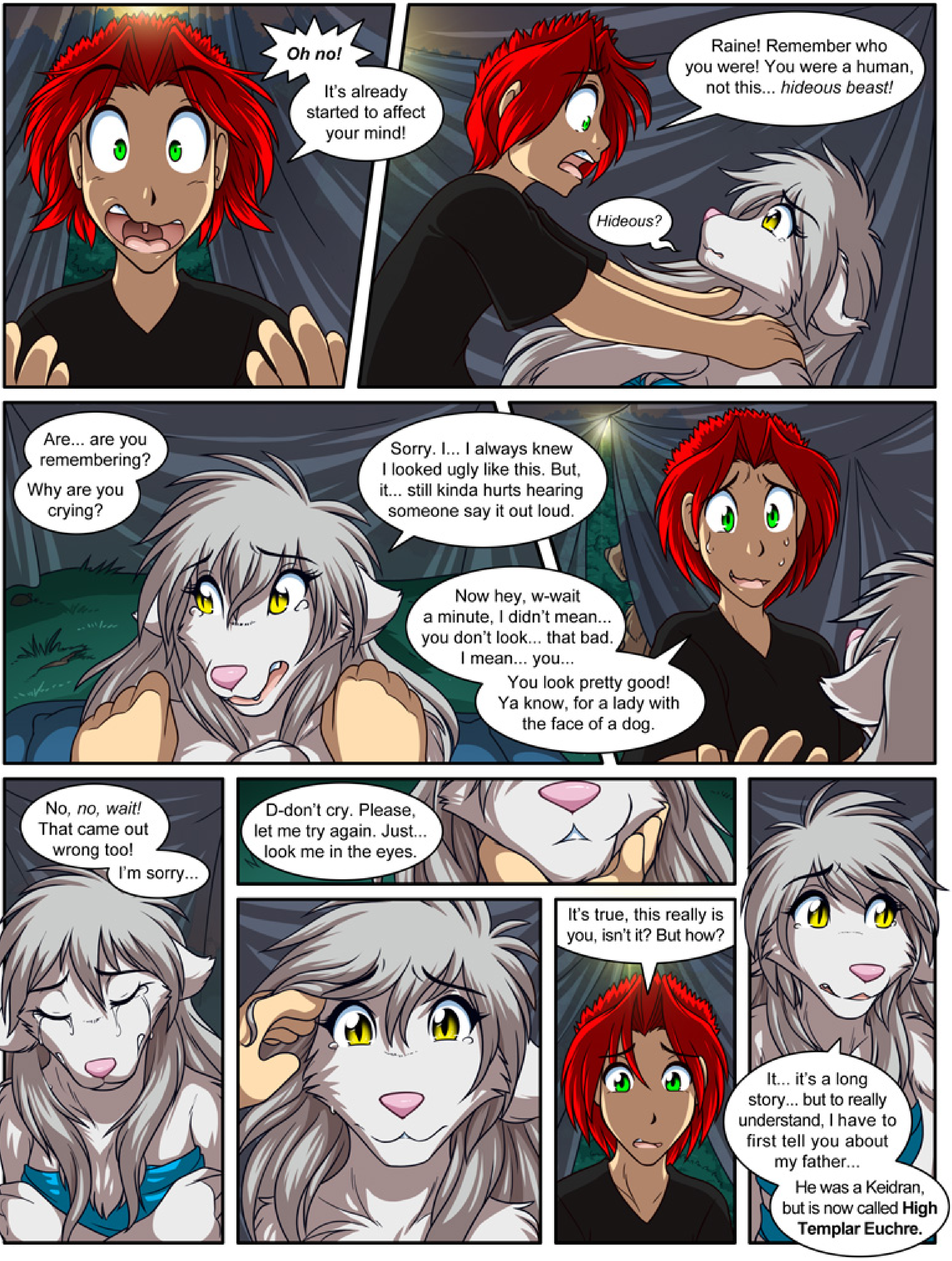
TwoKindS

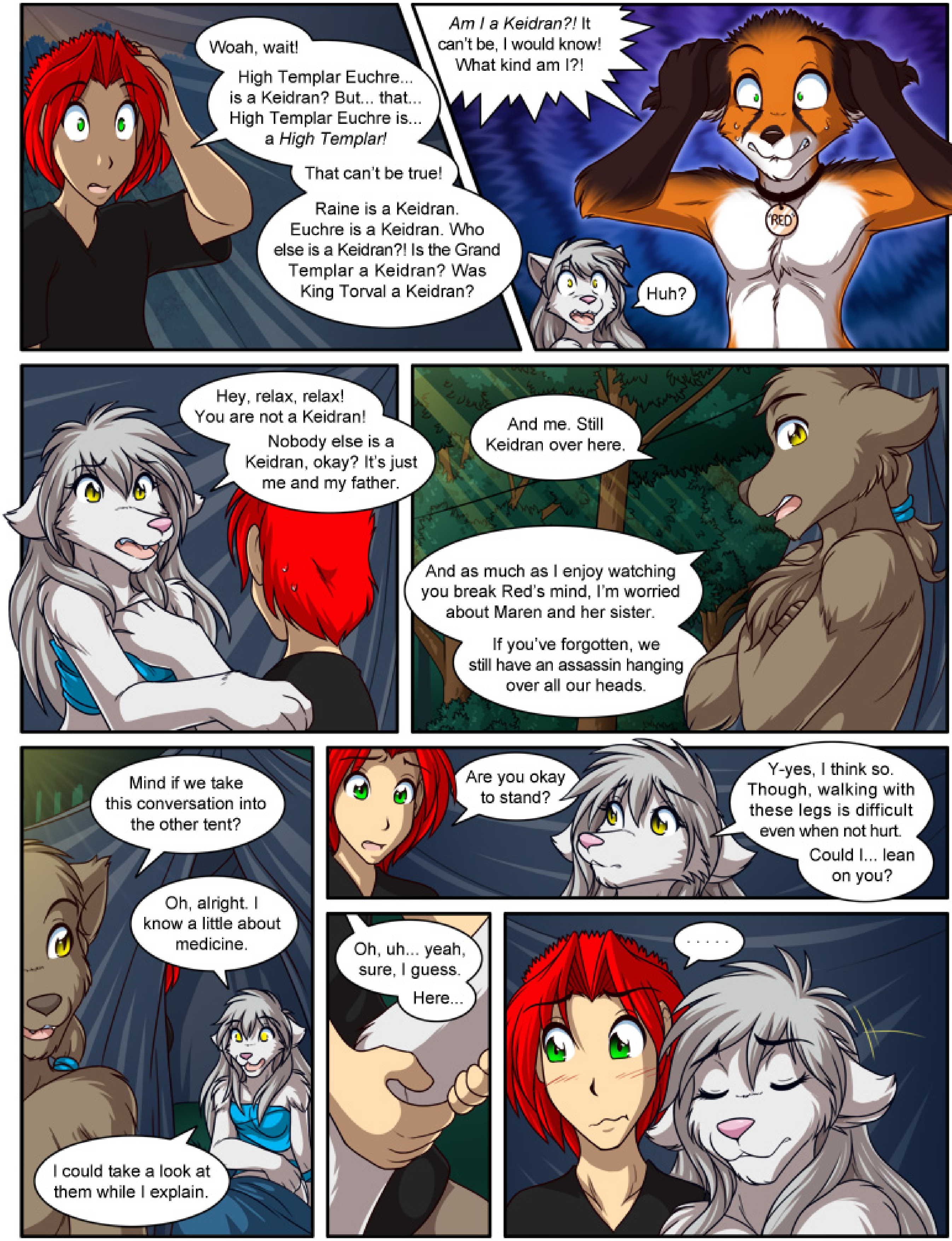
Chapter Sixteen

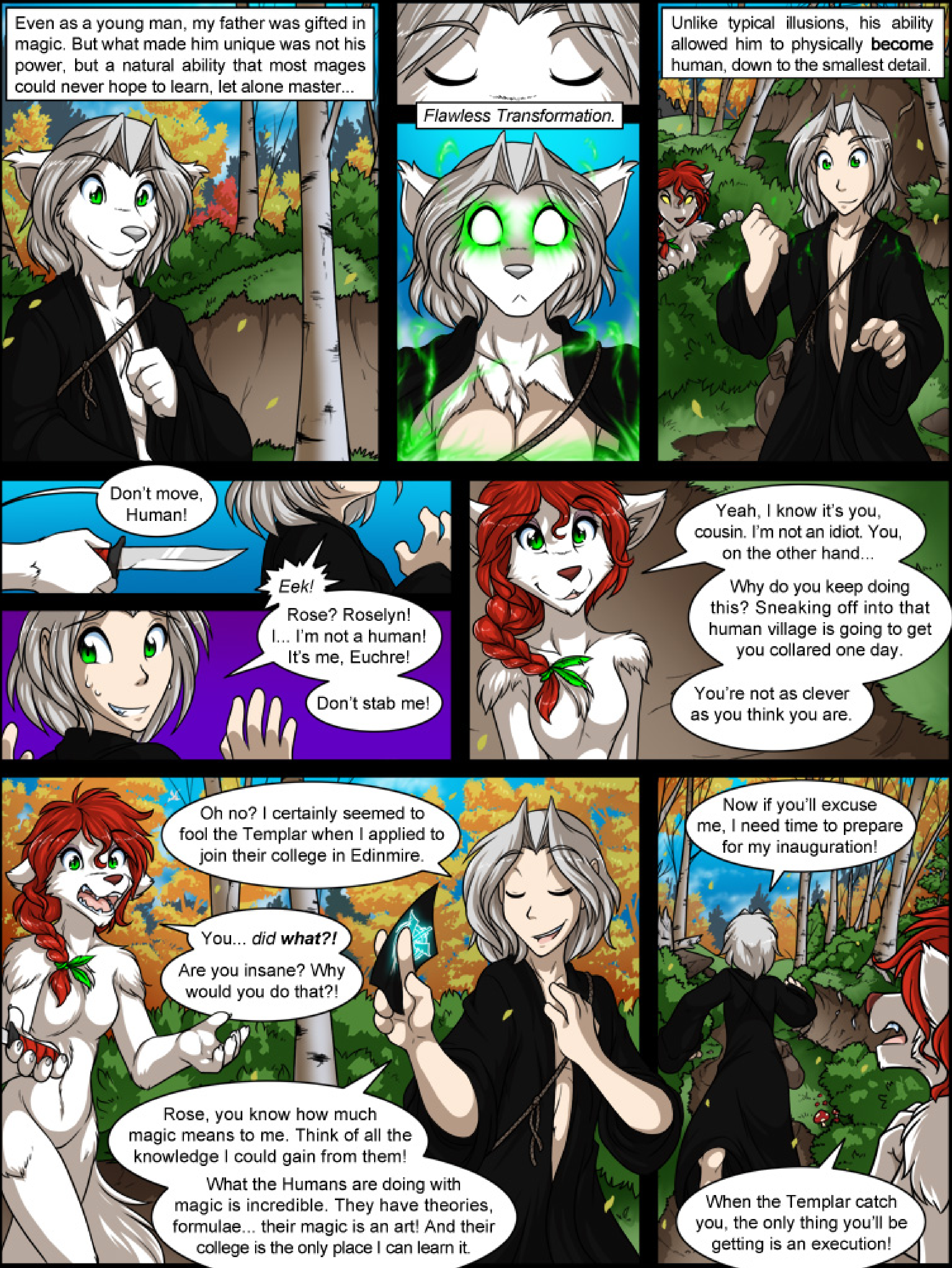
ConfessionS

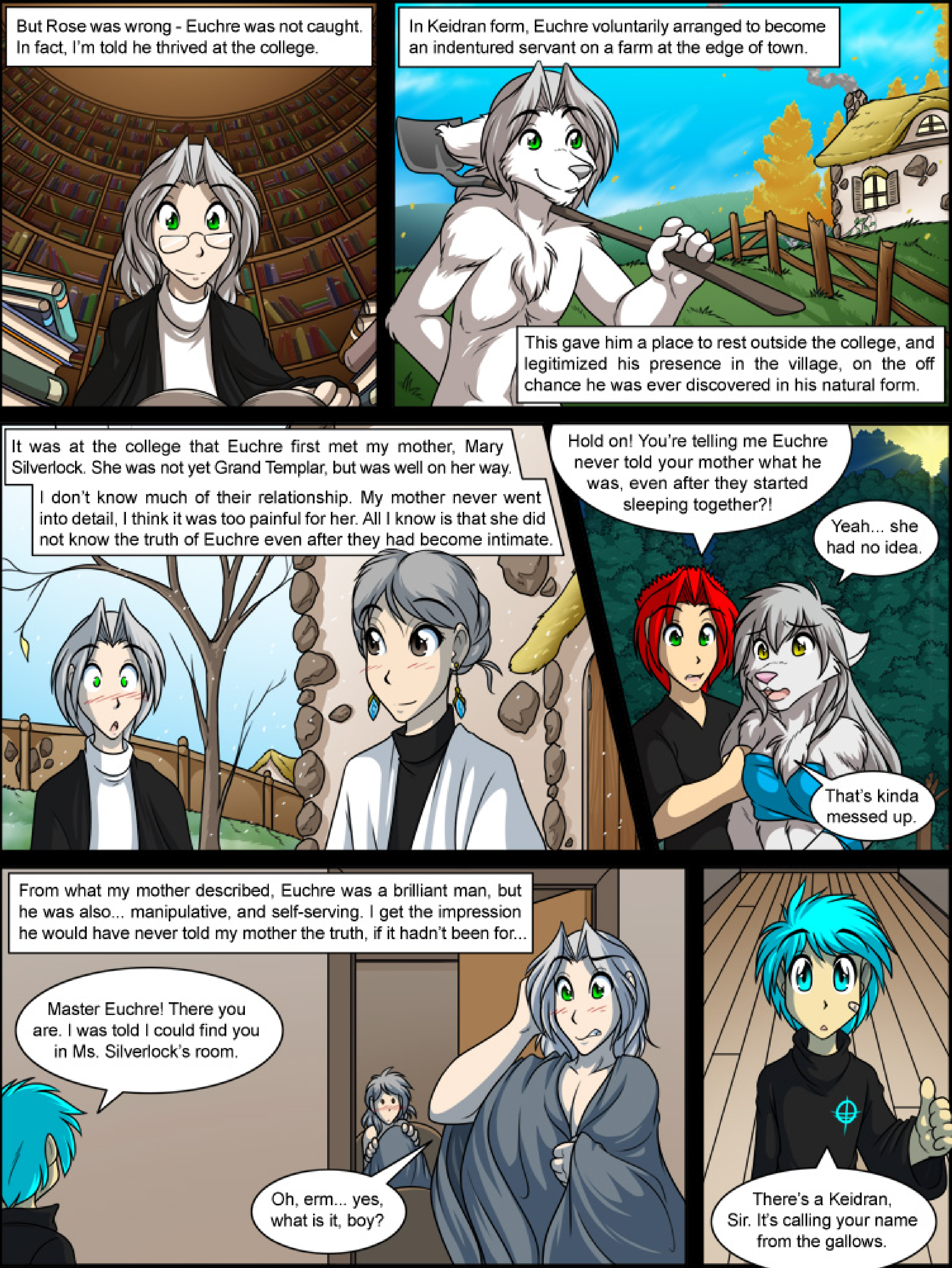

Uurgh...
Hey, I think she might be waking up...
I-is someone there? Erg... what happened?
Hey, Raine. Don't worry, you're okay.
Try not to move around too much. The cut wasn't bad, but you lost some blood.
Luckily, "Red" isn't as good with a sword as he thinks he is.
Still, it probably hurts like a bi- er, ah... like heck.
It does... but I... I'll be...
...I'm still covered in fur, aren't I?
Yeeeah, I didn't want to start pointing it out or nothin', but...
Well, for a human, you're looking pretty wolf-ish right now.
You're probably going to have to explain that one to us at some point.
Yes... yes, I know, and I will.
Ngh, where are the others?
Well...
Maren and Karen... they haven't woken up yet. We're not sure what's wrong with them.
As for Red, he's just outside the tent. I think he's still in denial.
"Red?" Why do you keep calling him that?
Because it ticks him off, and I think it's hilarious!
Anyway, I'll send him in now. And if it's any consolation, I think the new look suits you!

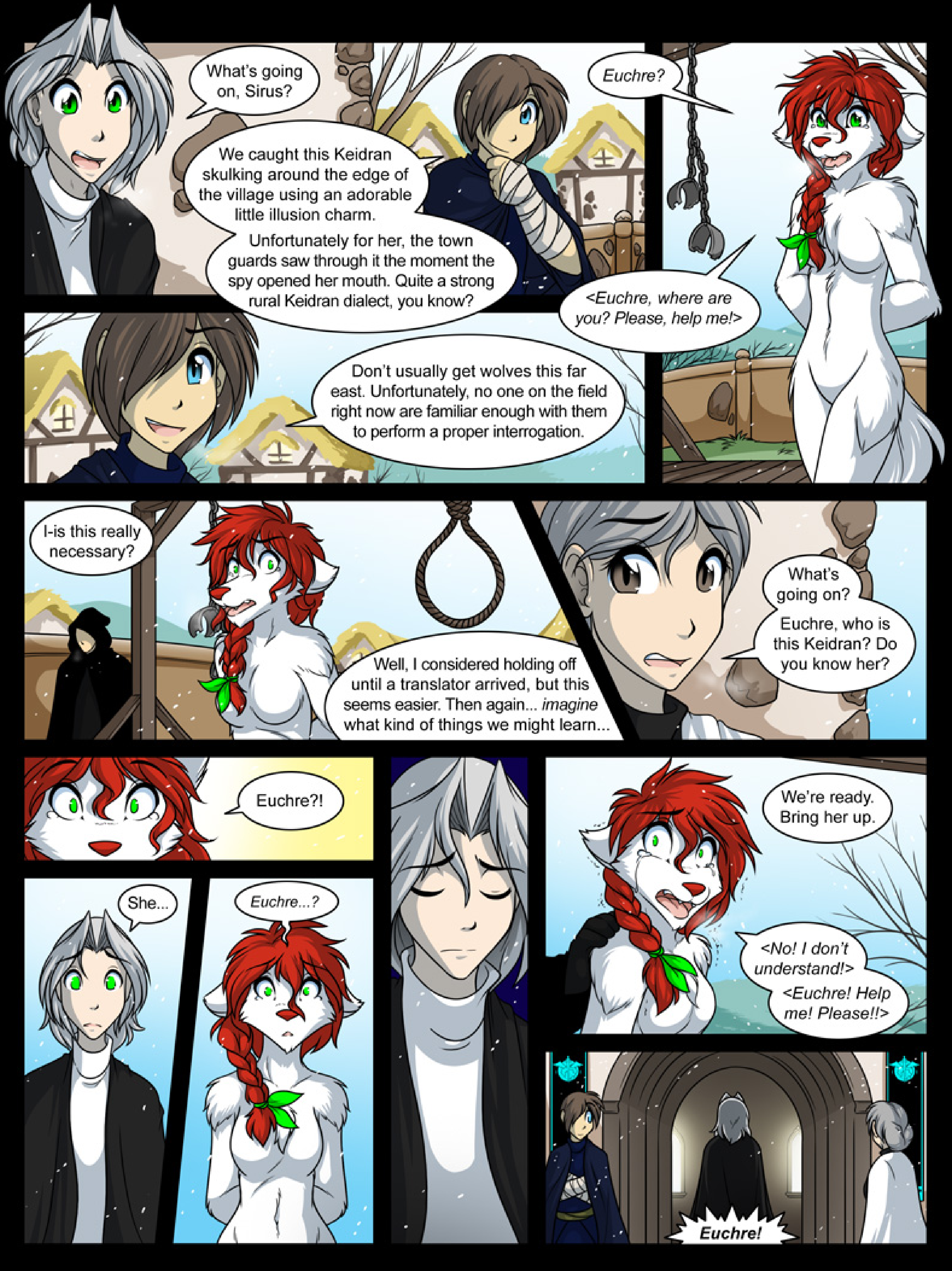

Hey... Raine.
It's me. I... I'm glad you're... um... okay.
. . . . .
....Right. So...
I wanted to apologise for... hurting you. I didn't know you were... you.
I'm so used to solving my problems by hitting them until they go away, but... this time it was a mistake.
I'm sorry.
I-it's okay. It's my fault. I should have been honest with you.
Back at the river–
No, no! I'm glad you didn't tell me at the river!
If... if we were alone and I saw you like that and mistook you for a *real* Keidran, I don't want to think of what I might have done!
But it doesn't matter! We'll fix you, Raine, I promise!
H-huh? Fix me?
We're going to figure out what that assassin did to you, and get you back to your old self in no time.
I'll force that fleabag to change you back myself! I won't allow you to be stuck like one of *them*!
H-hey, wait!
He... he didn't do this to me.
W-what?
I've always been like this. This form... it's a part of who I really am.

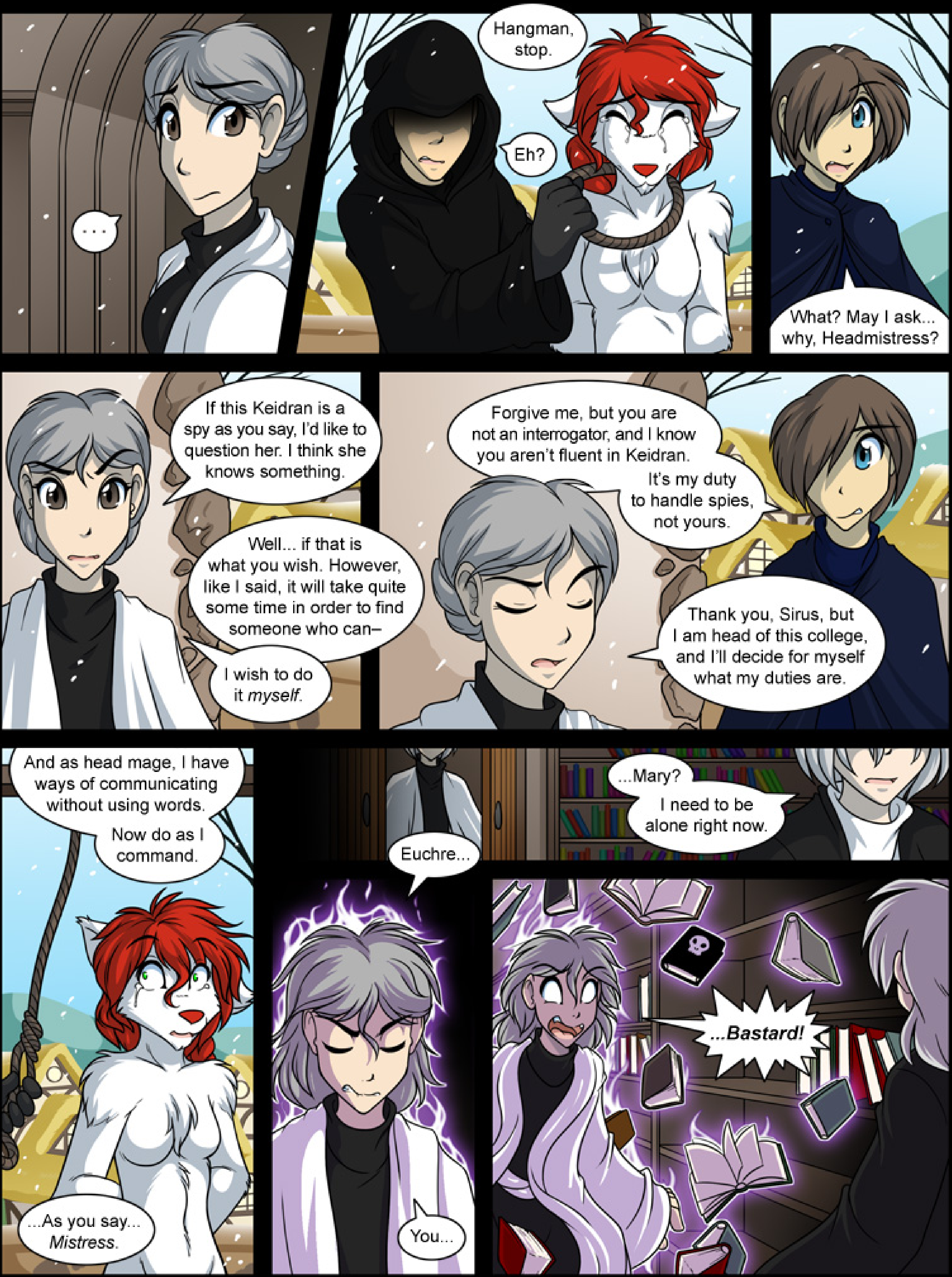

Oh no!
It's already started to affect your mind!
Raine! Remember who you were! You were a human, not this... *hideous beast!*
Hideous?
Are... are you remembering?
Why are you crying?
Sorry. I... I always knew I looked ugly like this. But, it... still kinda hurts hearing someone say it out loud.
Now hey, w-wait a minute, I didn't mean... you don't look... that bad. I mean... you...
You look pretty good! Ya know, for a lady with the face of a dog.
No, *no, wait!* That came out wrong too!
I'm sorry...
D-don't cry. Please, let me try again. Just... look me in the eyes.
It's true, this really is you, isn't it? But how?
It... it's a long story... but to really understand, I have to first tell you about my father...
He was a Keidran, but is now called **High Templar Euchre.**

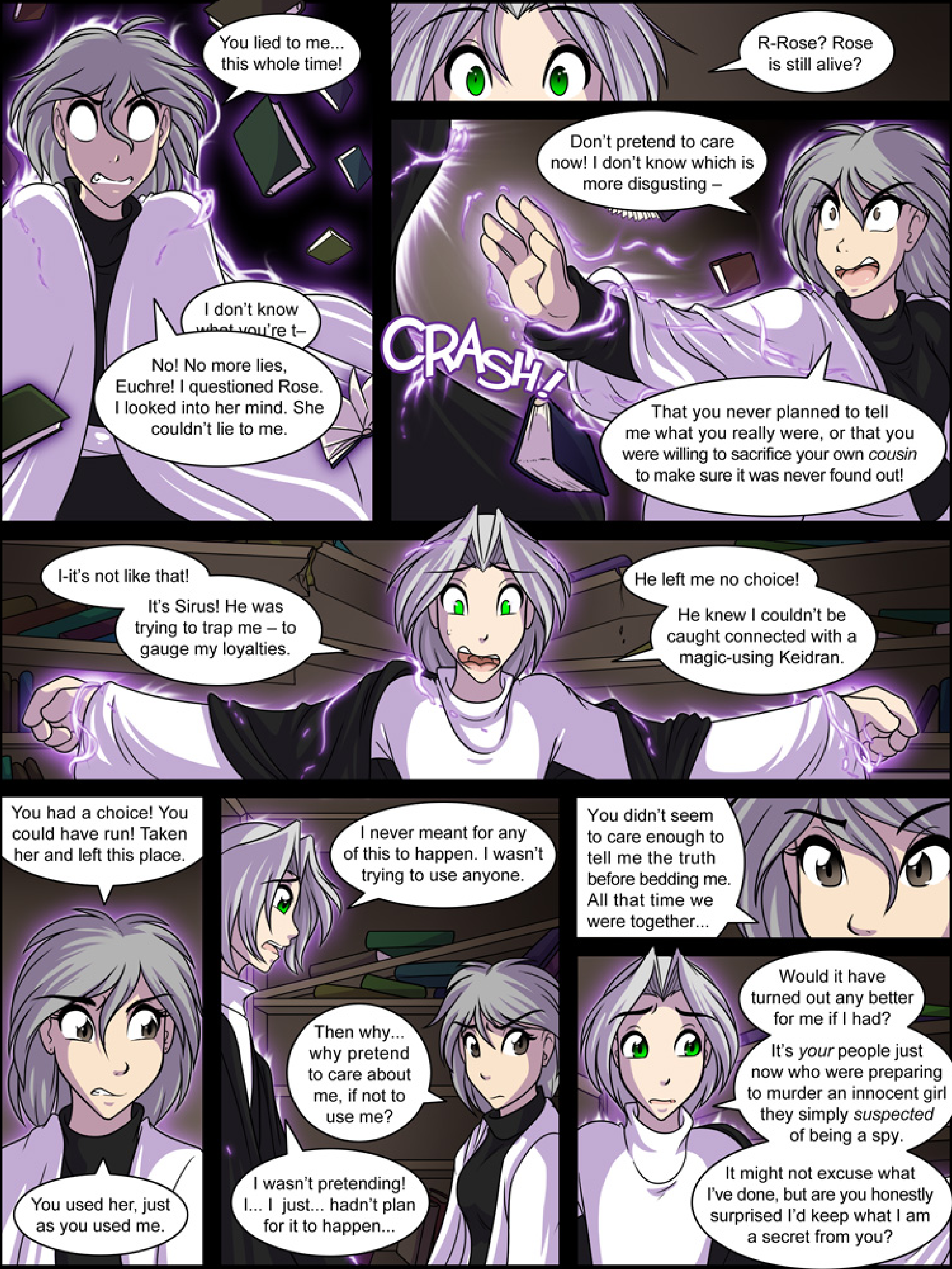

Woah, wait!
High Templar Euchre... is a Keidran? But... that... High Templar Euchre is... a *High Templar!*
That can't be true!
Raine is a Keidran. Euchre is a Keidran. Who else is a Keidran?! Is the Grand Templar a Keidran? Was King Torval a Keidran?
Am I a Keidran?! It can't be, I would know! What kind am I?!
RED
Huh?
Hey, relax, relax! You are not a Keidran!
Nobody else is a Keidran, okay? It's just me and my father.
And me. Still Keidran over here.
And as much as I enjoy watching you break Red's mind, I'm worried about Maren and her sister.
If you've forgotten, we still have an assassin hanging over all our heads.
Mind if we take this conversation into the other tent?
Oh, alright. I know a little about medicine.
I could take a look at them while I explain.
Are you okay to stand?
Y-yes, I think so. Though, walking with these legs is difficult even when not hurt.
Could I... lean on you?
Oh, uh... yeah, sure, I guess.
Here...
. . . . .

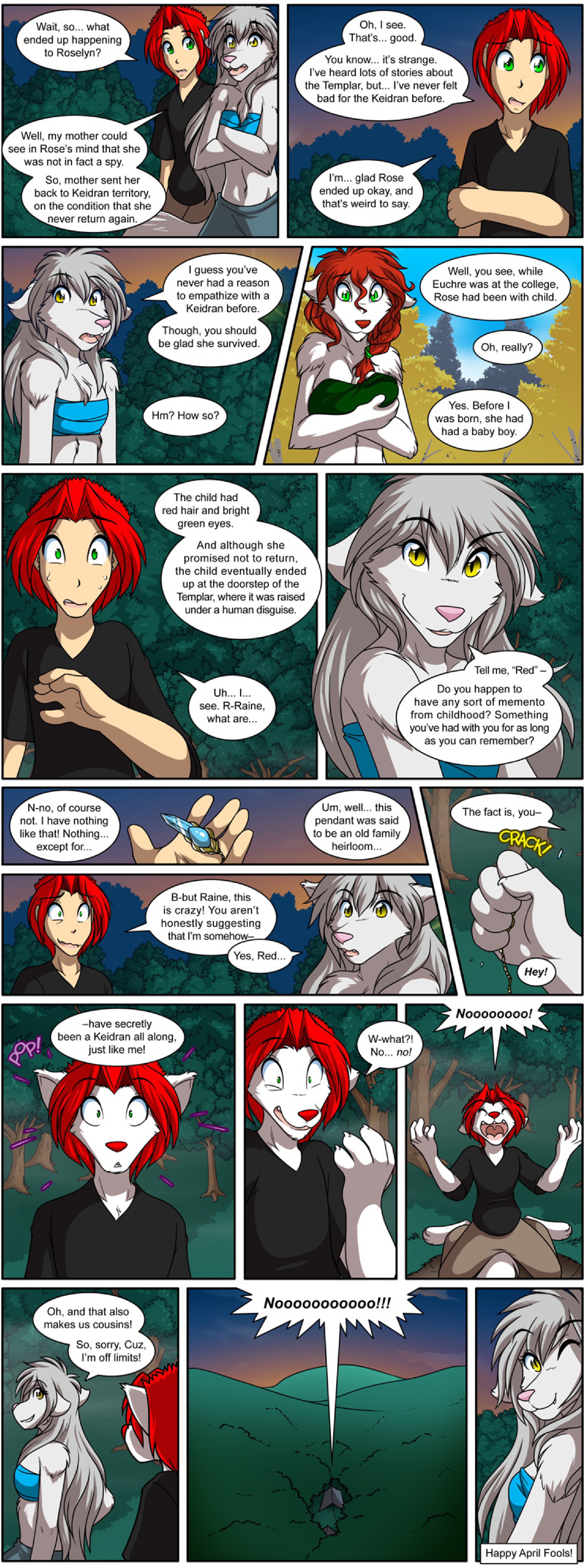

Even as a young man, my father was gifted in magic. But what made him unique was not his power, but a natural ability that most mages could never hope to learn, let alone master...
Flawless Transformation.
Unlike typical illusions, his ability allowed him to physically **become** human, down to the smallest detail.
Don't move, Human!
Eek!
Rose? Roselyn! I... I'm not a human! It's me, Euchre!
Don't stab me!
Yeah, I know it's you, cousin. I'm not an idiot. You, on the other hand...
Why do you keep doing this? Sneaking off into that human village is going to get you collared one day.
You're not as clever as you think you are.
Oh no? I certainly seemed to fool the Templar when I applied to join their college in Edinmire.
You... *did **what?!***
Are you insane? Why would you do that?!
Rose, you know how much magic means to me. Think of all the knowledge I could gain from them!
What the Humans are doing with magic is incredible. They have theories, formulae... their magic is an art! And their college is the only place I can learn it.
Now if you'll excuse me, I need time to prepare for my inauguration!
When the Templar catch you, the only thing you'll be getting is an execution!

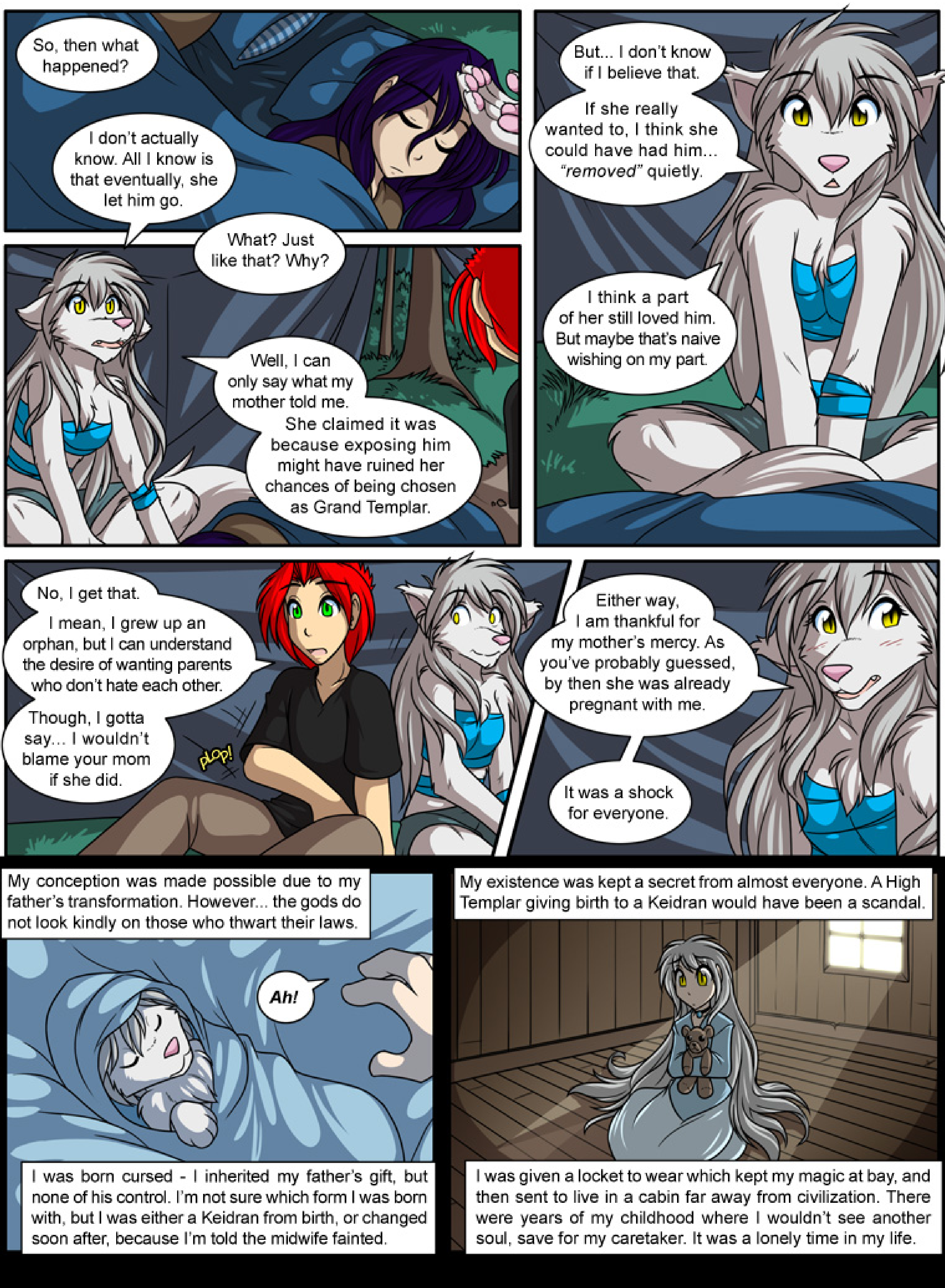

But Rose was wrong - Euchre was not caught. In fact, I'm told he thrived at the college.
In Keidran form, Euchre voluntarily arranged to become an indentured servant on a farm at the edge of town.
This gave him a place to rest outside the college, and legitimized his presence in the village, on the off chance he was ever discovered in his natural form.
It was at the college that Euchre first met my mother, Mary Silverlock. She was not yet Grand Templar, but was well on her way.
I don't know much of their relationship. My mother never went into detail, I think it was too painful for her. All I know is that she did not know the truth of Euchre even after they had become intimate.
Hold on! You're telling me Euchre never told your mother what he was, even after they started sleeping together?!
Yeah... she had no idea.
That's kinda messed up.
From what my mother described, Euchre was a brilliant man, but he was also... manipulative, and self-serving. I get the impression he would have never told my mother the truth, if it hadn't been for...
Master Euchre! There you are. I was told I could find you in Ms. Silverlock's room.
Oh, erm... yes, what is it, boy?
There's a Keidran, Sir. It's calling your name from the gallows.

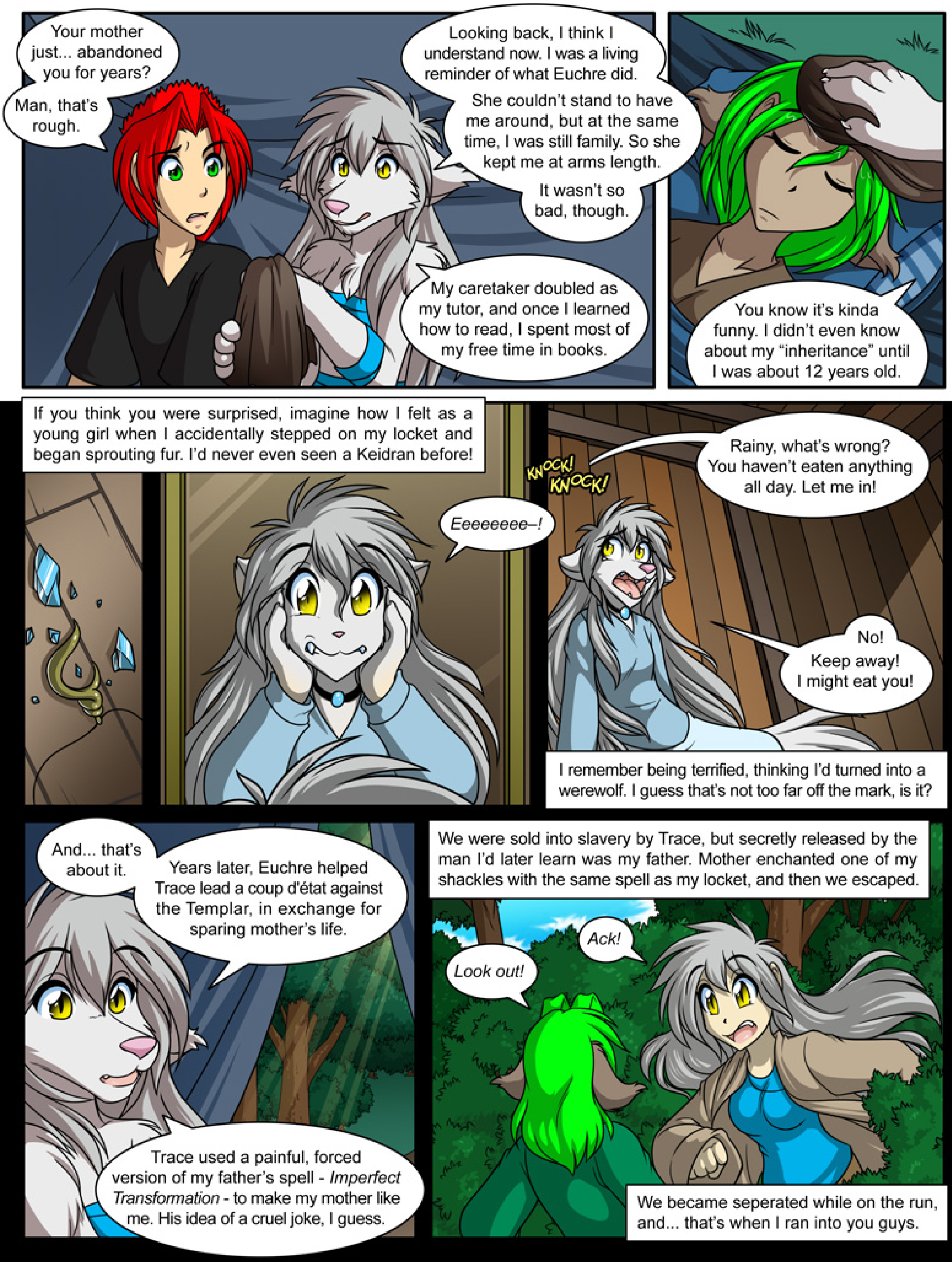

What's going on, Sirus?
We caught this Keidran skulking around the edge of the village using an adorable little illusion charm.
Unfortunately for her, the town guards saw through it the moment the spy opened her mouth. Quite a strong rural Keidran dialect, you know?
Euchre?
<Euchre, where are you? Please, help me!>
Don't usually get wolves this far east. Unfortunately, no one on the field right now are familiar enough with them to perform a proper interrogation.
I-is this really necessary?
Well, I considered holding off until a translator arrived, but this seems easier. Then again... *imagine* what kind of things we might learn...
What's going on?
Euchre, who is this Keidran? Do you know her?
Euchre?!
She...
Euchre...?
We're ready. Bring her up.
<No! I don't understand!>
<Euchre! Help me! Please!!>
Euchre!

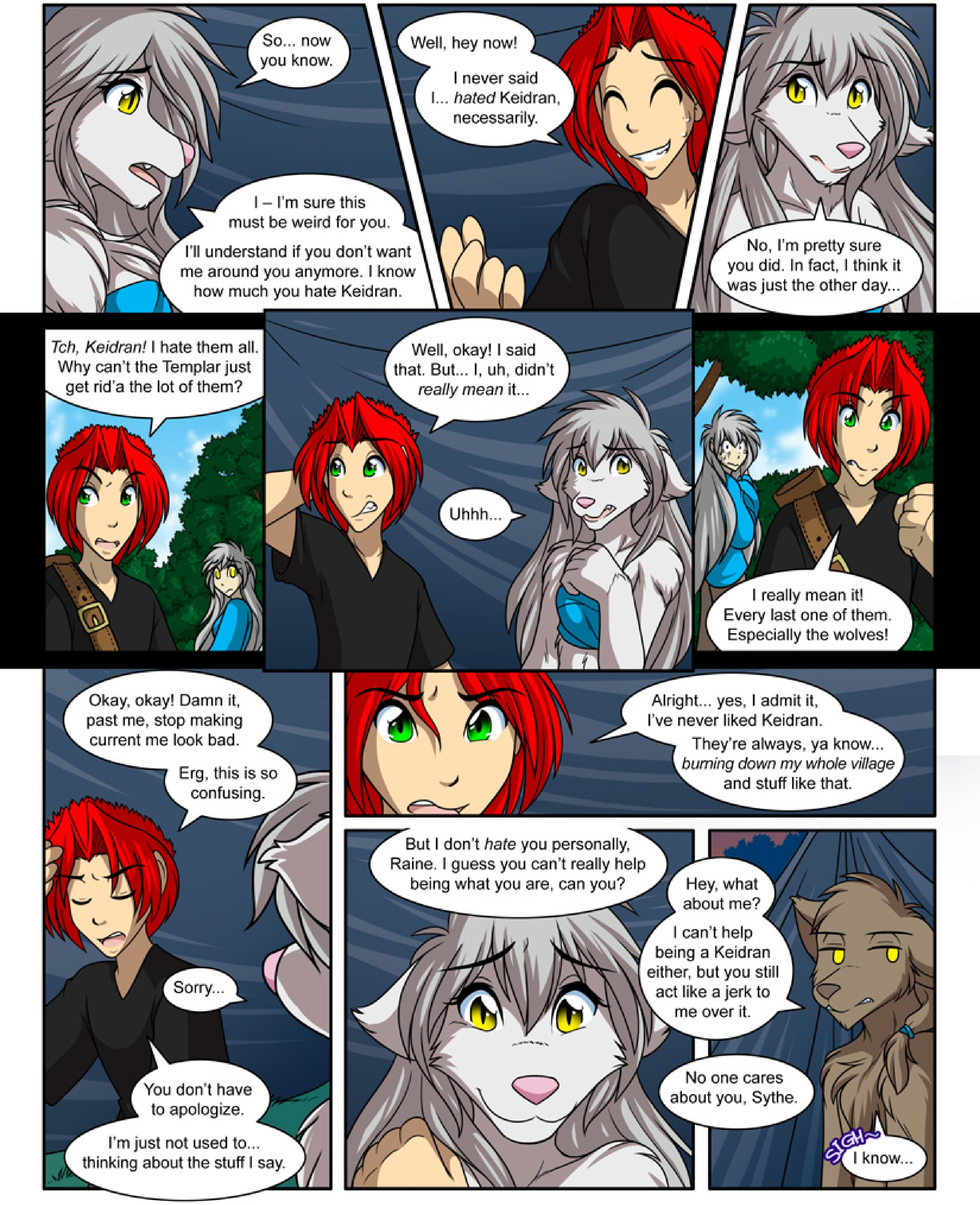

. . .
Hangman, stop.
Eh?
What? May I ask... why, Headmistress?
If this Keidran is a spy as you say, I'd like to question her. I think she knows something.
Well... if that is what you wish. However, like I said, it will take quite some time in order to find someone who can–
I wish to do it *myself*.
Forgive me, but you are not an interrogator, and I know you aren't fluent in Keidran.
It's my duty to handle spies, not yours.
Thank you, Sirus, but I am head of this college, and I'll decide for myself what my duties are.
And as head mage, I have ways of communicating without using words.
Now do as I command.
...As you say... *Mistress*.
...Mary?
I need to be alone right now.
Euchre...
You...
...Bastard!

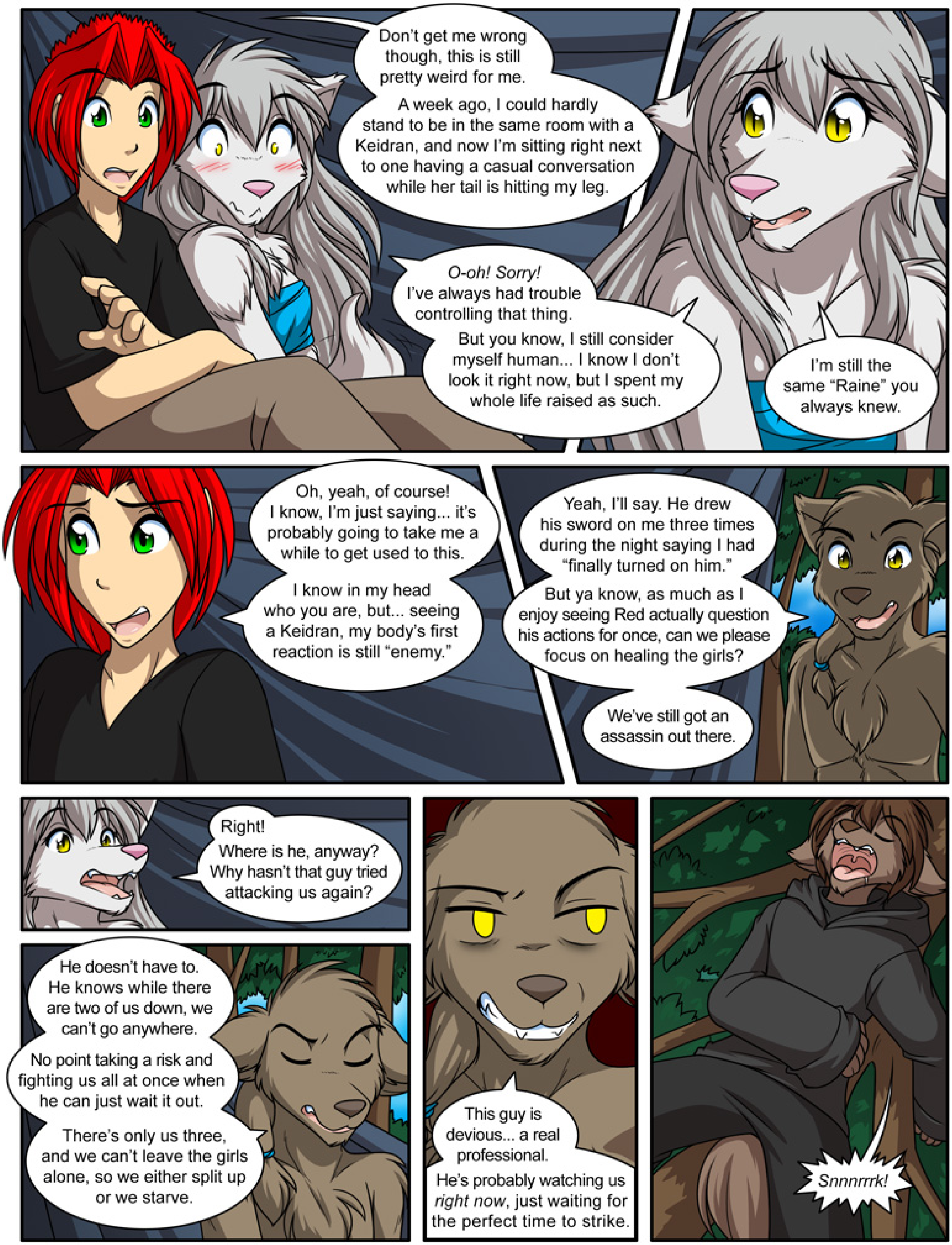

You lied to me... this whole time!
R-Rose? Rose is still alive?
I don't know what you're t–
No! No more lies, Euchre! I questioned Rose. I looked into her mind. She couldn't lie to me.
Don't pretend to care now! I don't know which is more disgusting –
CRASH!
That you never planned to tell me what you really were, or that you were willing to sacrifice your own *cousin* to make sure it was never found out!
I-it's not like that!
It's Sirus! He was trying to trap me – to gauge my loyalties.
He left me no choice!
He knew I couldn't be caught connected with a magic-using Keidran.
You had a choice! You could have run! Taken her and left this place.
You used her, just as you used me.
I never meant for any of this to happen. I wasn't trying to use anyone.
Then why... why pretend to care about me, if not to use me?
I wasn't pretending! I... I just... hadn't plan for it to happen...
You didn't seem to care enough to tell me the truth before bedding me. All that time we were together...
Would it have turned out any better for me if I had?
It's *your* people just now who were preparing to murder an innocent girl they simply *suspected* of being a spy.
It might not excuse what I've done, but are you honestly surprised I'd keep what I am a secret from you?

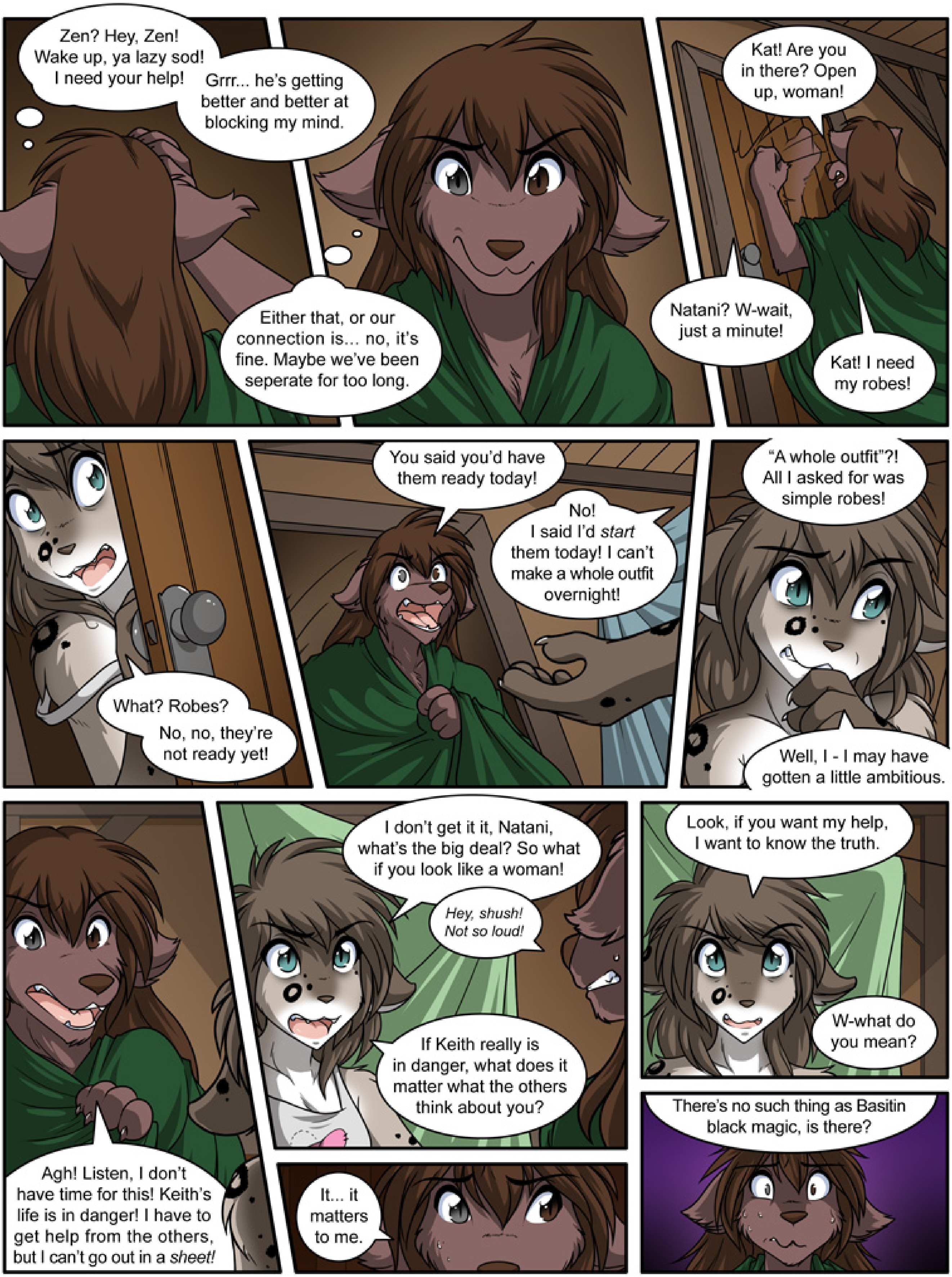

Wait, so... what ended up happening to Roselyn?
Well, my mother could see in Rose's mind that she was not in fact a spy.
So, mother sent her back to Keidran territory, on the condition that she never return again.
Oh, I see. That's... good.
You know... it's strange. I've heard lots of stories about the Templar, but... I've never felt bad for the Keidran before.
I'm... glad Rose ended up okay, and that's weird to say.
I guess you've never had a reason to empathize with a Keidran before.
Though, you should be glad she survived.
Hm? How so?
Well, you see, while Euchre was at the college, Rose had been with child.
Oh, really?
Yes. Before I was born, she had had a baby boy.
The child had red hair and bright green eyes.
And although she promised not to return, the child eventually ended up at the doorstep of the Templar, where it was raised under a human disguise.
Uh... I... see. R-Raine, what are...
Tell me, "Red" –
Do you happen to have any sort of memento from childhood? Something you've had with you for as long as you can remember?
N-no, of course not. I have nothing like that! Nothing... except for...
Um, well... this pendant was said to be an old family heirloom...
The fact is, you–
CRACK!
Hey!
B-but Raine, this is crazy! You aren't honestly suggesting that I'm somehow–
Yes, Red...
POP!
–have secretly been a Keidran all along, just like me!
W-what?! No... *no!*
Noooooooo!
Oh, and that also makes us cousins!
So, sorry, Cuz, I'm off limits!
Noooooooooo!!!
Happy April Fools!

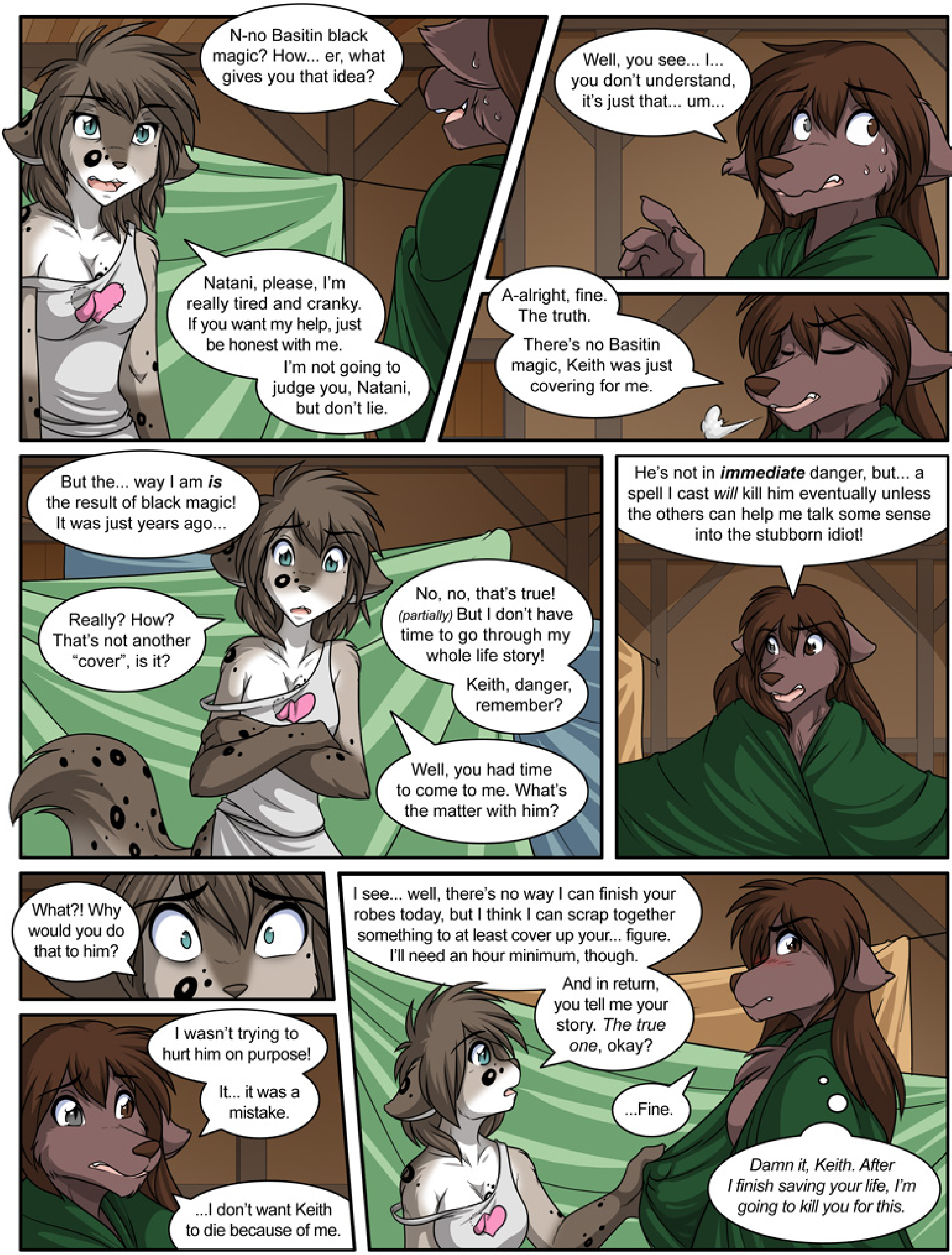

So, then what happened?
I don't actually know. All I know is that eventually, she let him go.
What? Just like that? Why?
Well, I can only say what my mother told me.
She claimed it was because exposing him might have ruined her chances of being chosen as Grand Templar.
But... I don't know if I believe that.
If she really wanted to, I think she could have had him... *"removed"* quietly.
I think a part of her still loved him. But maybe that's naive wishing on my part.
No, I get that.
I mean, I grew up an orphan, but I can understand the desire of wanting parents who don't hate each other.
Though, I gotta say... I wouldn't blame your mom if she did.
plop!
Either way, I am thankful for my mother's mercy. As you've probably guessed, by then she was already pregnant with me.
It was a shock for everyone.
My conception was made possible due to my father's transformation. However... the gods do not look kindly on those who thwart their laws.
Ah!
I was born cursed - I inherited my father's gift, but none of his control. I'm not sure which form I was born with, but I was either a Keidran from birth, or changed soon after, because I'm told the midwife fainted.
My existence was kept a secret from almost everyone. A High Templar giving birth to a Keidran would have been a scandal.
I was given a locket to wear which kept my magic at bay, and then sent to live in a cabin far away from civilization. There were years of my childhood where I wouldn't see another soul, save for my caretaker. It was a lonely time in my life.

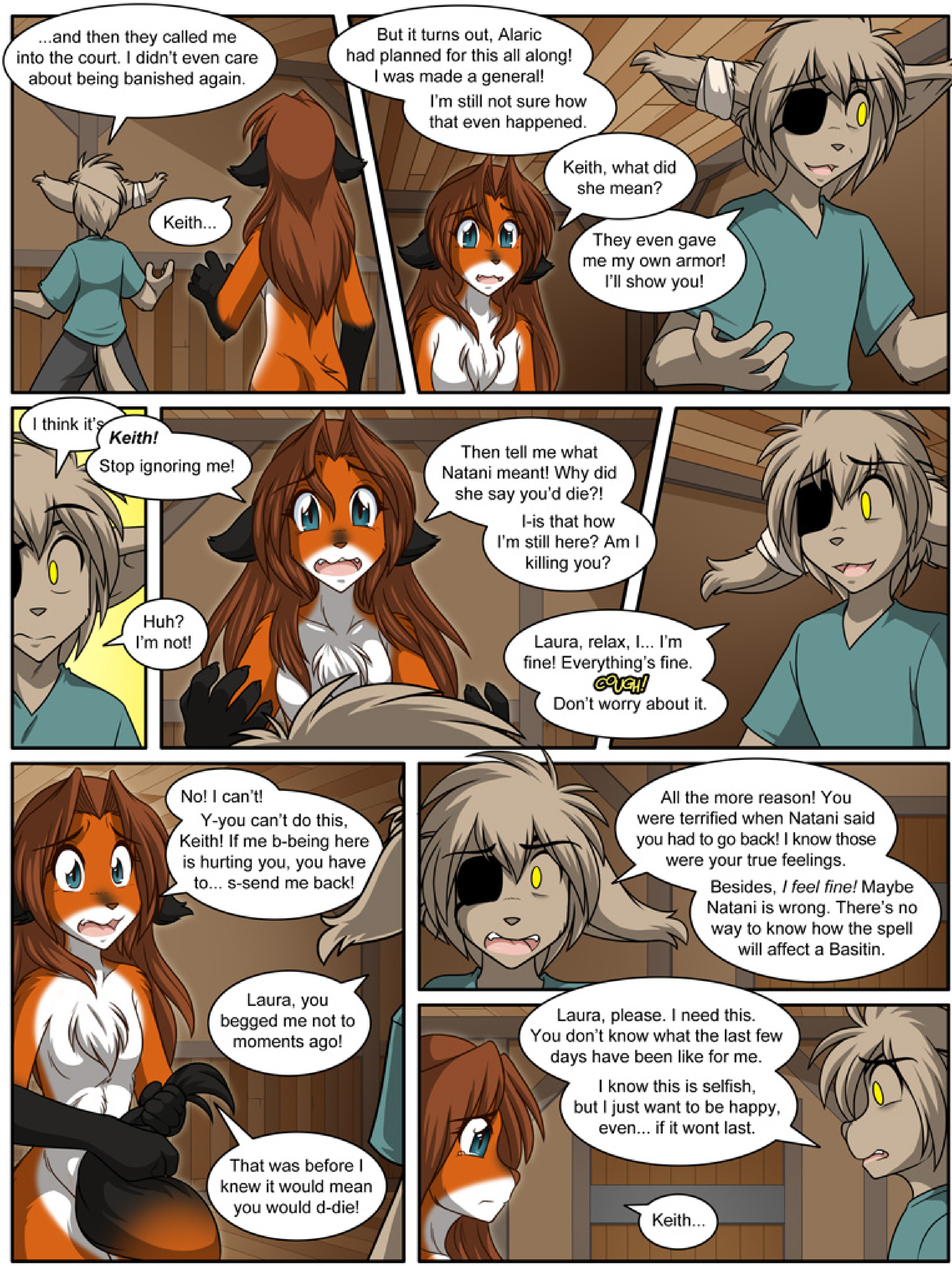

Your mother just... abandoned you for years?
Man, that's rough.
Looking back, I think I understand now. I was a living reminder of what Euchre did.
She couldn't stand to have me around, but at the same time, I was still family. So she kept me at arms length.
It wasn't so bad, though.
My caretaker doubled as my tutor, and once I learned how to read, I spent most of my free time in books.
You know it's kinda funny. I didn't even know about my "inheritance" until I was about 12 years old.
If you think you were surprised, imagine how I felt as a young girl when I accidentally stepped on my locket and began sprouting fur. I'd never even seen a Keidran before!
Eeeeeeee–!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
Rainy, what's wrong? You haven't eaten anything all day. Let me in!
No! Keep away! I might eat you!
I remember being terrified, thinking I'd turned into a werewolf. I guess that's not too far off the mark, is it?
And... that's about it.
Years later, Euchre helped Trace lead a coup d'état against the Templar, in exchange for sparing mother's life.
Trace used a painful, forced version of my father's spell - *Imperfect Transformation* - to make my mother like me. His idea of a cruel joke, I guess.
We were sold into slavery by Trace, but secretly released by the man I'd later learn was my father. Mother enchanted one of my shackles with the same spell as my locket, and then we escaped.
Look out!
Ack!
We became seperated while on the run, and... that's when I ran into you guys.

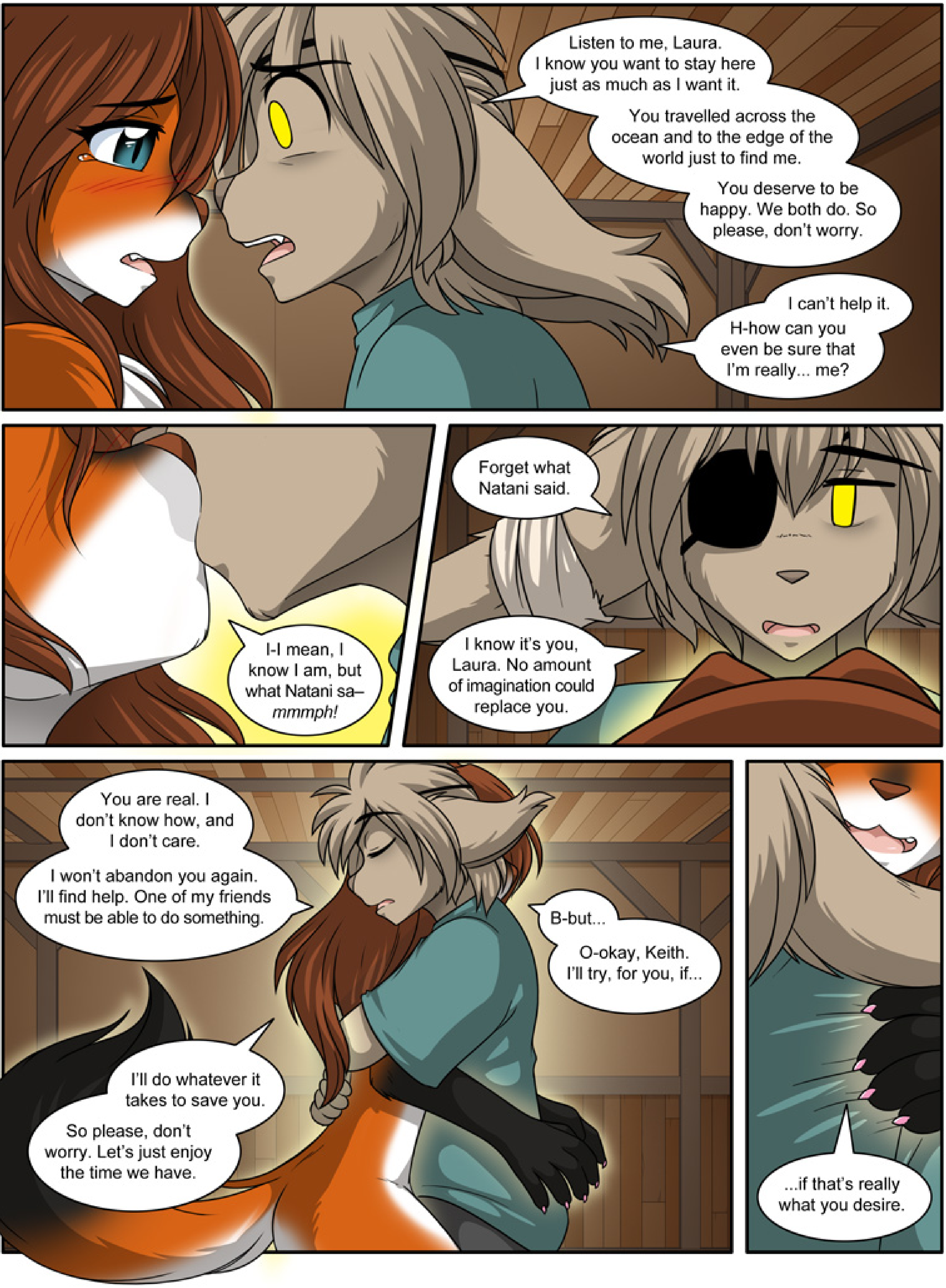

So... now you know.
I – I'm sure this must be weird for you.
I'll understand if you don't want me around you anymore. I know how much you hate Keidran.
Well, hey now!
I never said I... *hated* Keidran, necessarily.
No, I'm pretty sure you did. In fact, I think it was just the other day...
Tch, Keidran! I hate them all. Why can't the Templar just get rid'a the lot of them?
Well, okay! I said that. But... I, uh, didn't *really mean* it...
Uhhh...
I really mean it! Every last one of them. Especially the wolves!
Okay, okay! Damn it, past me, stop making current me look bad.
Erg, this is so confusing.
Sorry...
You don't have to apologize.
I'm just not used to... thinking about the stuff I say.
Alright... yes, I admit it, I've never liked Keidran.
They're always, ya know... *burning down my whole village* and stuff like that.
But I don't *hate* you personally, Raine. I guess you can't really help being what you are, can you?
Hey, what about me?
I can't help being a Keidran either, but you still act like a jerk to me over it.
No one cares about you, Sythe.
SIGH~
I know...

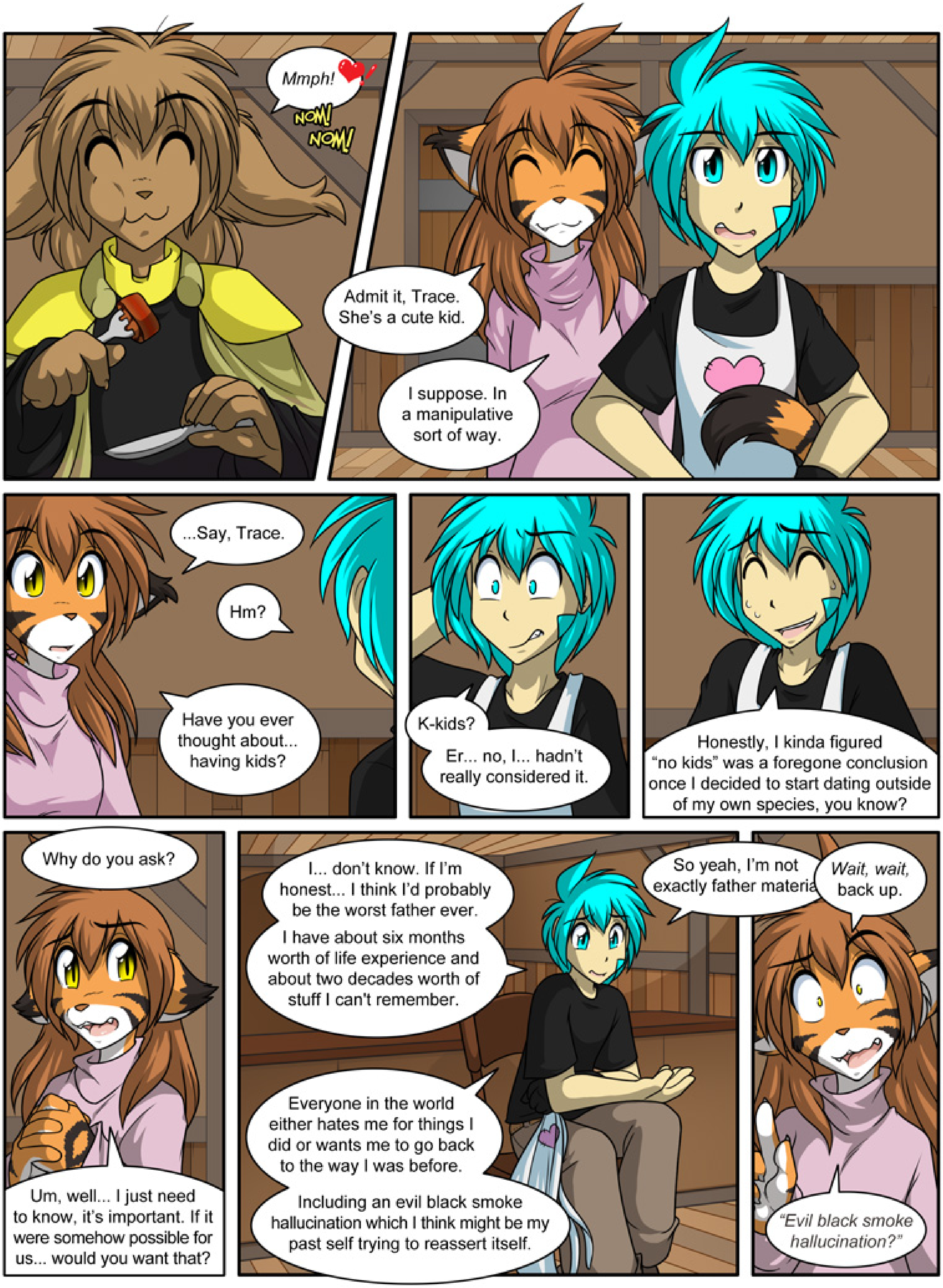

Don't get me wrong though, this is still pretty weird for me.
A week ago, I could hardly stand to be in the same room with a Keidran, and now I'm sitting right next to one having a casual conversation while her tail is hitting my leg.
O-oh! Sorry! I've always had trouble controlling that thing.
But you know, I still consider myself human... I know I don't look it right now, but I spent my whole life raised as such.
I'm still the same "Raine" you always knew.
Oh, yeah, of course! I know, I'm just saying... it's probably going to take me a while to get used to this.
I know in my head who you are, but... seeing a Keidran, my body's first reaction is still "enemy."
Yeah, I'll say. He drew his sword on me three times during the night saying I had "finally turned on him."
But ya know, as much as I enjoy seeing Red actually question his actions for once, can we please focus on healing the girls?
We've still got an assassin out there.
Right! Where is he, anyway? Why hasn't that guy tried attacking us again?
He doesn't have to. He knows while there are two of us down, we can't go anywhere.
No point taking a risk and fighting us all at once when he can just wait it out.
There's only us three, and we can't leave the girls alone, so we either split up or we starve.
This guy is devious... a real professional.
He's probably watching us *right now*, just waiting for the perfect time to strike.
Snnnrrrk!

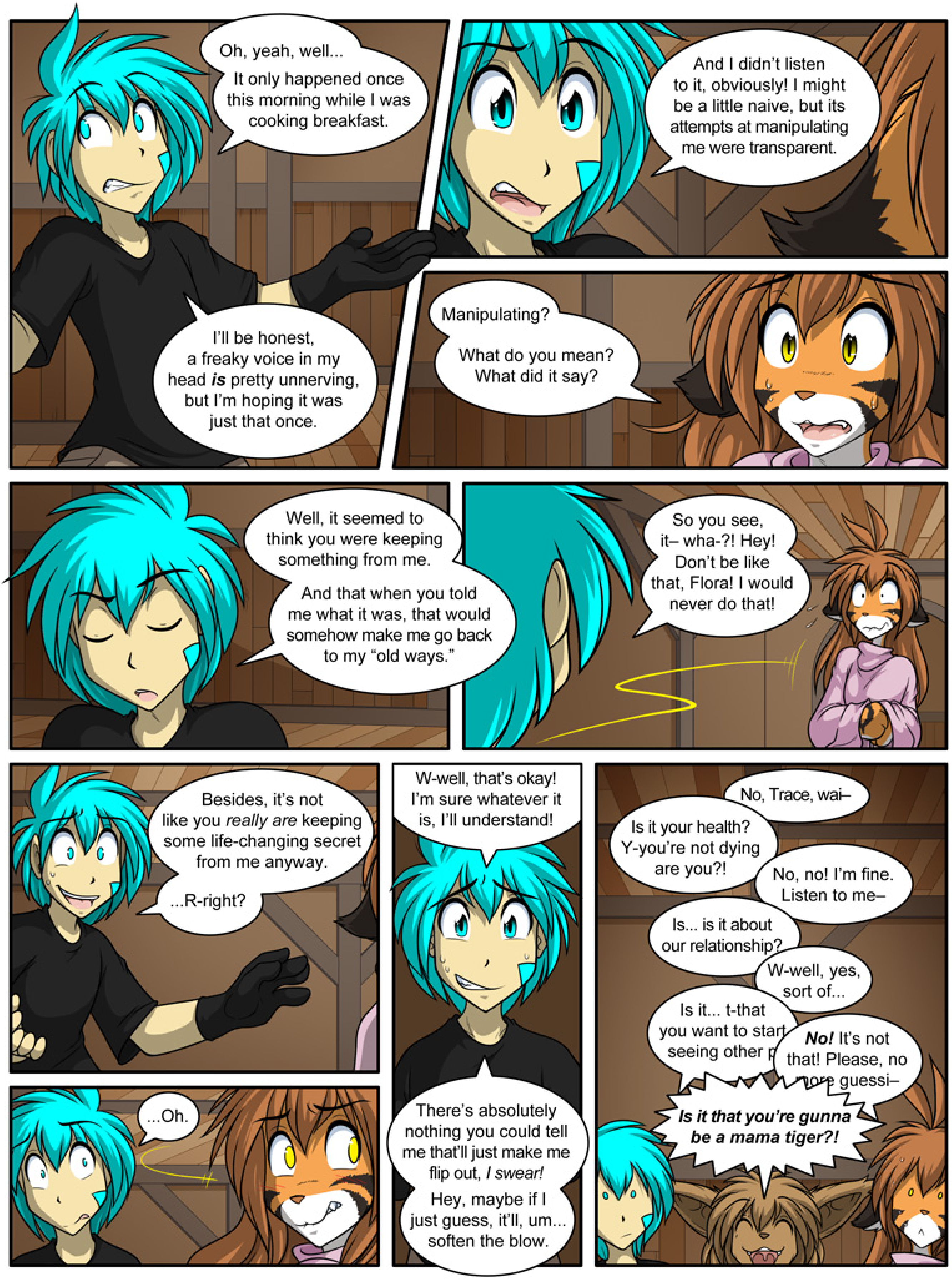

Zen? Hey, Zen! Wake up, ya lazy sod! I need your help!
Grrr... he's getting better and better at blocking my mind.
Either that, or our connection is... no, it's fine. Maybe we've been seperate for too long.
Kat! Are you in there? Open up, woman!
Natani? W-wait, just a minute!
Kat! I need my robes!
What? Robes?
No, no, they're not ready yet!
You said you'd have them ready today!
No! I said I'd *start* them today! I can't make a whole outfit overnight!
"A whole outfit"?! All I asked for was simple robes!
Well, I - I may have gotten a little ambitious.
Agh! Listen, I don't have time for this! Keith's life is in danger! I have to get help from the others, but I can't go out in a *sheet!*
I don't get it it, Natani, what's the big deal? So what if you look like a woman!
Hey, shush! Not so loud!
If Keith really is in danger, what does it matter what the others think about you?
It... it matters to me.
Look, if you want my help, I want to know the truth.
W-what do you mean?
There's no such thing as Basitin black magic, is there?

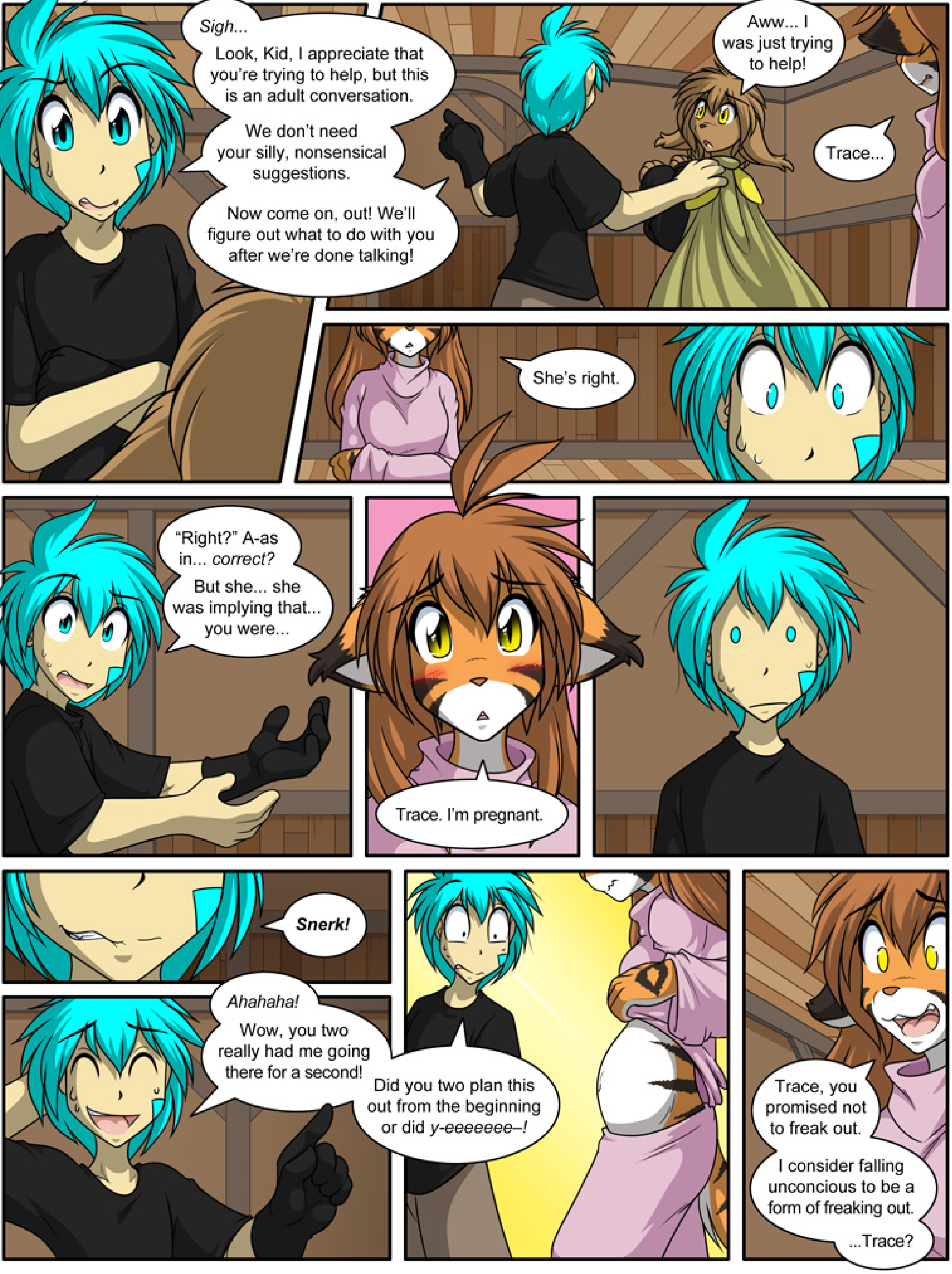

N-no Basitin black magic? How... er, what gives you that idea?
Natani, please, I'm really tired and cranky. If you want my help, just be honest with me.
I'm not going to judge you, Natani, but don't lie.
Well, you see... I... you don't understand, it's just that... um...
A-alright, fine. The truth.
There's no Basitin magic, Keith was just covering for me.
But the... way I am ***is*** the result of black magic! It was just years ago...
Really? How? That's not another "cover", is it?
No, no, that's true! *(partially)* But I don't have time to go through my whole life story!
Keith, danger, remember?
Well, you had time to come to me. What's the matter with him?
He's not in ***immediate*** danger, but... a spell I cast *will* kill him eventually unless the others can help me talk some sense into the stubborn idiot!
What?! Why would you do that to him?
I wasn't trying to hurt him on purpose!
It... it was a mistake.
...I don't want Keith to die because of me.
I see... well, there's no way I can finish your robes today, but I think I can scrap together something to at least cover up your... figure. I'll need an hour minimum, though.
And in return, you tell me your story. *The true one*, okay?
...Fine.
Damn it, Keith. After I finish saving your life, I'm going to kill you for this.

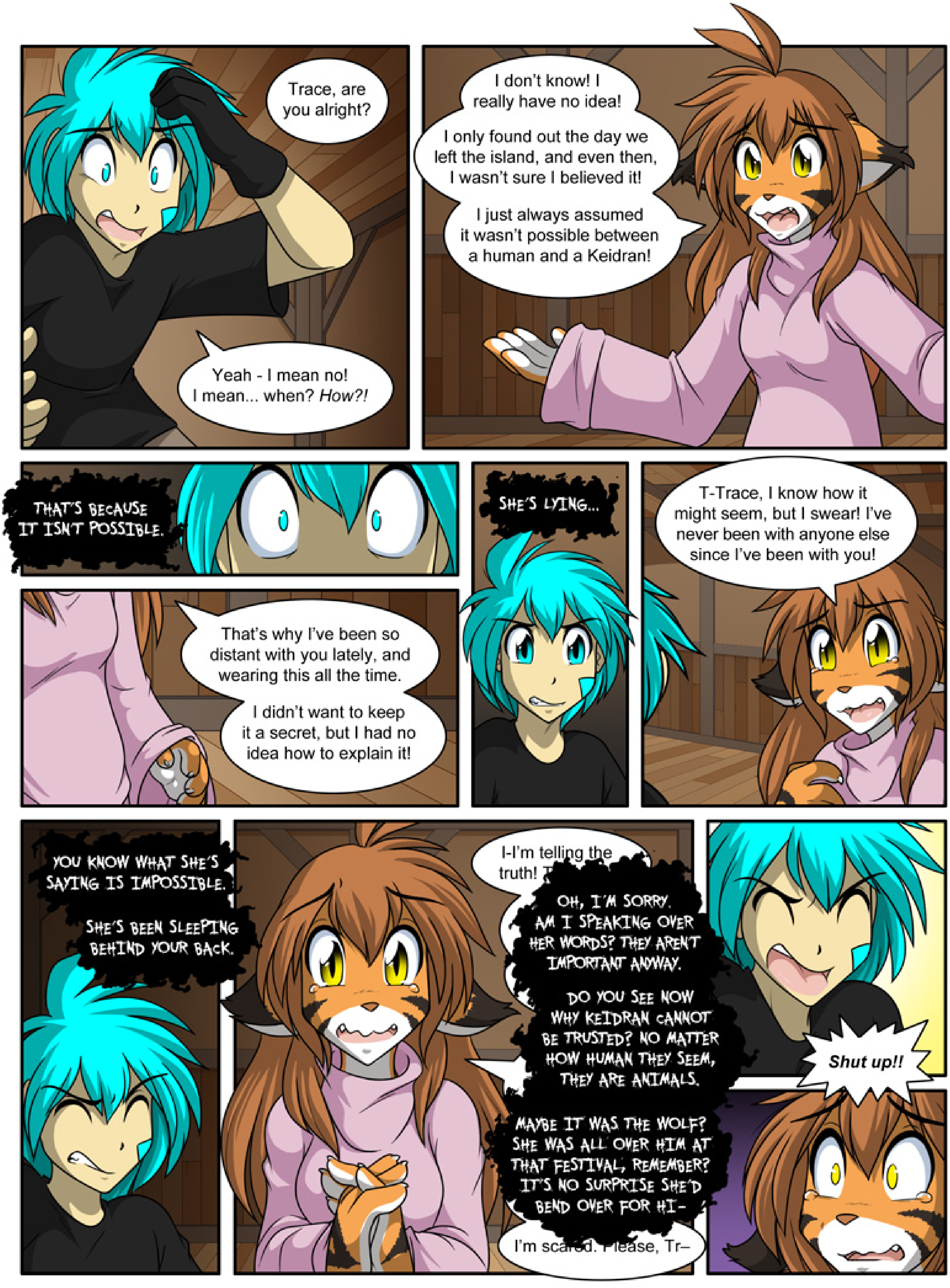

...and then they called me into the court. I didn't even care about being banished again.
Keith...
But it turns out, Alaric had planned for this all along! I was made a general!
I'm still not sure how that even happened.
Keith, what did she mean?
They even gave me my own armor! I'll show you!
I think it's
Keith! Stop ignoring me!
Huh? I'm not!
Then tell me what Natani meant! Why did she say you'd die?!
I-is that how I'm still here? Am I killing you?
Laura, relax, I... I'm fine! Everything's fine.
COUGH!
Don't worry about it.
No! I can't!
Y-you can't do this, Keith! If me b-being here is hurting you, you have to... s-send me back!
Laura, you begged me not to moments ago!
That was before I knew it would mean you would d-die!
All the more reason! You were terrified when Natani said you had to go back! I know those were your true feelings.
Besides, *I feel fine!* Maybe Natani is wrong. There's no way to know how the spell will affect a Basitin.
Laura, please. I need this. You don't know what the last few days have been like for me.
I know this is selfish, but I just want to be happy, even... if it wont last.
Keith...

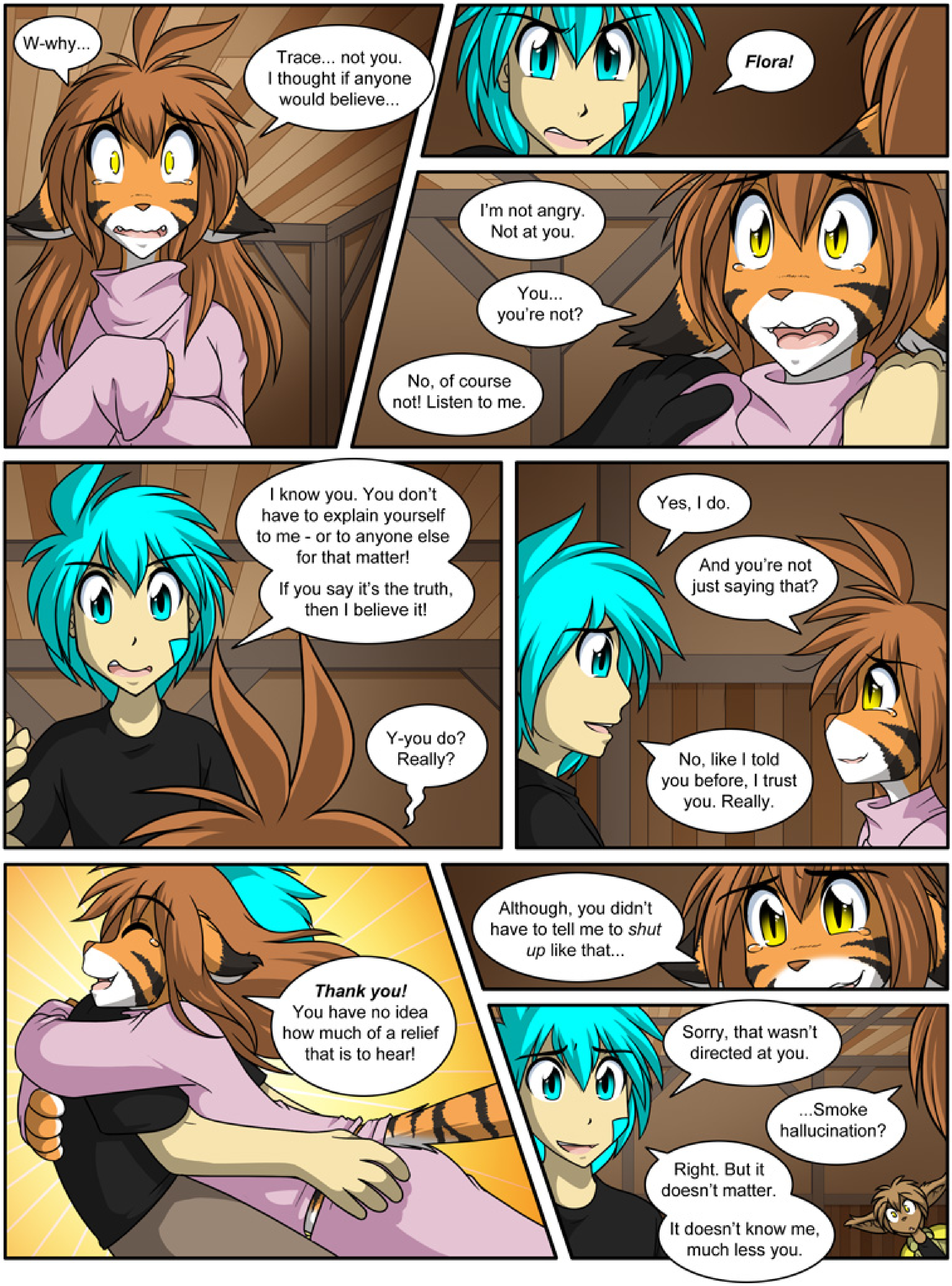

Listen to me, Laura. I know you want to stay here just as much as I want it.
You travelled across the ocean and to the edge of the world just to find me.
You deserve to be happy. We both do. So please, don't worry.
I can't help it.
H-how can you even be sure that I'm really... me?
I-I mean, I know I am, but what Natani sa– *mmmph!*
Forget what Natani said.
I know it's you, Laura. No amount of imagination could replace you.
You are real. I don't know how, and I don't care.
I won't abandon you again. I'll find help. One of my friends must be able to do something.
B-but...
O-okay, Keith. I'll try, for you, if...
I'll do whatever it takes to save you.
So please, don't worry. Let's just enjoy the time we have.
...if that's really what you desire.

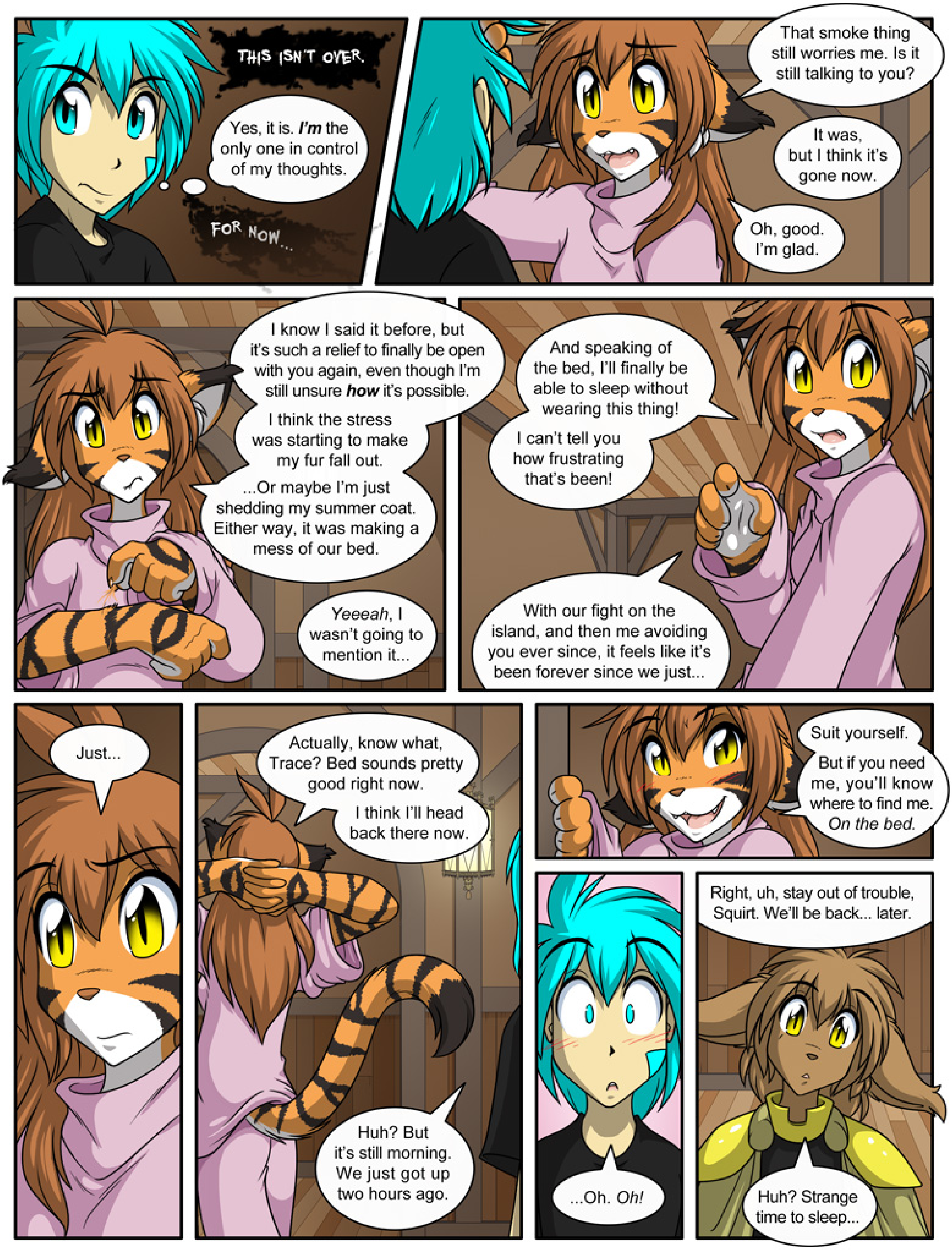

Mmph!
NOM! NOM!
Admit it, Trace. She's a cute kid.
I suppose. In a manipulative sort of way.
...Say, Trace.
Hm?
Have you ever thought about... having kids?
K-kids?
Er... no, I... hadn't really considered it.
Honestly, I kinda figured "no kids" was a foregone conclusion once I decided to start dating outside of my own species, you know?
Why do you ask?
Um, well... I just need to know, it's important. If it were somehow possible for us... would you want that?
I... don't know. If I'm honest... I think I'd probably be the worst father ever.
I have about six months worth of life experience and about two decades worth of stuff I can't remember.
Everyone in the world either hates me for things I did or wants me to go back to the way I was before.
Including an evil black smoke hallucination which I think might be my past self trying to reassert itself.
So yeah, I'm not exactly father materia
Wait, wait, back up.
"Evil black smoke hallucination?"

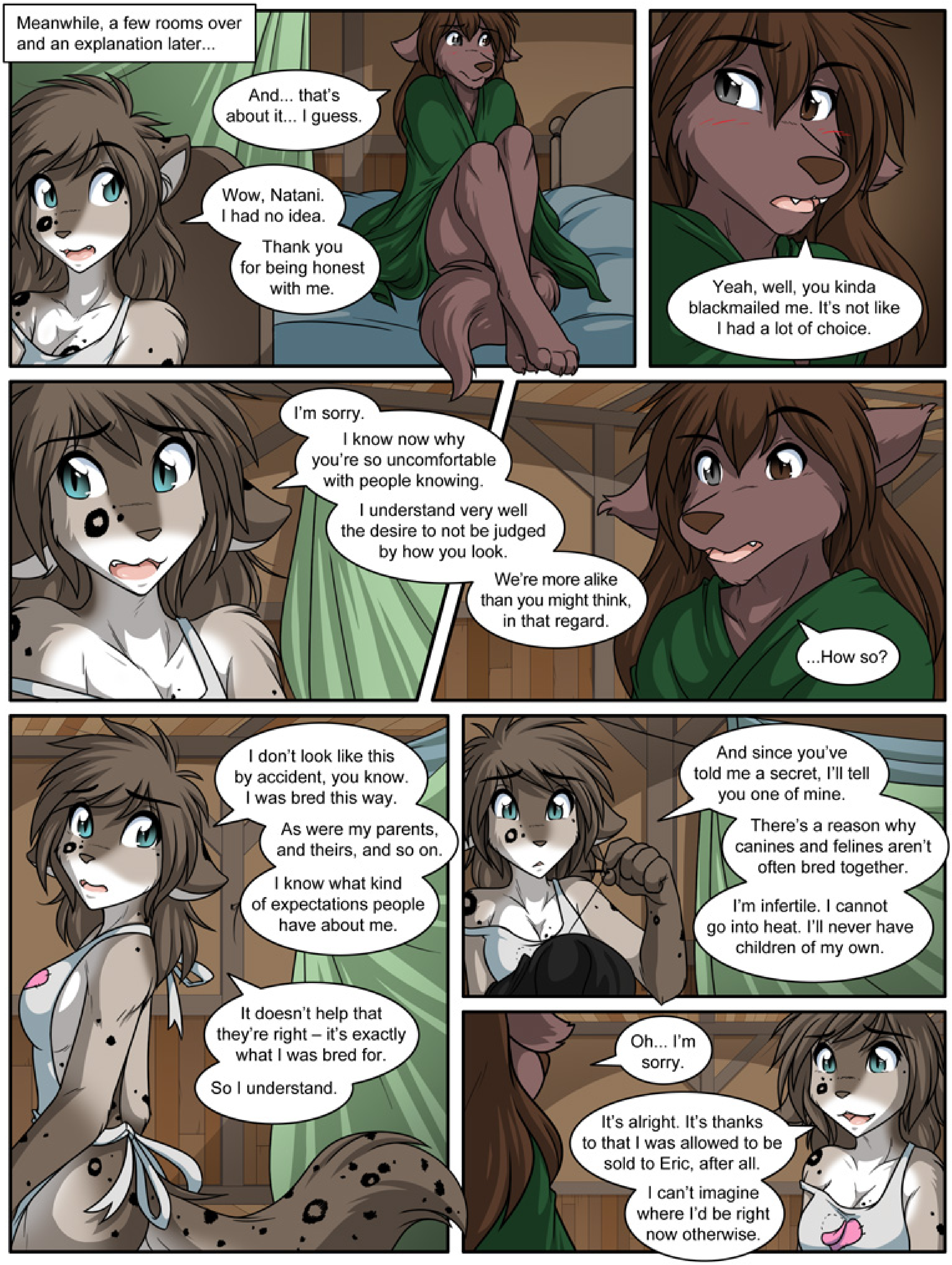

Oh, yeah, well... It only happened once this morning while I was cooking breakfast.
I'll be honest, a freaky voice in my head ***is*** pretty unnerving, but I'm hoping it was just that once.
And I didn't listen to it, obviously! I might be a little naive, but its attempts at manipulating me were transparent.
Manipulating? What do you mean? What did it say?
Well, it seemed to think you were keeping something from me.
And that when you told me what it was, that would somehow make me go back to my "old ways."
So you see, it– wha-?! Hey! Don't be like that, Flora! I would never do that!
Besides, it's not like you *really are* keeping some life-changing secret from me anyway.
...R-right?
...Oh.
W-well, that's okay! I'm sure whatever it is, I'll understand!
There's absolutely nothing you could tell me that'll just make me flip out, *I swear!*
Hey, maybe if I just guess, it'll, um... soften the blow.
No, Trace, wai–
Is it your health? Y-you're not dying are you?!
No, no! I'm fine. Listen to me–
Is... is it about our relationship?
W-well, yes, sort of...
Is it... t-that you want to start seeing other p
No! It's not that! Please, no more guessi–
Is it that you're gunna be a mama tiger?!

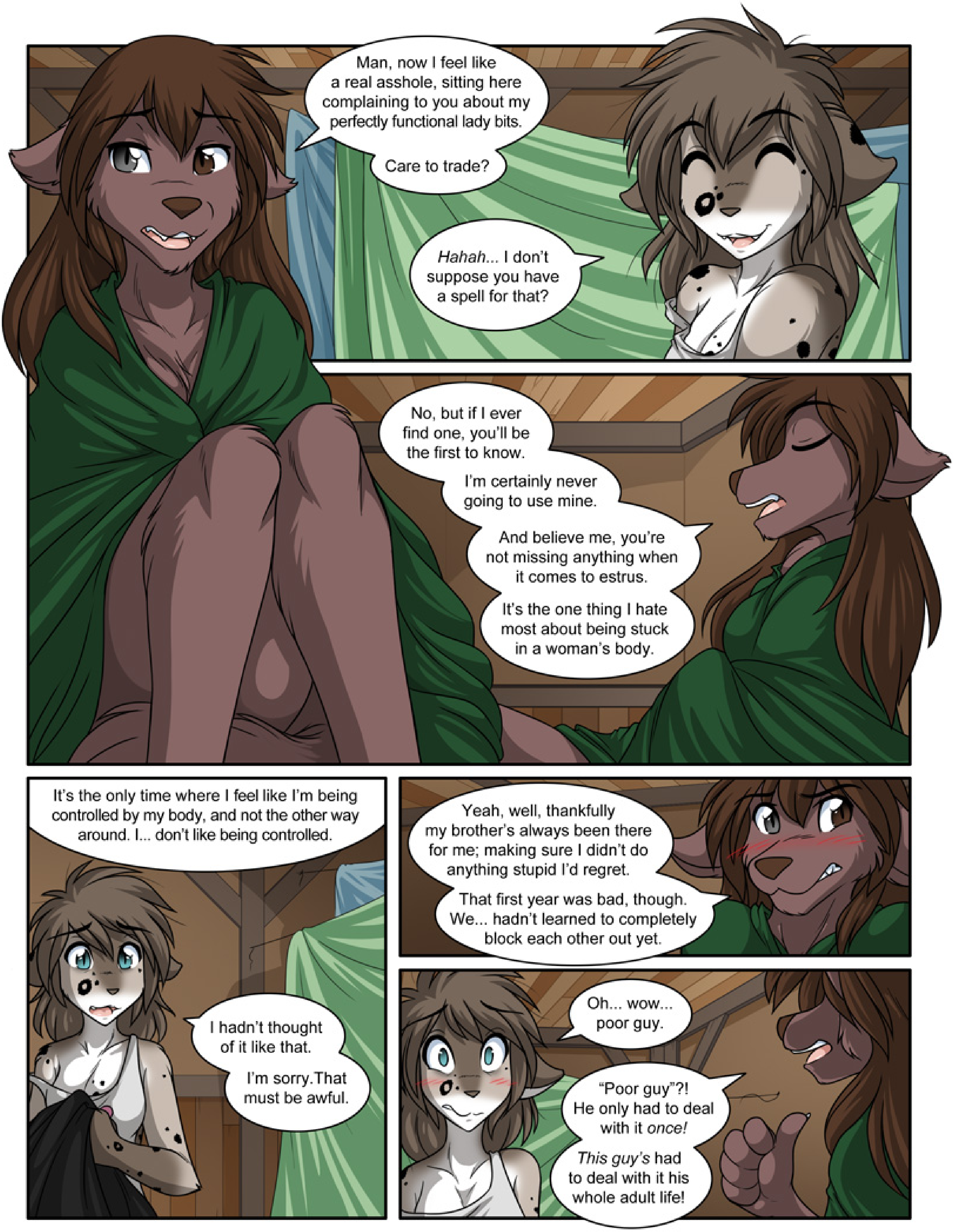

Sigh... Look, Kid, I appreciate that you're trying to help, but this is an adult conversation.
We don't need your silly, nonsensical suggestions.
Now come on, out! We'll figure out what to do with you after we're done talking!
Aww... I was just trying to help!
Trace...
She's right.
"Right?" A-as in... *correct?*
But she... she was implying that... you were...
Trace. I'm pregnant.
Snerk!
Ahahaha! Wow, you two really had me going there for a second!
Did you two plan this out from the beginning or did *y-eeeeeee–!*
Trace, you promised not to freak out.
I consider falling unconcious to be a form of freaking out.
...Trace?

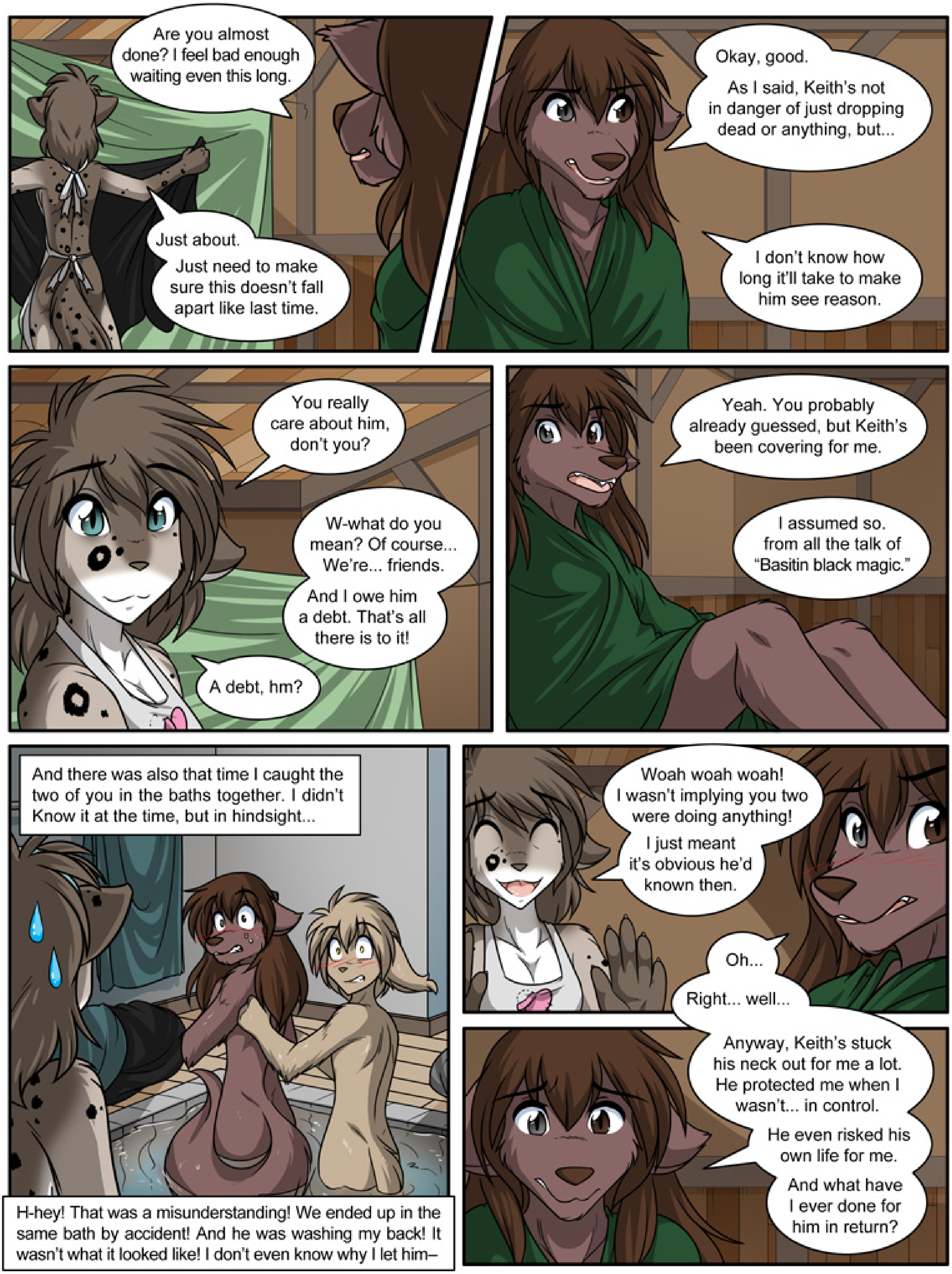

Trace, are you alright?
Yeah - I mean no! I mean... when? *How?!*
I don't know! I really have no idea!
I only found out the day we left the island, and even then, I wasn't sure I believed it!
I just always assumed it wasn't possible between a human and a Keidran!
THAT'S BECAUSE IT ISN'T POSSIBLE.
SHE'S LYING...
T-Trace, I know how it might seem, but I swear! I've never been with anyone else since I've been with you!
That's why I've been so distant with you lately, and wearing this all the time.
I didn't want to keep it a secret, but I had no idea how to explain it!
YOU KNOW WHAT SHE'S SAYING IS IMPOSSIBLE.
SHE'S BEEN SLEEPING BEHIND YOUR BACK.
I-I'm telling the truth! T
OH, I'M SORRY. AM I SPEAKING OVER HER WORDS? THEY AREN'T IMPORTANT ANYWAY.
DO YOU SEE NOW WHY KEIDRAN CANNOT BE TRUSTED? NO MATTER HOW HUMAN THEY SEEM, THEY ARE ANIMALS.
MAYBE IT WAS THE WOLF? SHE WAS ALL OVER HIM AT THAT FESTIVAL, REMEMBER? IT'S NO SURPRISE SHE'D BEND OVER FOR HI–
I'm scared. Please, Tr–
Shut up!!

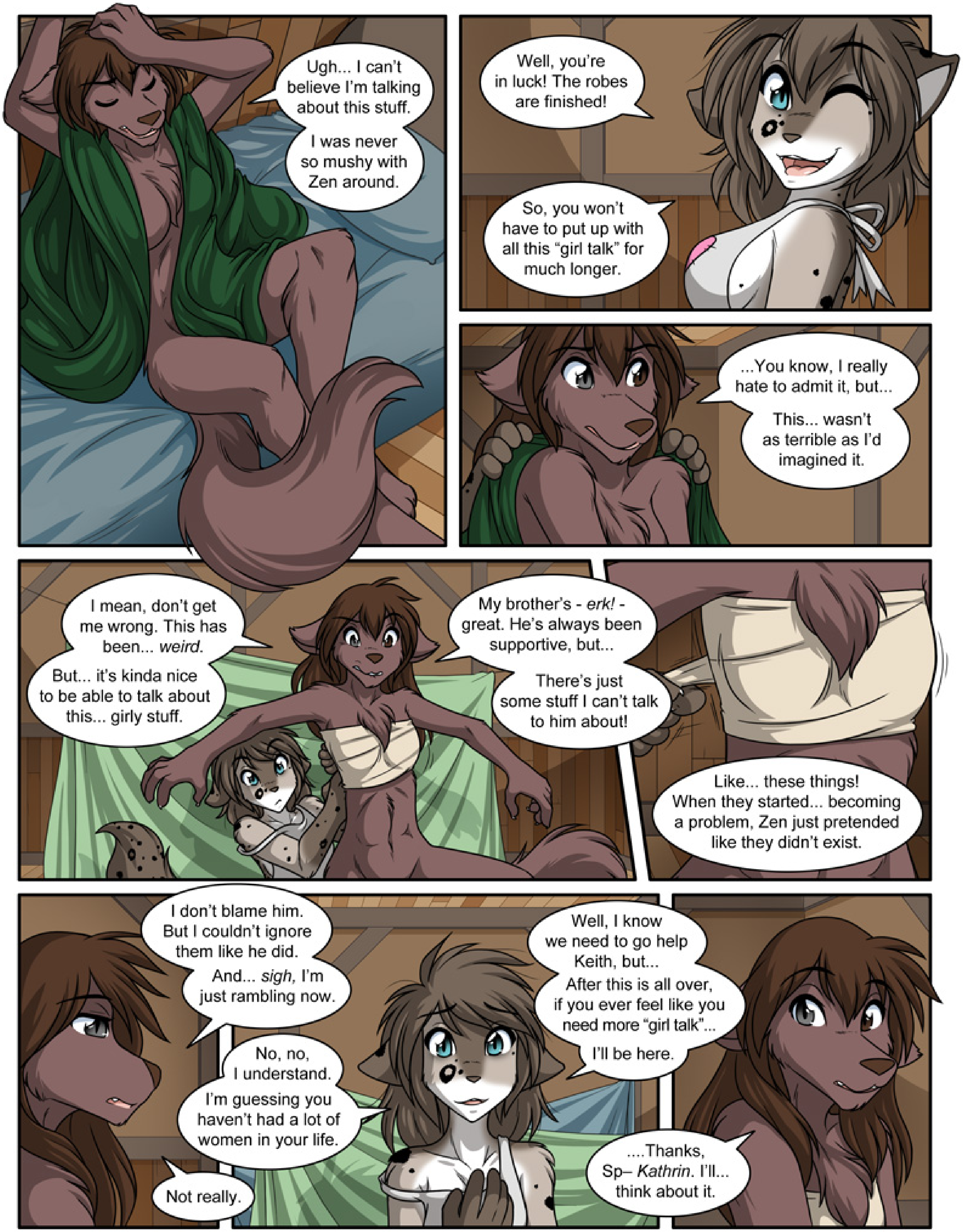

W-why...
Trace... not you. I thought if anyone would believe...
Flora!
I'm not angry. Not at you.
You... you're not?
No, of course not! Listen to me.
I know you. You don't have to explain yourself to me - or to anyone else for that matter!
If you say it's the truth, then I believe it!
Y-you do? Really?
Yes, I do.
And you're not just saying that?
No, like I told you before, I trust you. Really.
Thank you! You have no idea how much of a relief that is to hear!
Although, you didn't have to tell me to *shut up* like that...
Sorry, that wasn't directed at you.
...Smoke hallucination?
Right. But it doesn't matter.
It doesn't know me, much less you.

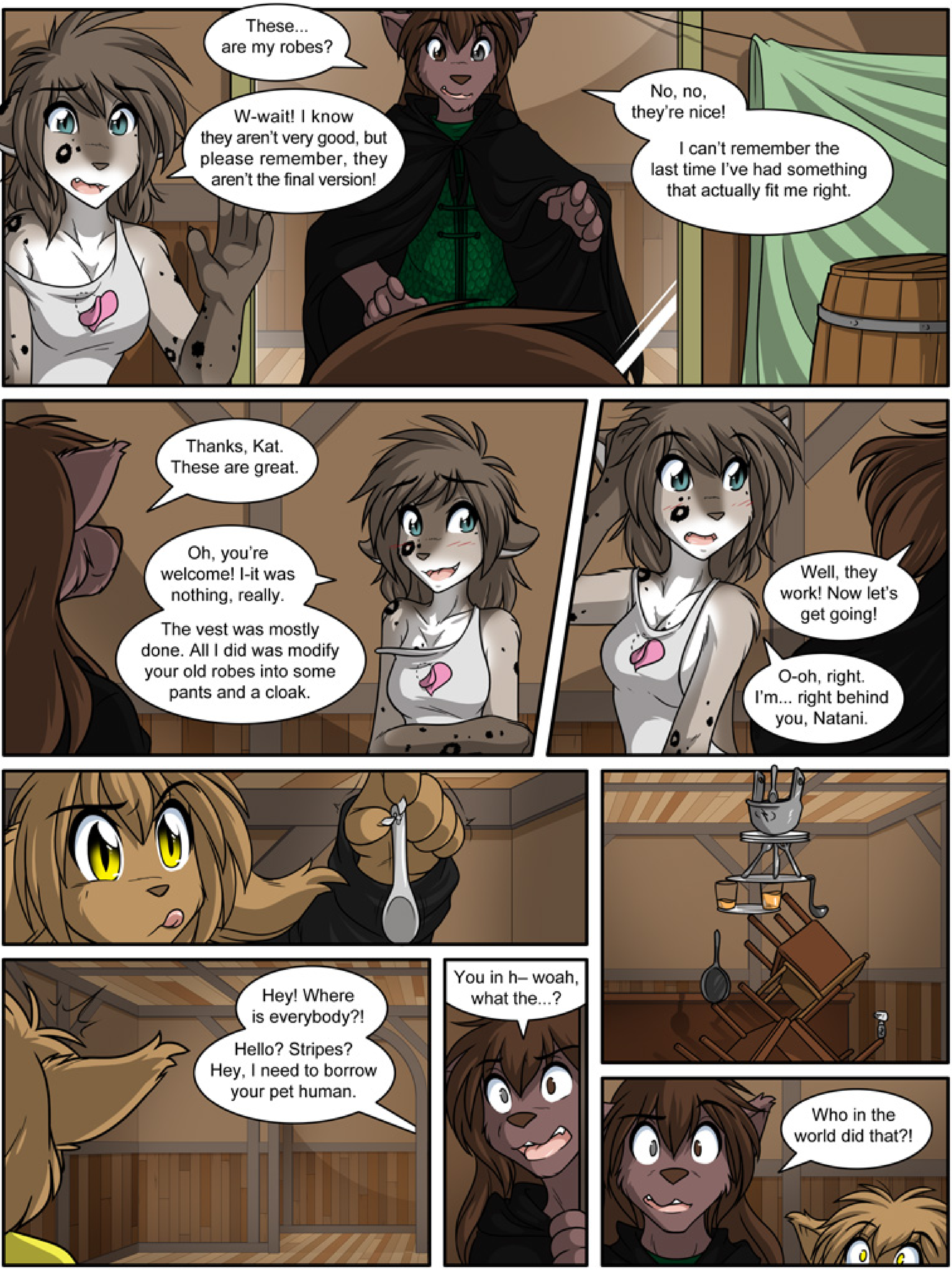

THIS ISN'T OVER.
Yes, it is. *I'm* the only one in control of my thoughts.
FOR NOW...
That smoke thing still worries me. Is it still talking to you?
It was, but I think it's gone now.
Oh, good. I'm glad.
I know I said it before, but it's such a relief to finally be open with you again, even though I'm still unsure *how* it's possible.
I think the stress was starting to make my fur fall out.
...Or maybe I'm just shedding my summer coat. Either way, it was making a mess of our bed.
Yeeeah, I wasn't going to mention it...
And speaking of the bed, I'll finally be able to sleep without wearing this thing!
I can't tell you how frustrating that's been!
With our fight on the island, and then me avoiding you ever since, it feels like it's been forever since we just...
Just...
Actually, know what, Trace? Bed sounds pretty good right now.
I think I'll head back there now.
Huh? But it's still morning. We just got up two hours ago.
Suit yourself.
But if you need me, you'll know where to find me. *On the bed.*
...Oh. *Oh!*
Right, uh, stay out of trouble, Squirt. We'll be back... later.
Huh? Strange time to sleep...

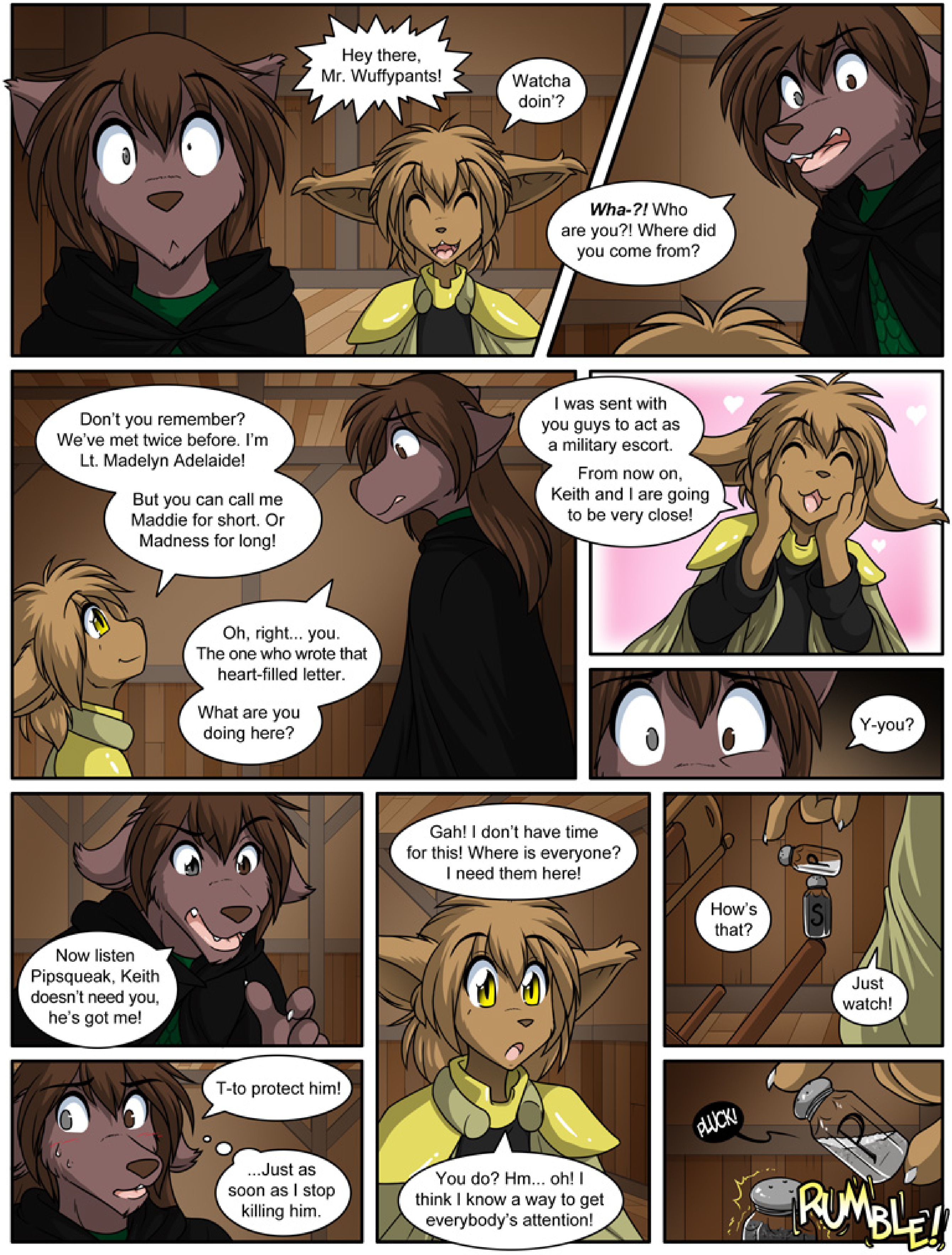

Meanwhile, a few rooms over and an explanation later...
And... that's about it... I guess.
Wow, Natani. I had no idea.
Thank you for being honest with me.
Yeah, well, you kinda blackmailed me. It's not like I had a lot of choice.
I'm sorry.
I know now why you're so uncomfortable with people knowing.
I understand very well the desire to not be judged by how you look.
We're more alike than you might think, in that regard.
...How so?
I don't look like this by accident, you know. I was bred this way.
As were my parents, and theirs, and so on.
I know what kind of expectations people have about me.
It doesn't help that they're right – it's exactly what I was bred for.
So I understand.
And since you've told me a secret, I'll tell you one of mine.
There's a reason why canines and felines aren't often bred together.
I'm infertile. I cannot go into heat. I'll never have children of my own.
Oh... I'm sorry.
It's alright. It's thanks to that I was allowed to be sold to Eric, after all.
I can't imagine where I'd be right now otherwise.

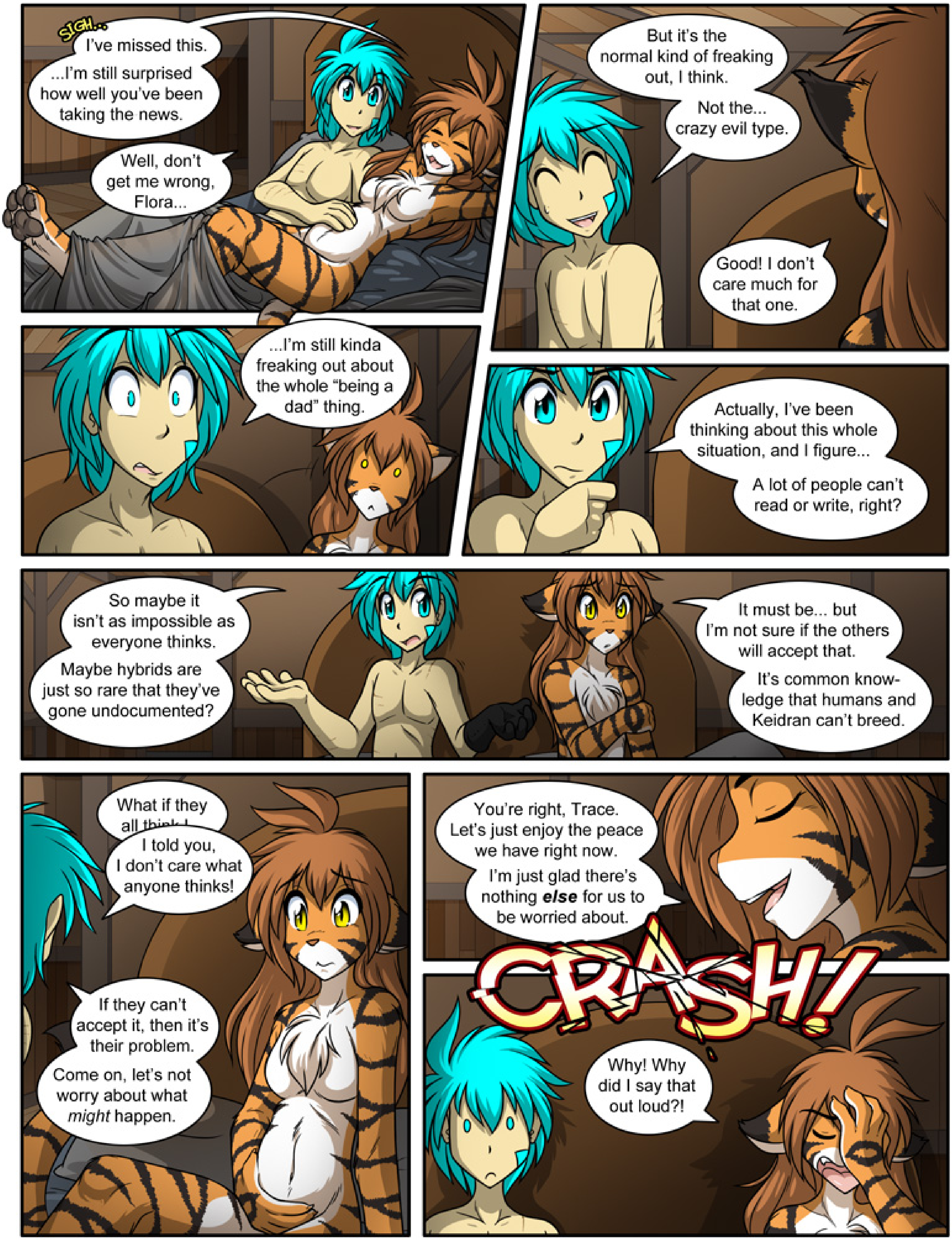

Man, now I feel like a real asshole, sitting here complaining to you about my perfectly functional lady bits.
Care to trade?
Hahah... I don't suppose you have a spell for that?
No, but if I ever find one, you'll be the first to know.
I'm certainly never going to use mine.
And believe me, you're not missing anything when it comes to estrus.
It's the one thing I hate most about being stuck in a woman's body.
It's the only time where I feel like I'm being controlled by my body, and not the other way around. I... don't like being controlled.
I hadn't thought of it like that.
I'm sorry.That must be awful.
Yeah, well, thankfully my brother's always been there for me; making sure I didn't do anything stupid I'd regret.
That first year was bad, though. We... hadn't learned to completely block each other out yet.
Oh... wow... poor guy.
"Poor guy"?! He only had to deal with it *once!*
This guy's had to deal with it his whole adult life!

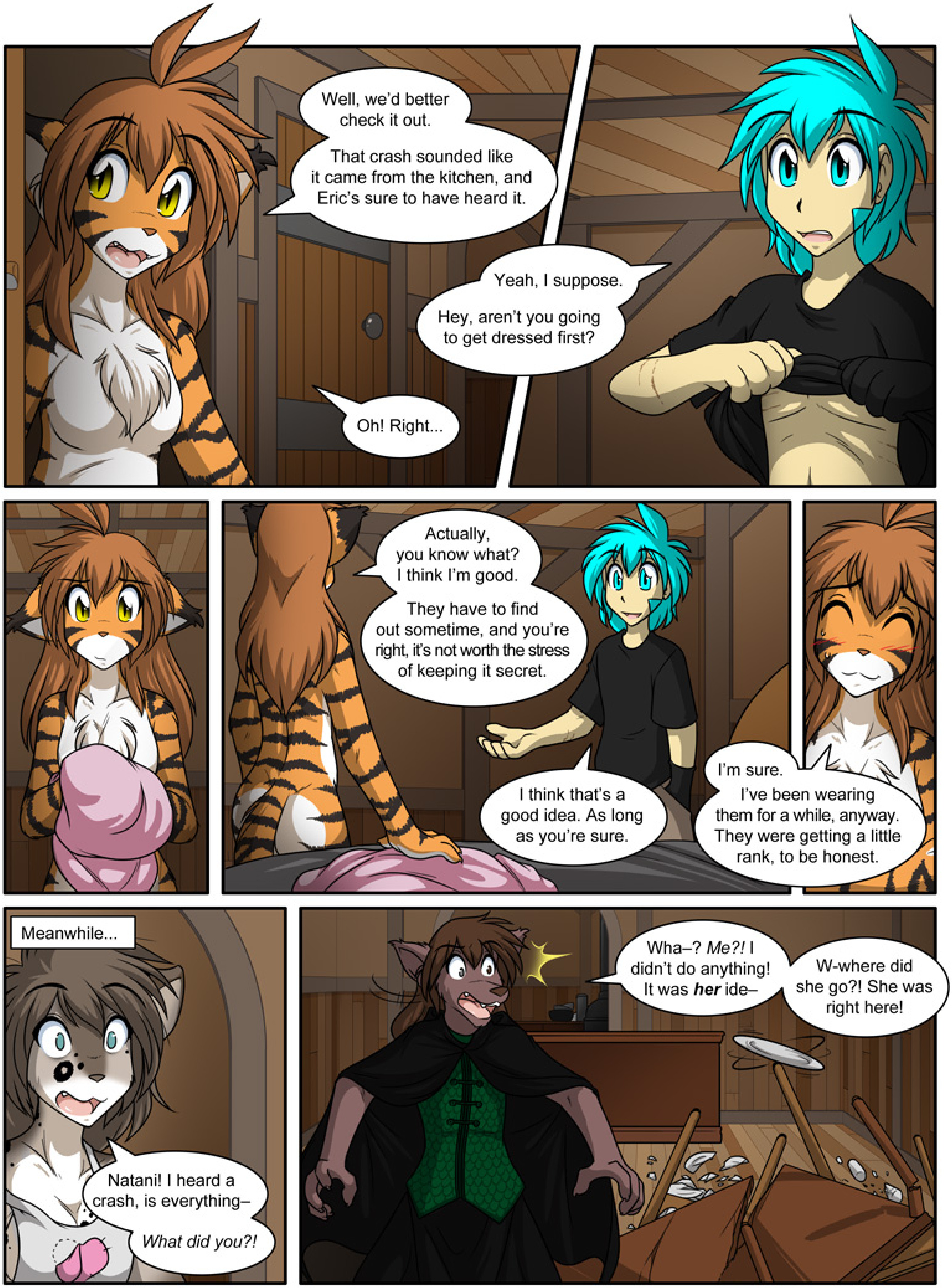

Are you almost done? I feel bad enough waiting even this long.
Just about.
Just need to make sure this doesn't fall apart like last time.
Okay, good.
As I said, Keith's not in danger of just dropping dead or anything, but...
I don't know how long it'll take to make him see reason.
You really care about him, don't you?
W-what do you mean? Of course... We're... friends.
And I owe him a debt. That's all there is to it!
A debt, hm?
Yeah. You probably already guessed, but Keith's been covering for me.
I assumed so. from all the talk of "Basitin black magic."
And there was also that time I caught the two of you in the baths together. I didn't Know it at the time, but in hindsight...
H-hey! That was a misunderstanding! We ended up in the same bath by accident! And he was washing my back! It wasn't what it looked like! I don't even know why I let him–
Woah woah woah! I wasn't implying you two were doing anything!
I just meant it's obvious he'd known then.
Oh...
Right... well...
Anyway, Keith's stuck his neck out for me a lot. He protected me when I wasn't... in control.
He even risked his own life for me.
And what have I ever done for him in return?

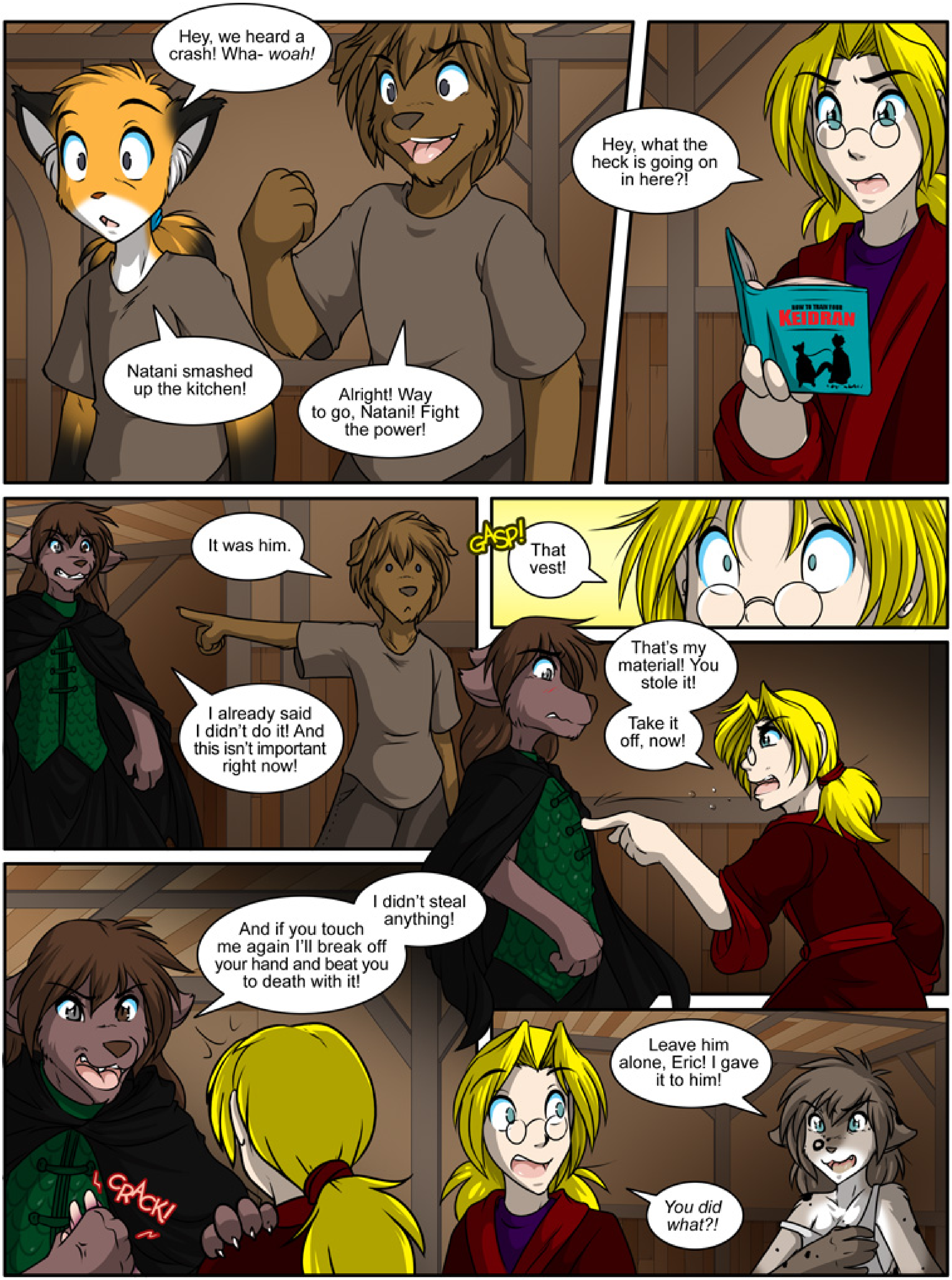

Ugh... I can't believe I'm talking about this stuff.
I was never so mushy with Zen around.
Well, you're in luck! The robes are finished!
So, you won't have to put up with all this "girl talk" for much longer.
...You know, I really hate to admit it, but...
This... wasn't as terrible as I'd imagined it.
I mean, don't get me wrong. This has been... *weird.*
But... it's kinda nice to be able to talk about this... girly stuff.
My brother's - *erk!* - great. He's always been supportive, but...
There's just some stuff I can't talk to him about!
Like... these things! When they started... becoming a problem, Zen just pretended like they didn't exist.
I don't blame him. But I couldn't ignore them like he did.
And... *sigh,* I'm just rambling now.
No, no, I understand.
I'm guessing you haven't had a lot of women in your life.
Not really.
Well, I know we need to go help Keith, but...
After this is all over, if you ever feel like you need more "girl talk"...
I'll be here.
....Thanks, Sp– *Kathrin.* I'll... think about it.

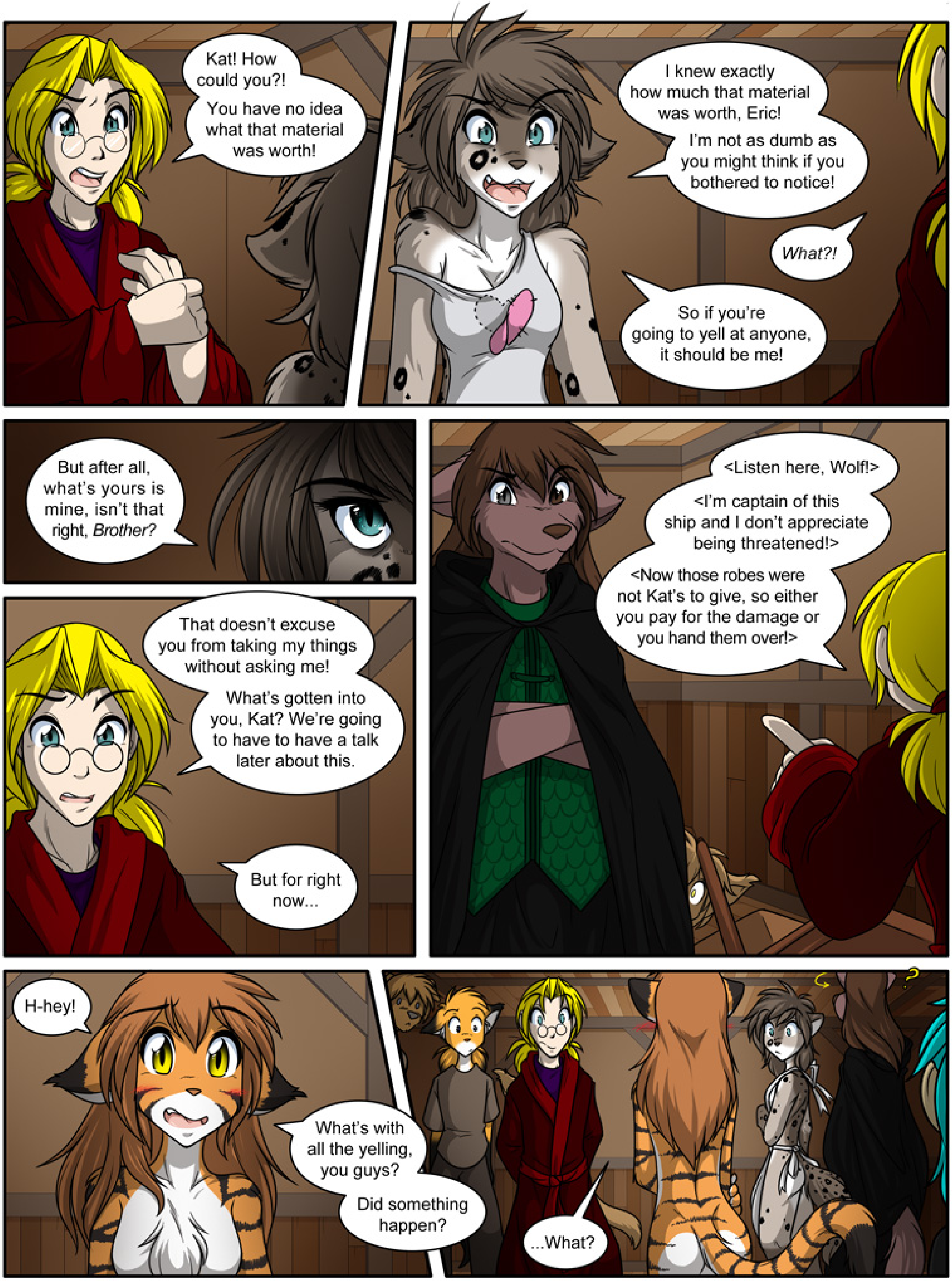

These... are my robes?
W-wait! I know they aren't very good, but please remember, they aren't the final version!
No, no, they're nice!
I can't remember the last time I've had something that actually fit me right.
Thanks, Kat. These are great.
Oh, you're welcome! I-it was nothing, really.
The vest was mostly done. All I did was modify your old robes into some pants and a cloak.
Well, they work! Now let's get going!
O-oh, right. I'm... right behind you, Natani.
Hey! Where is everybody?!
Hello? Stripes? Hey, I need to borrow your pet human.
You in h– woah, what the...?
Who in the world did that?!

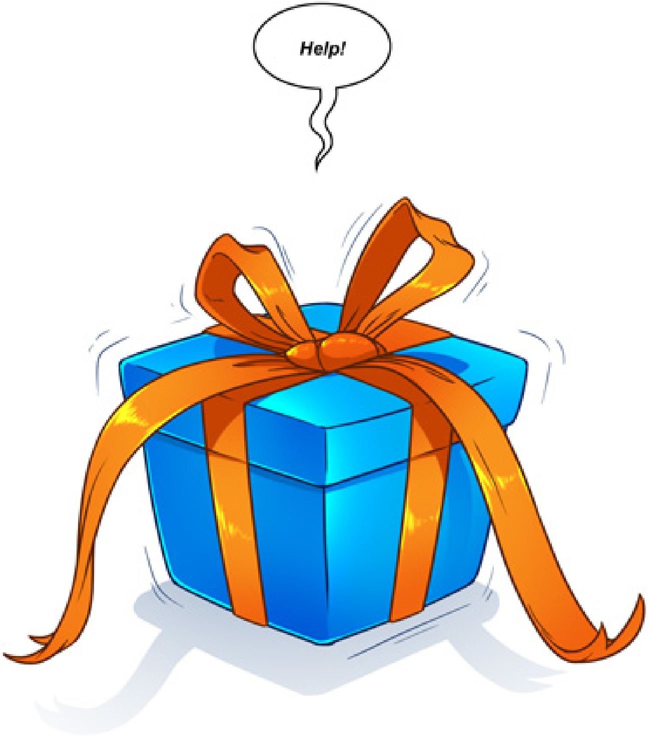

Hey there, Mr. Wuffypants!
Watcha doin'?
Wha-?! Who are you?! Where did you come from?
Don't you remember? We've met twice before. I'm Lt. Madelyn Adelaide!
But you can call me Maddie for short. Or Madness for long!
Oh, right... you. The one who wrote that heart-filled letter.
What are you doing here?
I was sent with you guys to act as a military escort.
From now on, Keith and I are going to be very close!
Y-you?
Now listen Pipsqueak, Keith doesn't need you, he's got me!
T-to protect him!
...Just as soon as I stop killing him.
Gah! I don't have time for this! Where is everyone? I need them here!
You do? Hm... oh! I think I know a way to get everybody's attention!
How's that?
Just watch!
S
PLUCK!
RUMBLE!


SIGH...
I've missed this.
...I'm still surprised how well you've been taking the news.
Well, don't get me wrong, Flora...
But it's the normal kind of freaking out, I think.
Not the... crazy evil type.
Good! I don't care much for that one.
...I'm still kinda freaking out about the whole "being a dad" thing.
Actually, I've been thinking about this whole situation, and I figure...
A lot of people can't read or write, right?
So maybe it isn't as impossible as everyone thinks.
Maybe hybrids are just so rare that they've gone undocumented?
It must be... but I'm not sure if the others will accept that.
It's common knowledge that humans and Keidran can't breed.
What if they all thi
I told you, I don't care what anyone thinks!
If they can't accept it, then it's their problem.
Come on, let's not worry about what *might* happen.
You're right, Trace. Let's just enjoy the peace we have right now.
I'm just glad there's nothing ***else*** for us to be worried about.
CRASH!
Why! Why did I say that out loud?!

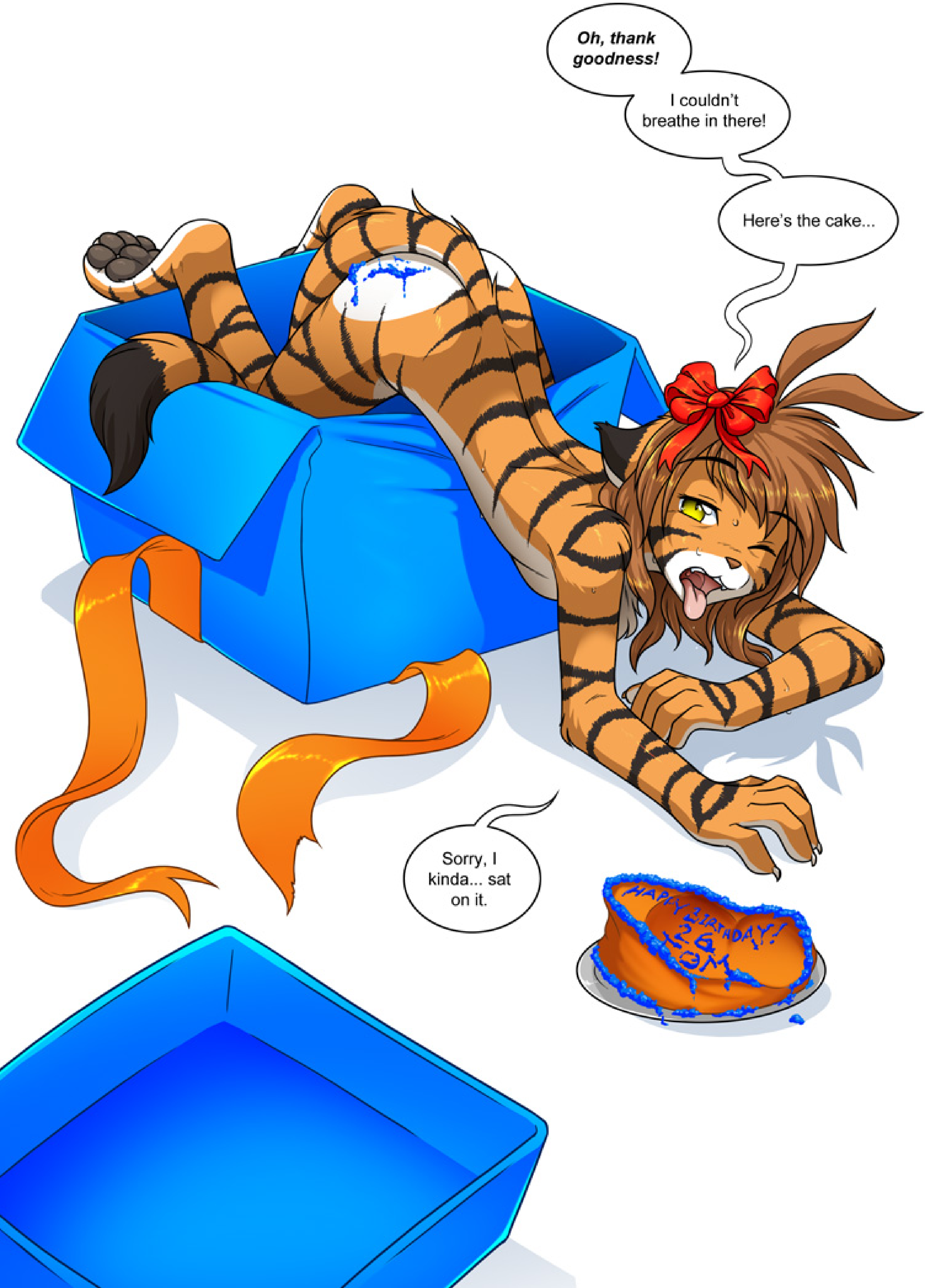

Well, we'd better check it out.
That crash sounded like it came from the kitchen, and Eric's sure to have heard it.
Yeah, I suppose.
Hey, aren't you going to get dressed first?
Oh! Right...
Actually, you know what? I think I'm good.
They have to find out sometime, and you're right, it's not worth the stress of keeping it secret.
I think that's a good idea. As long as you're sure.
I'm sure.
I've been wearing them for a while, anyway. They were getting a little rank, to be honest.
Meanwhile...
Natani! I heard a crash, is everything–
What did you?!
Wha–? *Me?!* I didn't do anything! It was ***her*** ide–
W-where did she go?! She was right here!

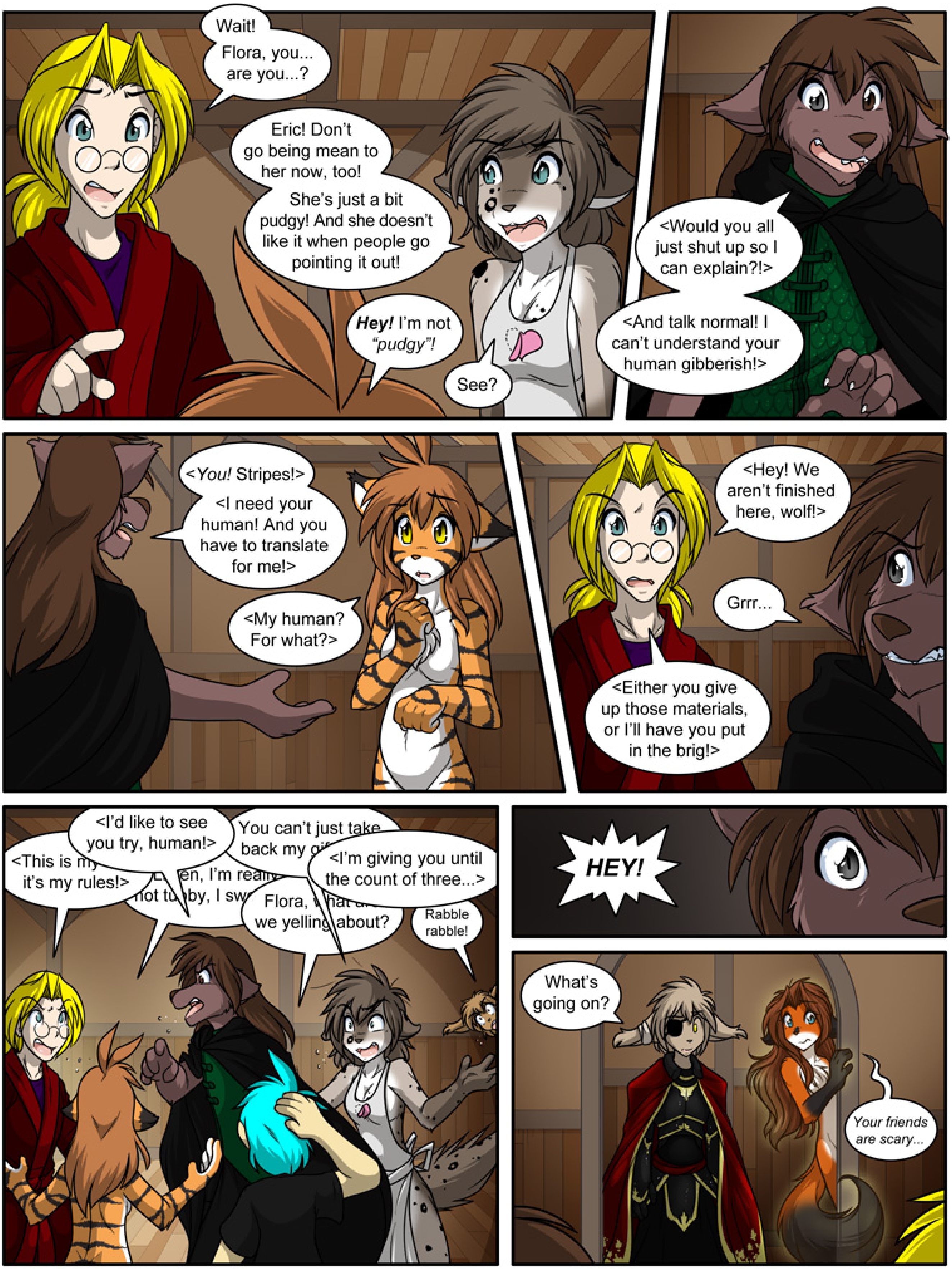

Hey, we heard a crash! Wha- *woah!*
Natani smashed up the kitchen!
Alright! Way to go, Natani! Fight the power!
Hey, what the heck is going on in here?!
HOW TO TRAIN YOUR KEIDRAN
It was him.
I already said I didn't do it! And this isn't important right now!
GASP!
That vest!
That's my material! You stole it!
Take it off, now!
I didn't steal anything!
And if you touch me again I'll break off your hand and beat you to death with it!
CRACK!
Leave him alone, Eric! I gave it to him!
You did what?!

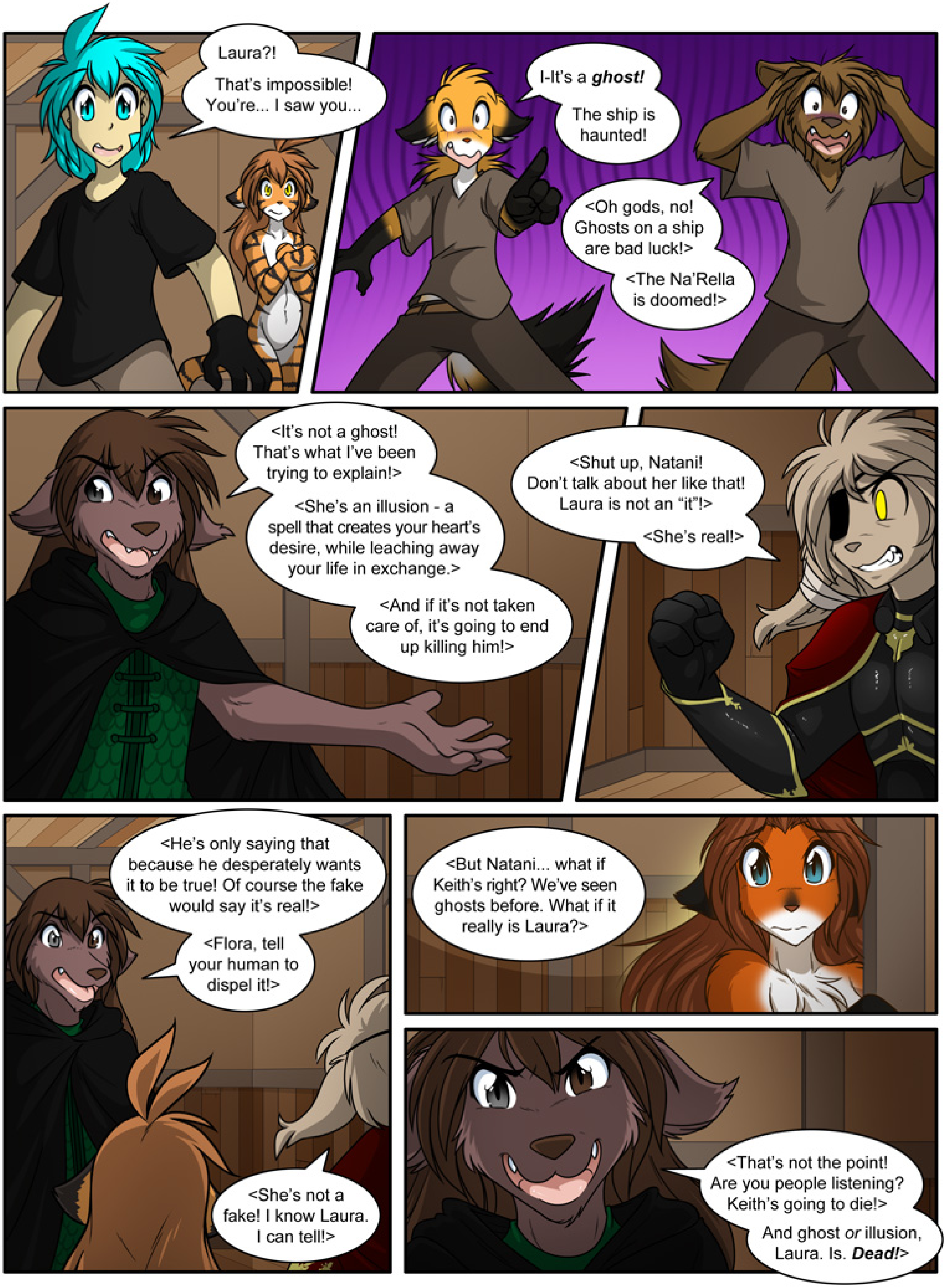

Kat! How could you?!
You have no idea what that material was worth!
I knew exactly how much that material was worth, Eric!
I'm not as dumb as you might think if you bothered to notice!
What?!
So if you're going to yell at anyone, it should be me!
But after all, what's yours is mine, isn't that right, *Brother?*
<Listen here, Wolf!>
<I'm captain of this ship and I don't appreciate being threatened!>
<Now those robes were not Kat's to give, so either you pay for the damage or you hand them over!>
That doesn't excuse you from taking my things without asking me!
What's gotten into you, Kat? We're going to have to have a talk later about this.
But for right now...
H-hey!
What's with all the yelling, you guys?
Did something happen?
...What?

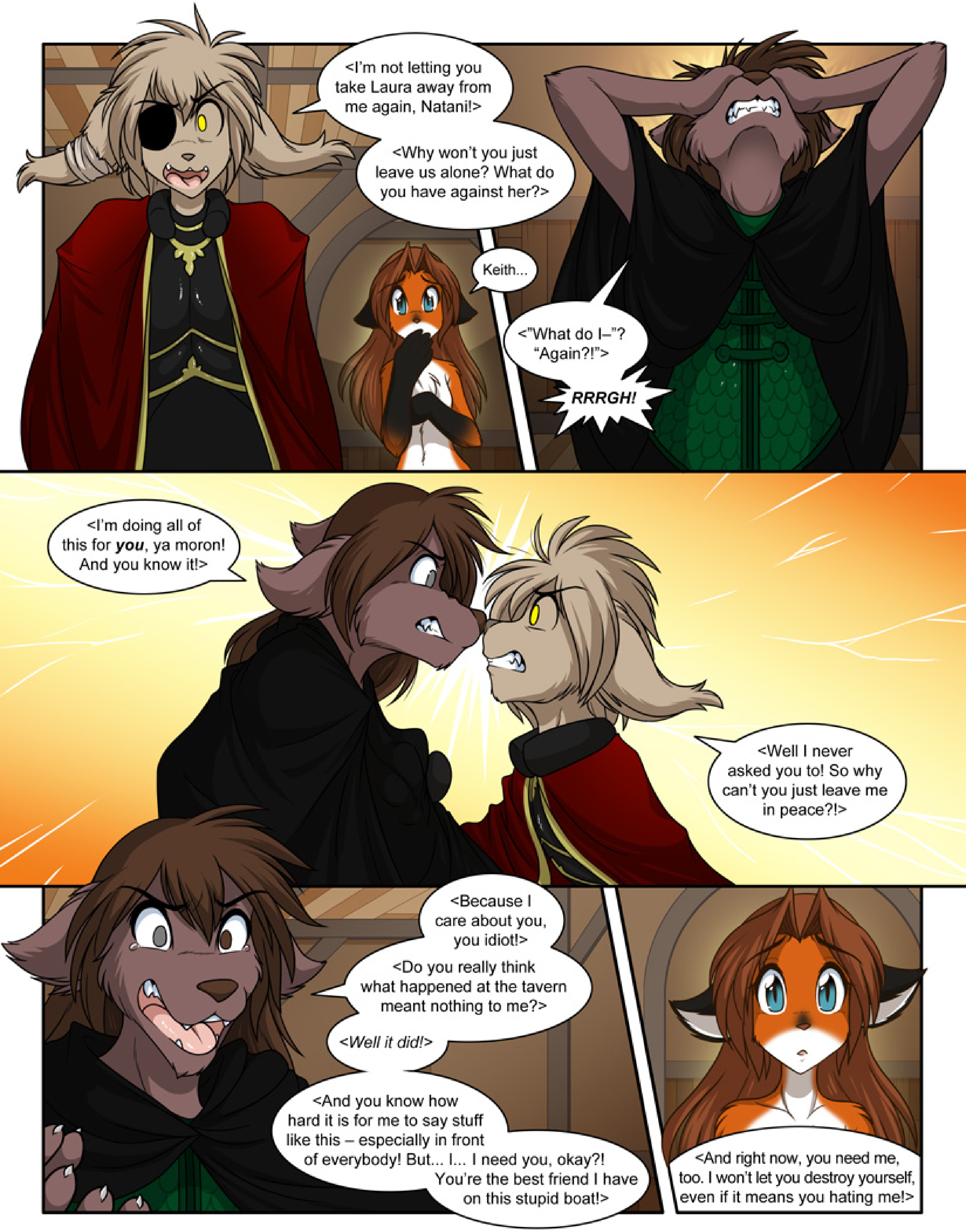


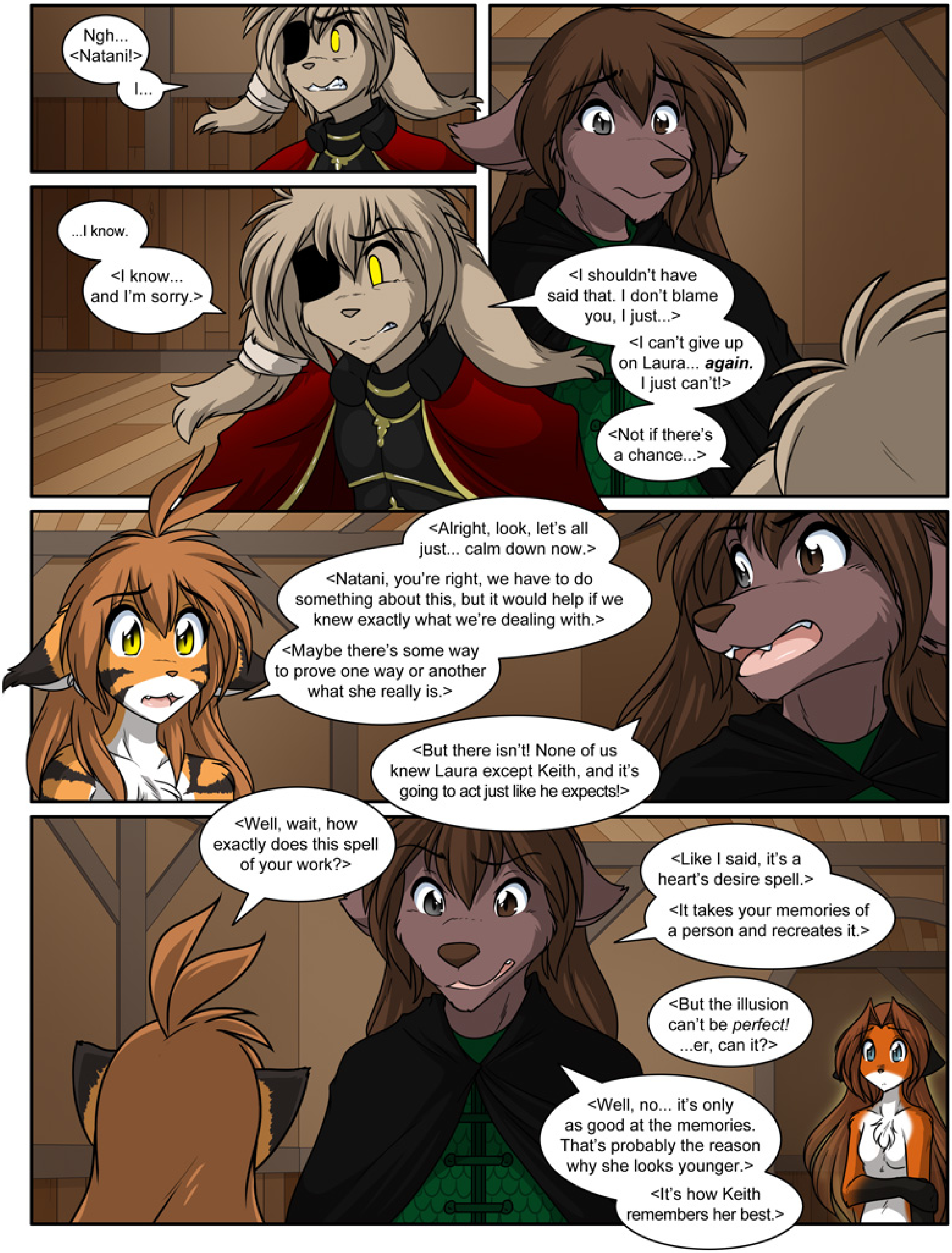
Open the gift?

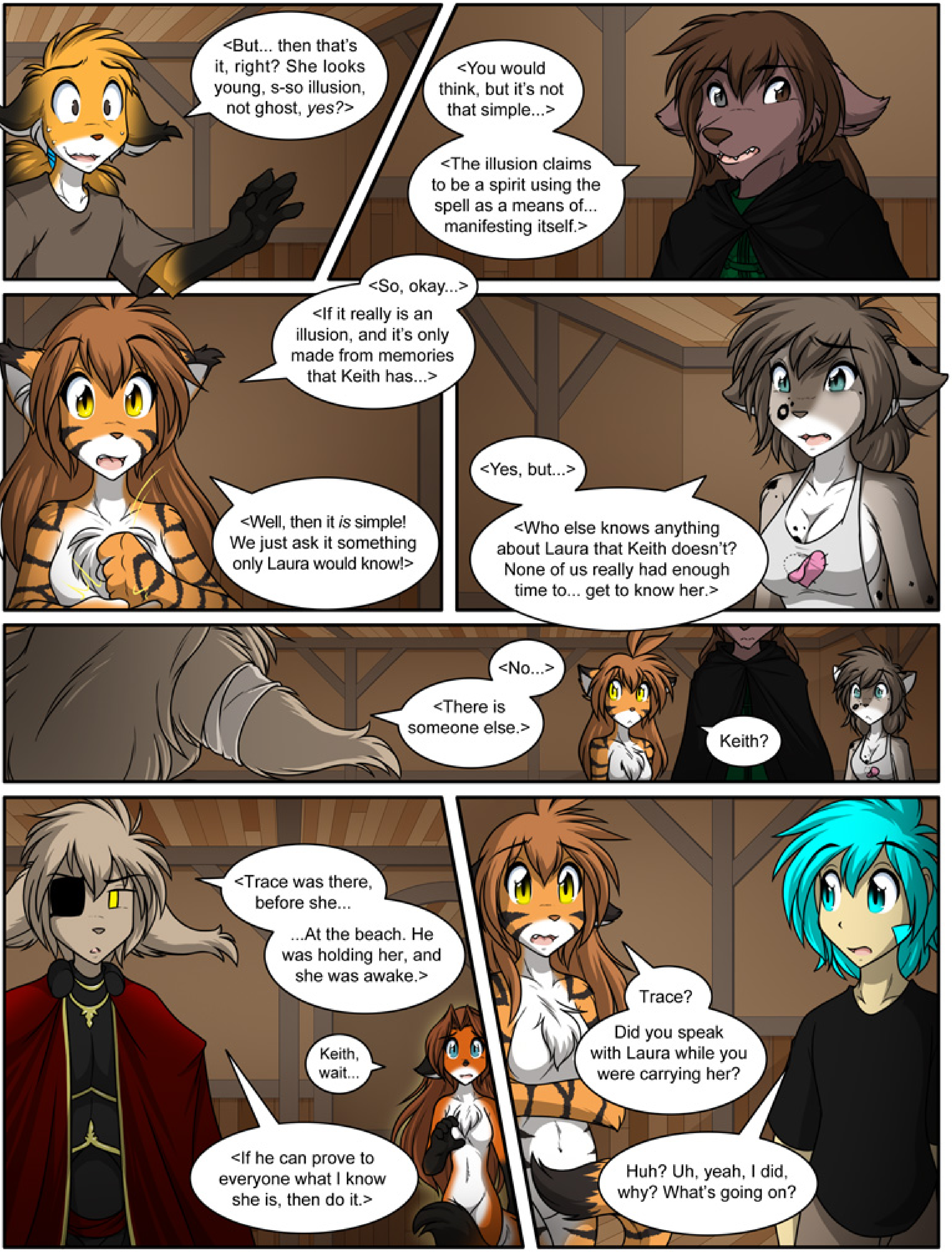

Oh, thank goodness!
I couldn't breathe in there!
Here's the cake...
Sorry, I kinda... sat on it.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
26
TOM

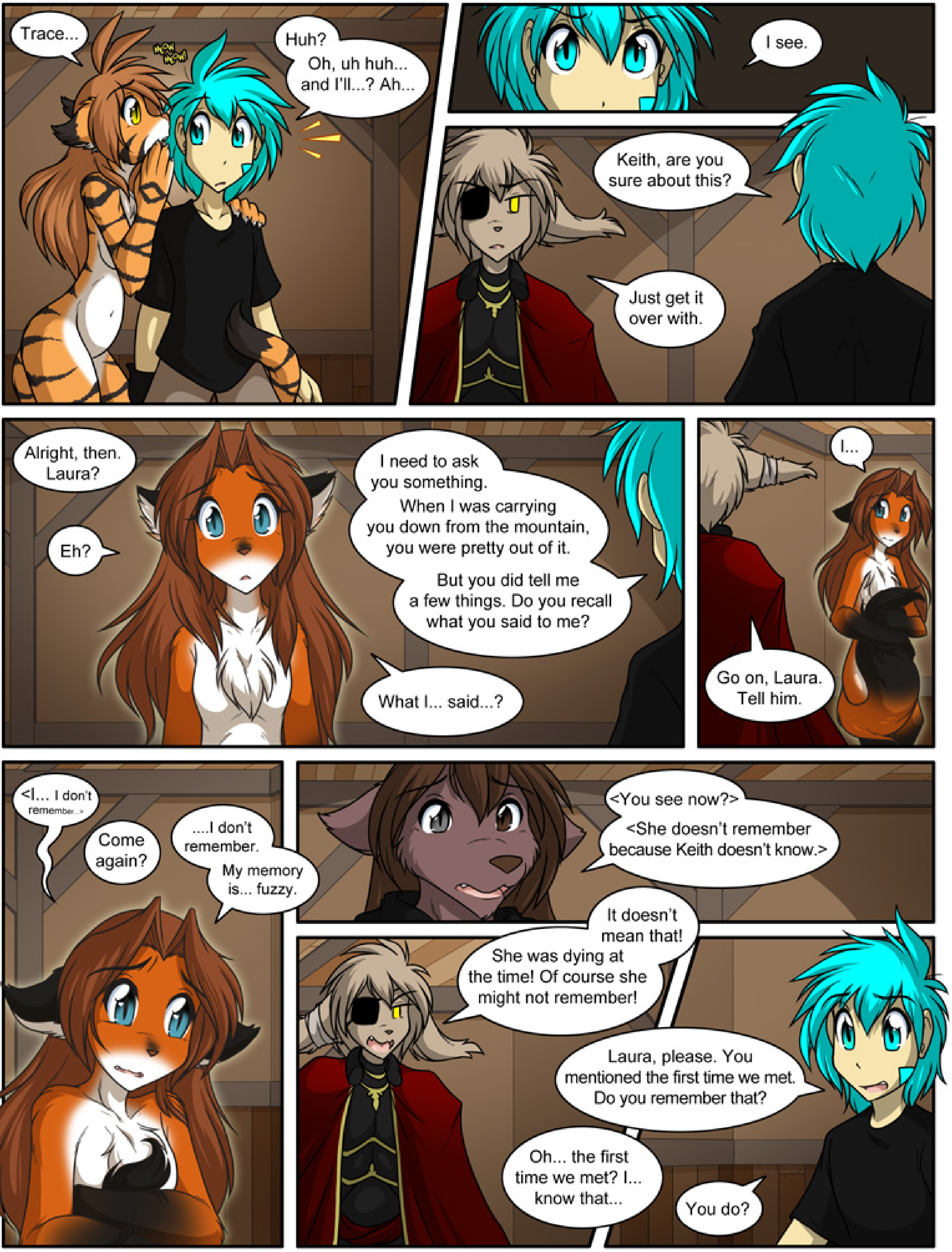

Wait!
Flora, you... are you...?
Eric! Don't go being mean to her now, too!
She's just a bit pudgy! And she doesn't like it when people go pointing it out!
Hey! I'm not *"pudgy"*!
See?
<Would you all just shut up so I can explain?!>
<And talk normal! I can't understand your human gibberish!>
<*You!* Stripes!>
<I need your human! And you have to translate for me!>
<My human? For what?>
<Hey! We aren't finished here, wolf!>
Grrr...
<Either you give up those materials, or I'll have you put in the brig!>
<This is my
it's my rules!>
<I'd like to see you try, human!>
You can't just take back my gi
en, I'm real
not tu by, I sw
<I'm giving you until the count of three...>
Flora, hat a we yelling about?
Rabble rabble!
HEY!
What's going on?
Your friends are scary...

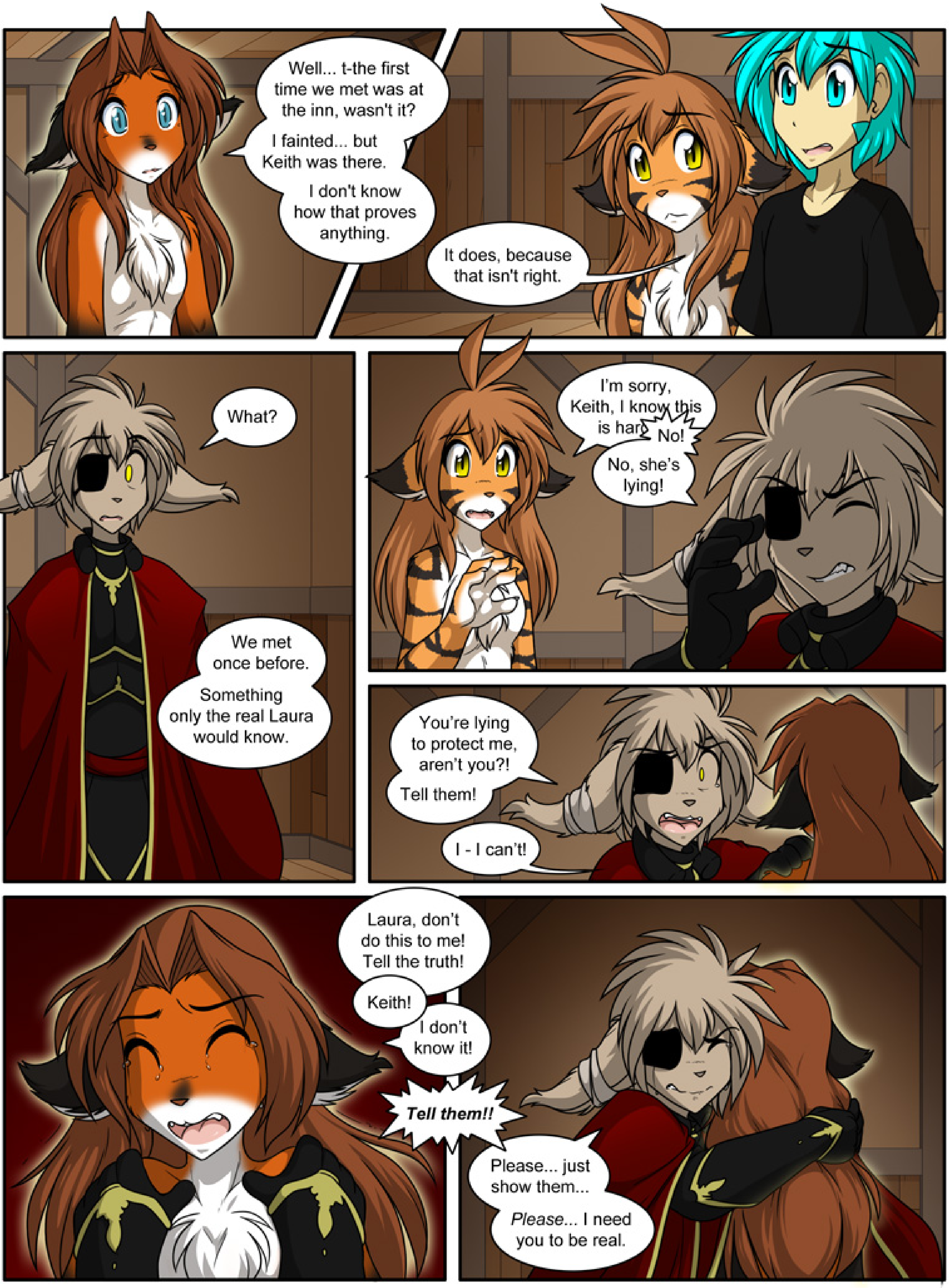

Laura?! That's impossible! You're... I saw you...
I-It's a *ghost!* The ship is haunted!
<Oh gods, no! Ghosts on a ship are bad luck!>
<The Na'Rella is doomed!>
<It's not a ghost! That's what I've been trying to explain!>
<She's an illusion - a spell that creates your heart's desire, while leaching away your life in exchange.>
<And if it's not taken care of, it's going to end up killing him!>
<Shut up, Natani! Don't talk about her like that! Laura is not an "it"!>
<She's real!>
<He's only saying that because he desperately wants it to be true! Of course the fake would say it's real!>
<Flora, tell your human to dispel it!>
<She's not a fake! I know Laura. I can tell!>
<But Natani... what if Keith's right? We've seen ghosts before. What if it really is Laura?>
<That's not the point! Are you people listening? Keith's going to die!>
And ghost *or* illusion, Laura. Is. ***Dead!***>

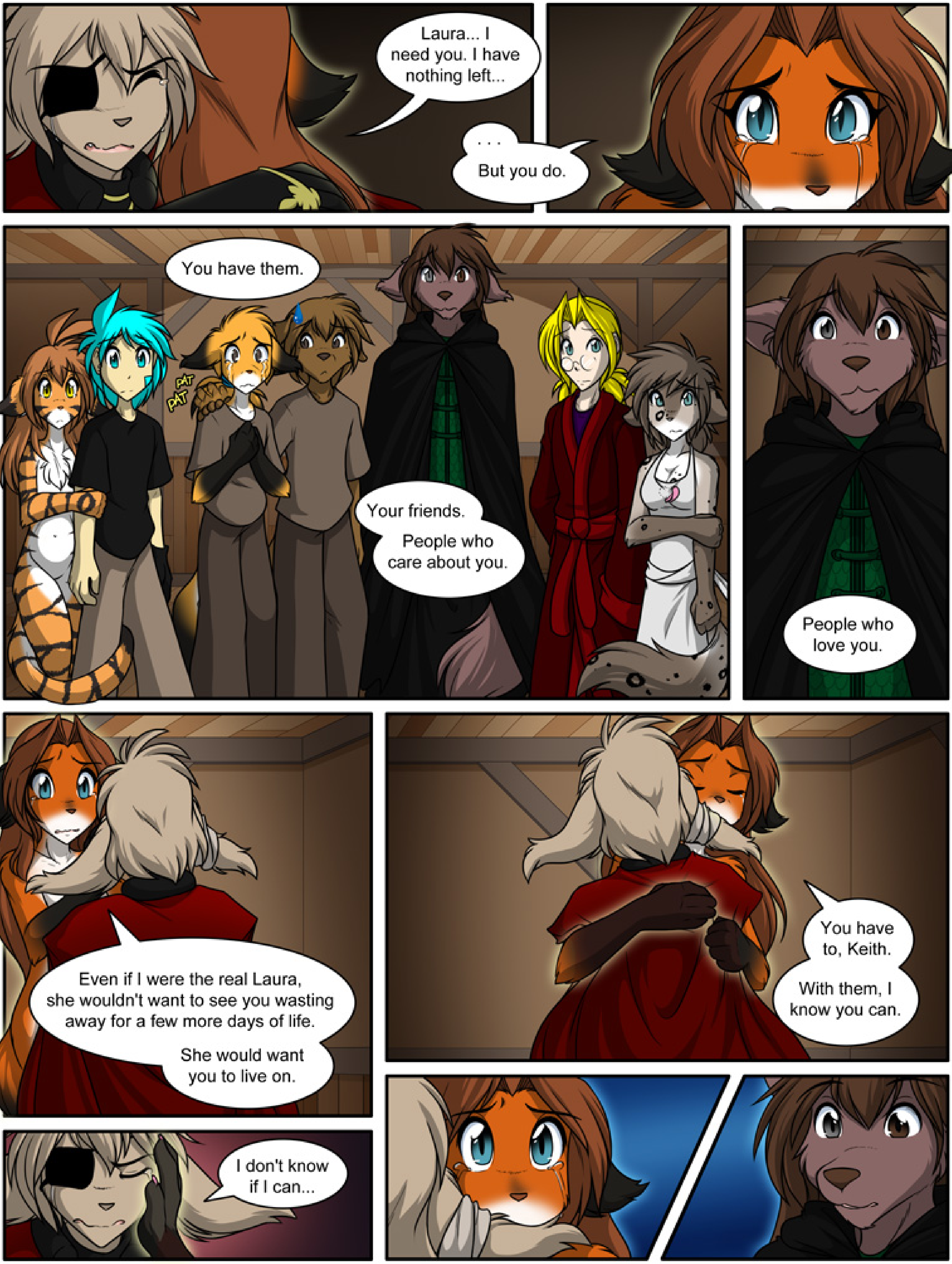

<I'm not letting you take Laura away from me again, Natani!>
<Why won't you just leave us alone? What do you have against her?>
Keith...
<"What do I–"? "Again?!">
RRRGH!
<I'm doing all of this for *you*, ya moron! And you know it!>
<Well I never asked you to! So why can't you just leave me in peace?!>
<Because I care about you, you idiot!>
<Do you really think what happened at the tavern meant nothing to me?>
<Well it did!>
<And you know how hard it is for me to say stuff like this – especially in front of everybody! But... I... I need you, okay?! You're the best friend I have on this stupid boat!>
<And right now, you need me, too. I won't let you destroy yourself, even if it means you hating me!>

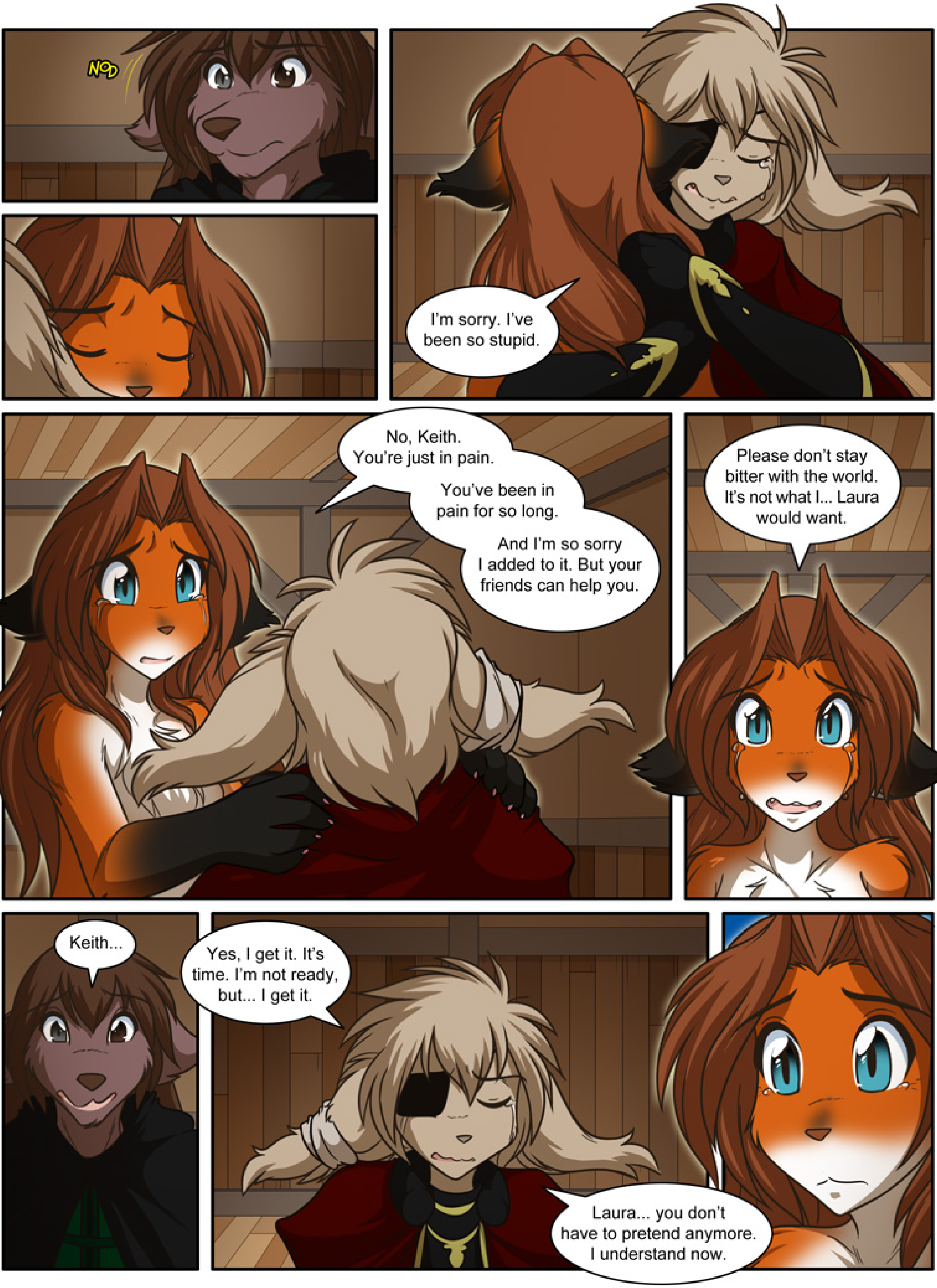

Ngh... <Natani!>
I...
...I know.
<I know... and I'm sorry.>
<I shouldn't have said that. I don't blame you, I just...>
<I can't give up on Laura... ***again.*** I just can't!>
<Not if there's a chance...>
<Alright, look, let's all just... calm down now.>
<Natani, you're right, we have to do something about this, but it would help if we knew exactly what we're dealing with.>
<Maybe there's some way to prove one way or another what she really is.>
<But there isn't! None of us knew Laura except Keith, and it's going to act just like he expects!>
<Well, wait, how exactly does this spell of your work?>
<Like I said, it's a heart's desire spell.>
<It takes your memories of a person and recreates it.>
<But the illusion can't be *perfect!* ...er, can it?>
<Well, no... it's only as good at the memories. That's probably the reason why she looks younger.>
<It's how Keith remembers her best.>

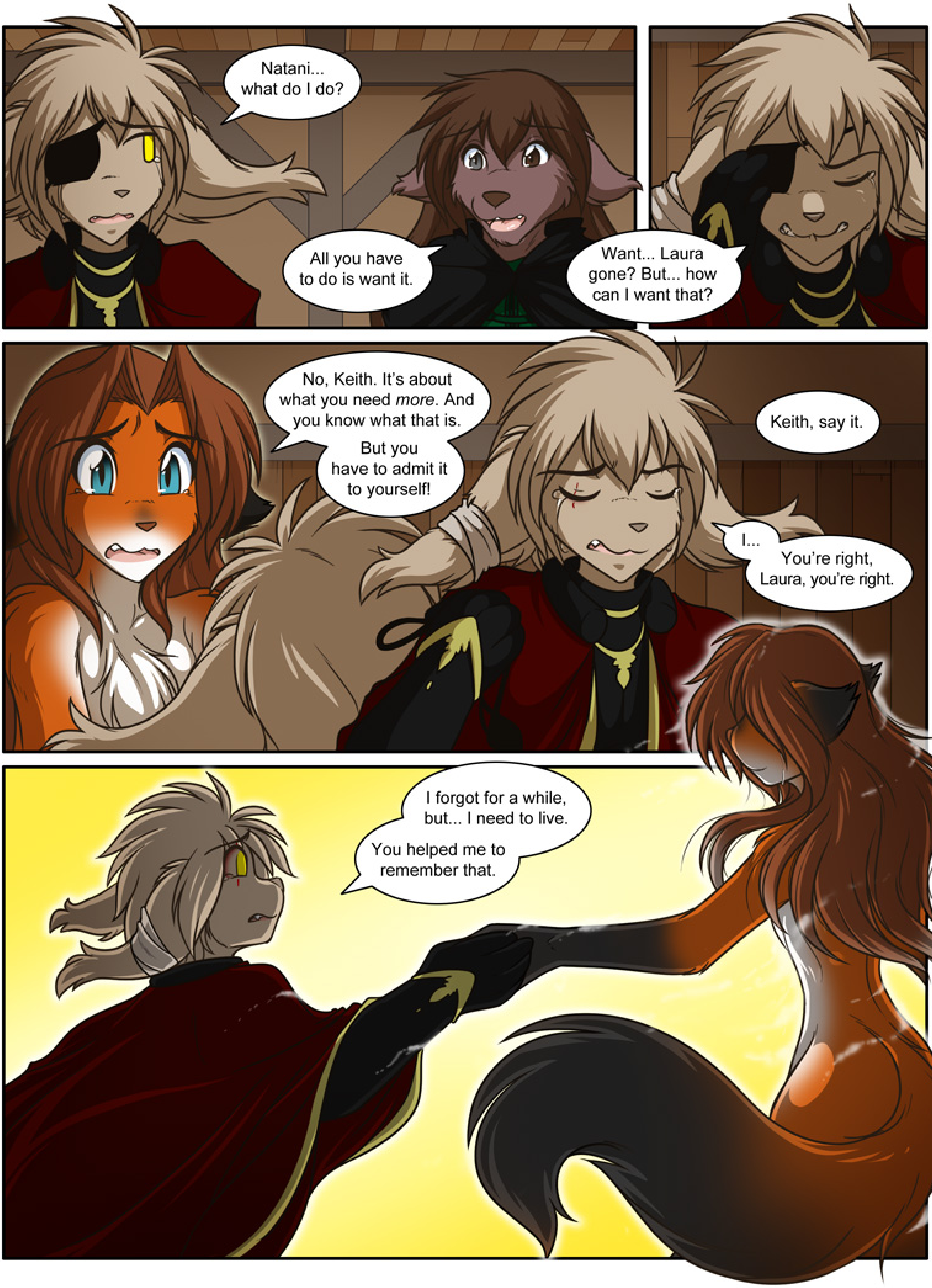

<But... then that's it, right? She looks young, s-so illusion, not ghost, *yes?*>
<You would think, but it's not that simple...>
<The illusion claims to be a spirit using the spell as a means of... manifesting itself.>
<So, okay...>
<If it really is an illusion, and it's only made from memories that Keith has...>
<Well, then it *is* simple! We just ask it something only Laura would know!>
<Yes, but...>
<Who else knows anything about Laura that Keith doesn't? None of us really had enough time to... get to know her.>
<No...>
<There is someone else.>
Keith?
<Trace was there, before she...
...At the beach. He was holding her, and she was awake.>
Keith, wait...
<If he can prove to everyone what I know she is, then do it.>
Trace?
Did you speak with Laura while you were carrying her?
Huh? Uh, yeah, I did, why? What's going on?

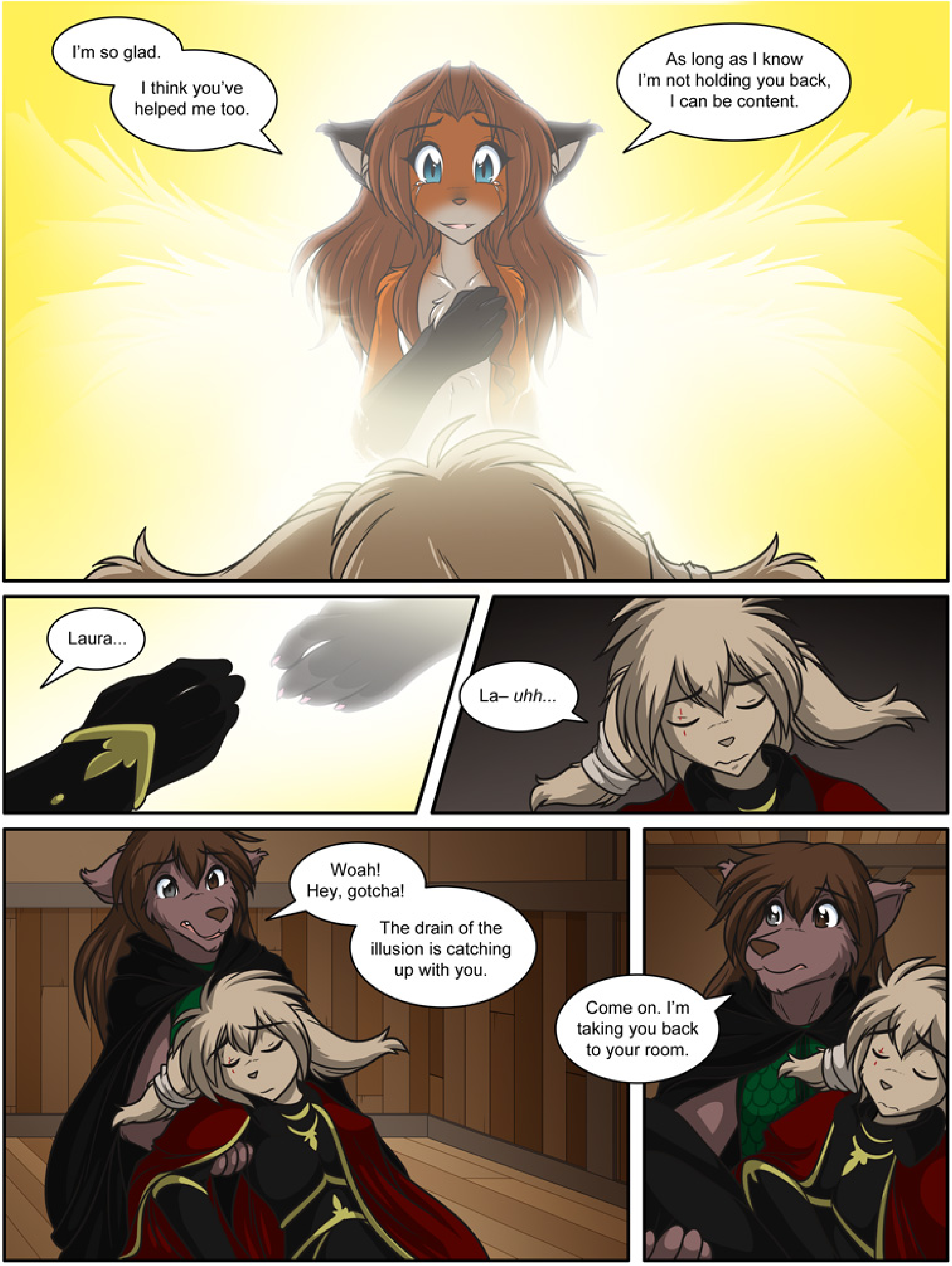

Trace...
MEOW MEOW!
Huh? Oh, uh huh... and I'll...? Ah...
I see.
Keith, are you sure about this?
Just get it over with.
Alright, then. Laura?
Eh?
I need to ask you something.
When I was carrying you down from the mountain, you were pretty out of it.
But you did tell me a few things. Do you recall what you said to me?
What I... said...?
I...
Go on, Laura. Tell him.
<I... I don't remember...>
Come again?
....I don't remember.
My memory is... fuzzy.
<You see now?>
<She doesn't remember because Keith doesn't know.>
It doesn't mean that!
She was dying at the time! Of course she might not remember!
Laura, please. You mentioned the first time we met. Do you remember that?
Oh... the first time we met? I... know that...
You do?

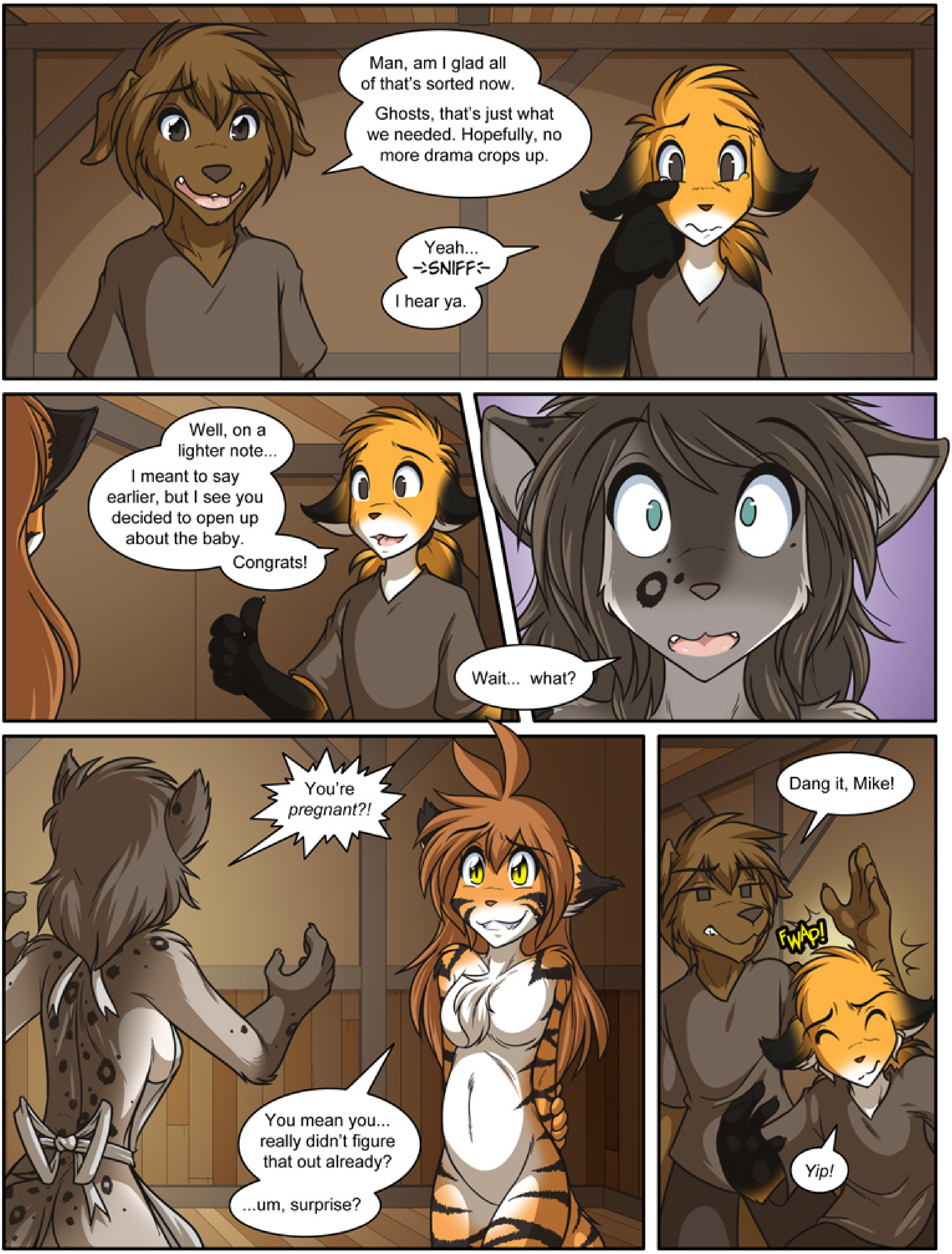

Well... t-the first time we met was at the inn, wasn't it?
I fainted... but Keith was there.
I don't know how that proves anything.
It does, because that isn't right.
What?
We met once before.
Something only the real Laura would know.
I'm sorry, Keith, I know this is hard
No!
No, she's lying!
You're lying to protect me, aren't you?!
Tell them!
I - I can't!
Laura, don't do this to me! Tell the truth!
Keith!
I don't know it!
Tell them!!
Please... just show them...
Please... I need you to be real.

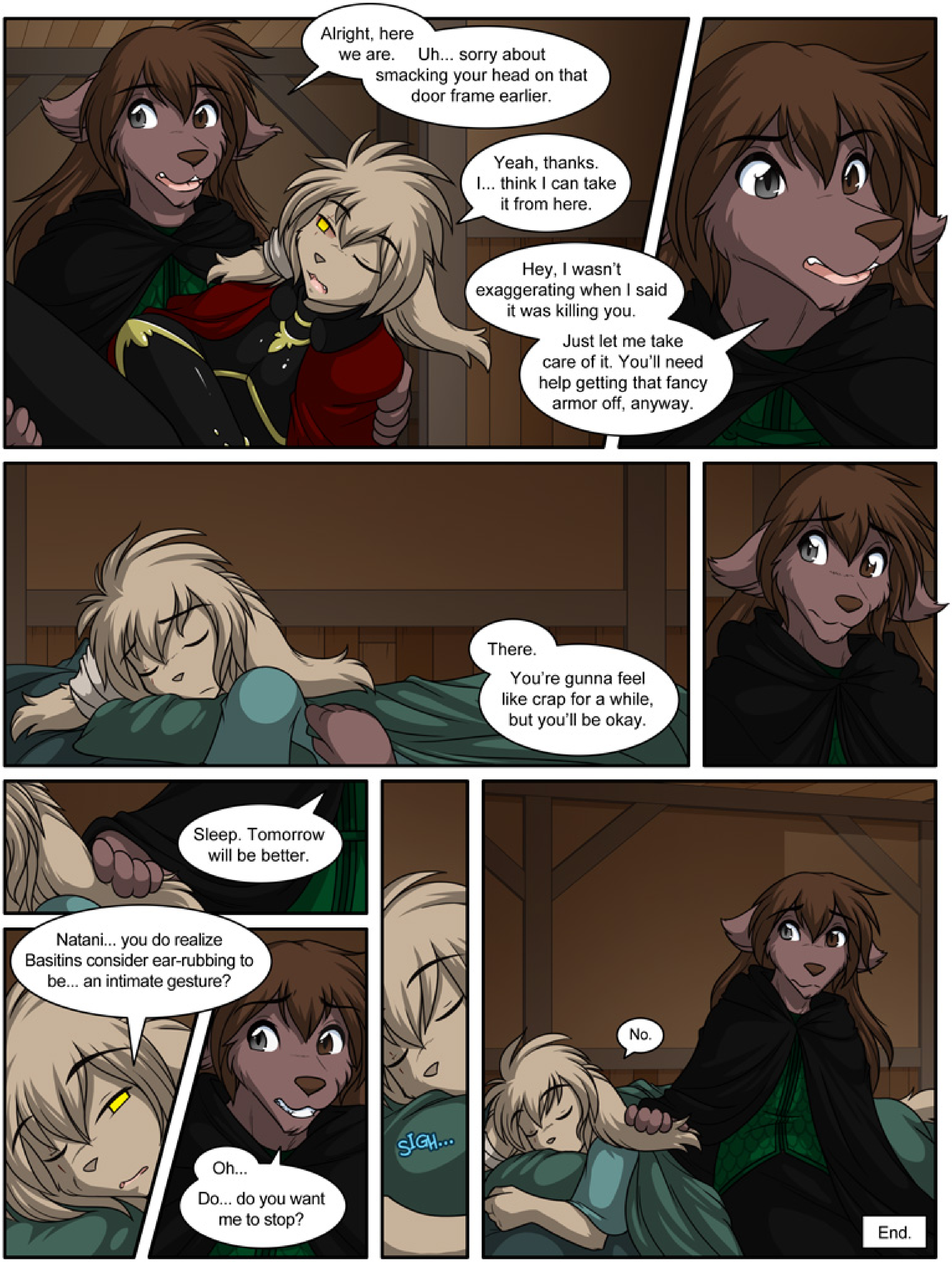

Laura... I need you. I have nothing left...
. . .
But you do.
You have them.
PAT PAT
Your friends.
People who care about you.
People who love you.
Even if I were the real Laura, she wouldn't want to see you wasting away for a few more days of life.
She would want you to live on.
You have to, Keith.
With them, I know you can.
I don't know if I can...


NOD
I'm sorry. I've been so stupid.
No, Keith. You're just in pain.
You've been in pain for so long.
And I'm so sorry I added to it. But your friends can help you.
Please don't stay bitter with the world. It's not what I... Laura would want.
Keith...
Yes, I get it. It's time. I'm not ready, but... I get it.
Laura... you don't have to pretend anymore. I understand now.


Natani... what do I do?
All you have to do is want it.
Want... Laura gone? But... how can I want that?
No, Keith. It's about what you need *more*. And you know what that is.
But you have to admit it to yourself!
Keith, say it.
I...
You're right, Laura, you're right.
I forgot for a while, but... I need to live.
You helped me to remember that.

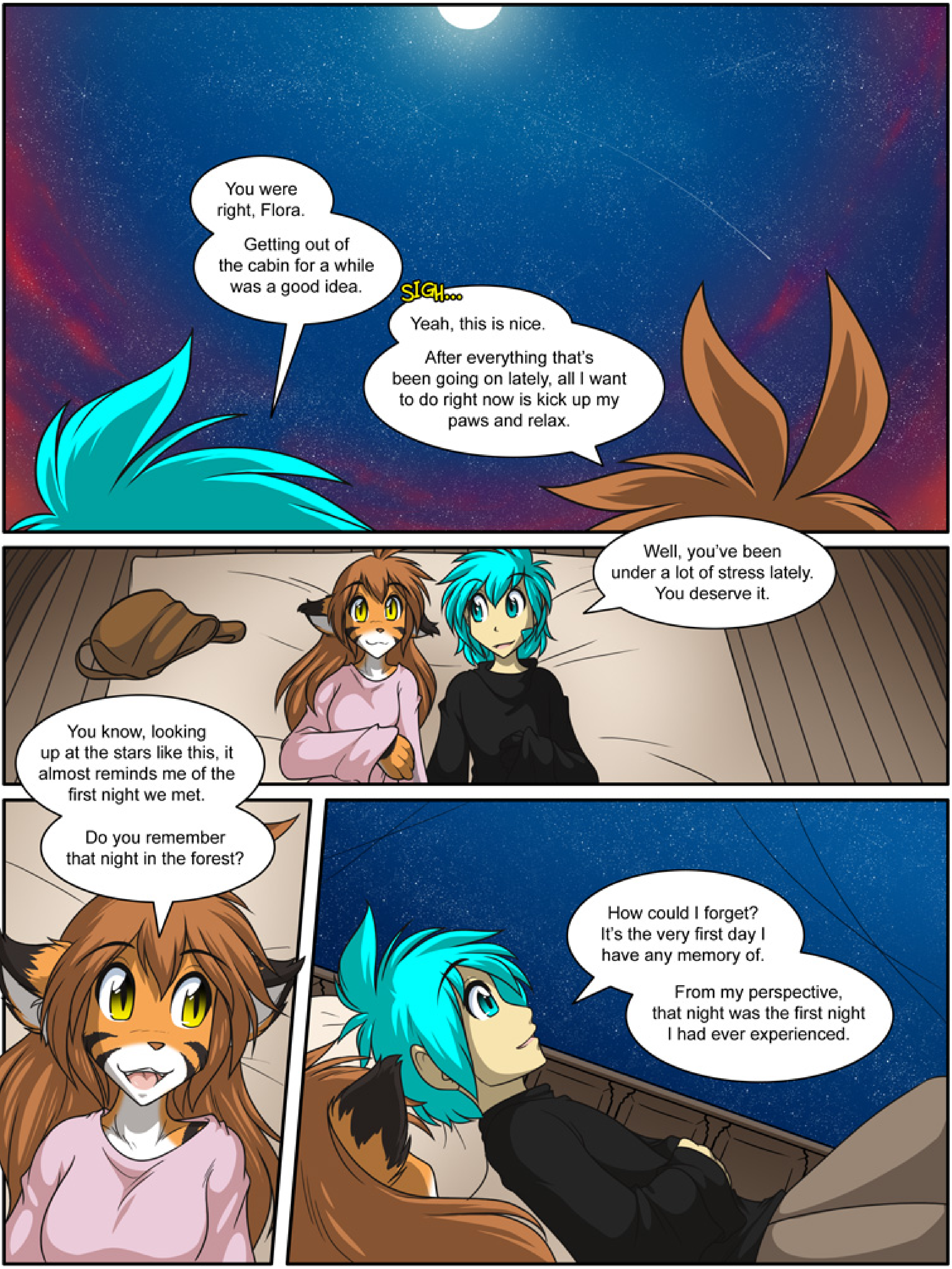

I'm so glad.
I think you've helped me too.
As long as I know I'm not holding you back, I can be content.
Laura...
La– *uhh...*
Woah! Hey, gotcha!
The drain of the illusion is catching up with you.
Come on. I'm taking you back to your room.

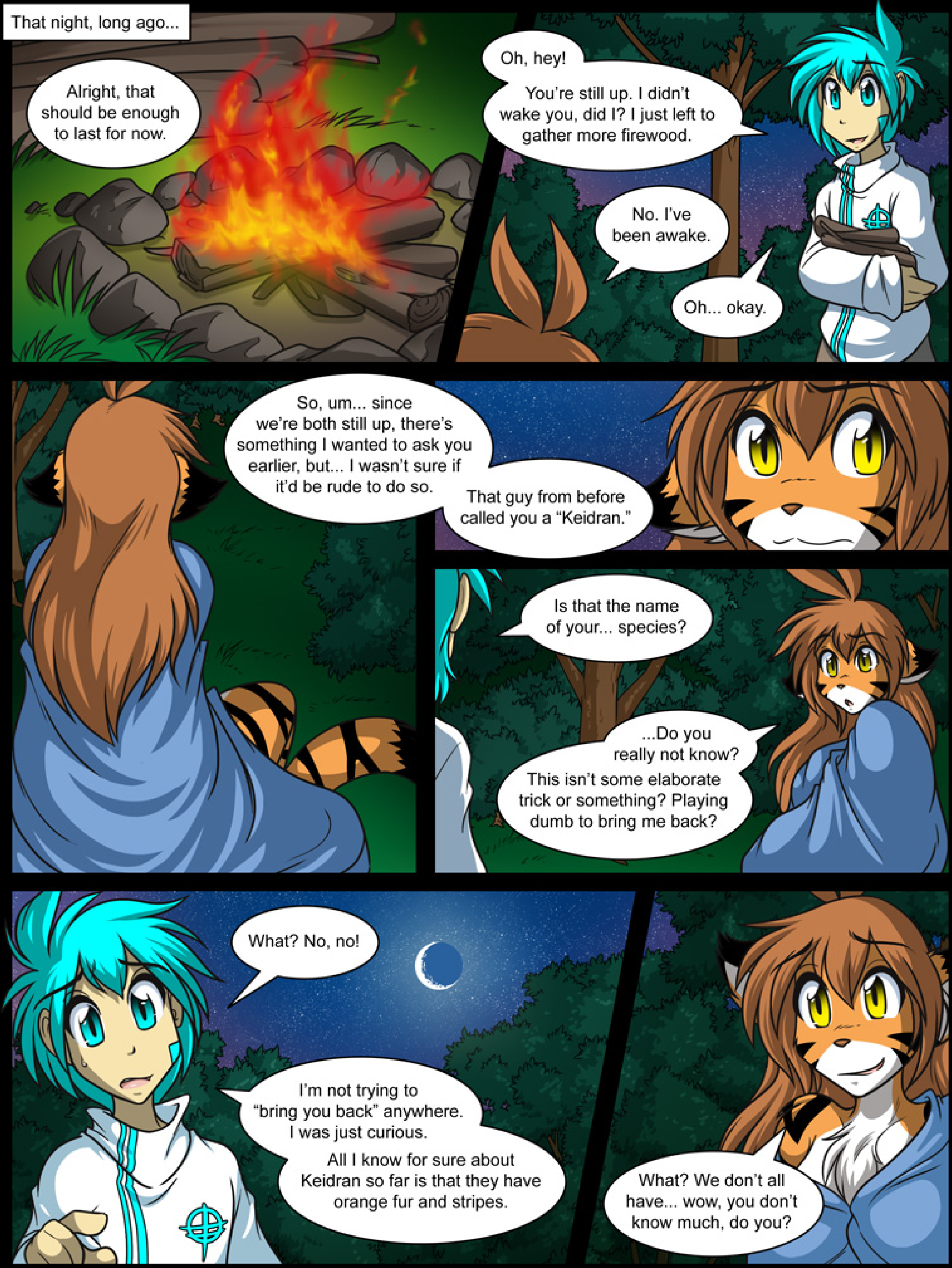

Man, am I glad all of that's sorted now.
Ghosts, that's just what we needed. Hopefully, no more drama crops up.
Yeah...
-SNIFF-
I hear ya.
Well, on a lighter note...
I meant to say earlier, but I see you decided to open up about the baby.
Congrats!
Wait... what?
You're *pregnant?!*
You mean you... really didn't figure that out already?
...um, surprise?
Dang it, Mike!
FWAP!
Yip!

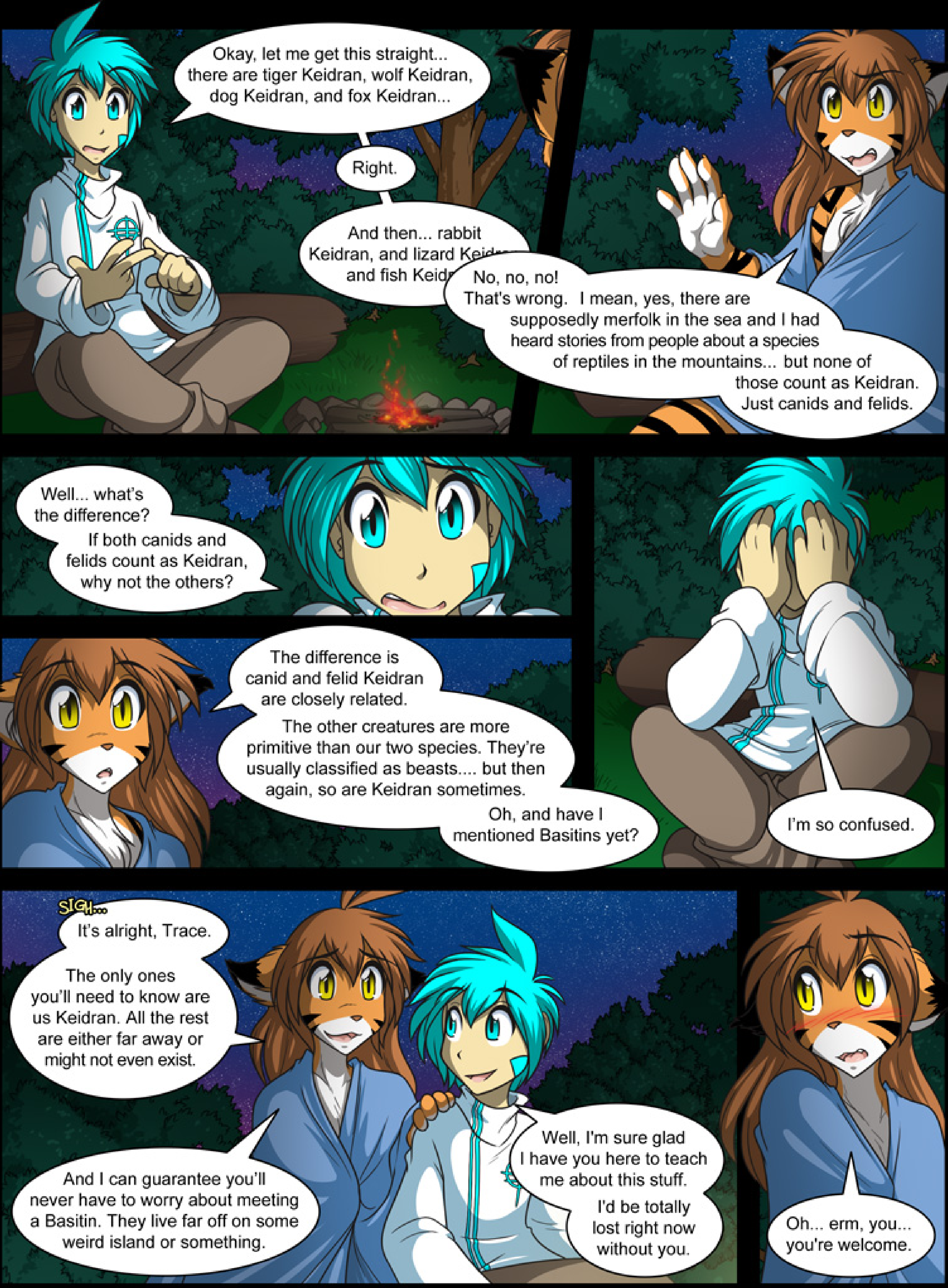

Alright, here we are.
Uh... sorry about smacking your head on that door frame earlier.
Yeah, thanks. I... think I can take it from here.
Hey, I wasn't exaggerating when I said it was killing you.
Just let me take care of it. You'll need help getting that fancy armor off, anyway.
There.
You're gunna feel like crap for a while, but you'll be okay.
Sleep. Tomorrow will be better.
Natani... you do realize Basitins consider ear-rubbing to be... an intimate gesture?
Oh...
Do... do you want me to stop?
SIGH...
No.
End.

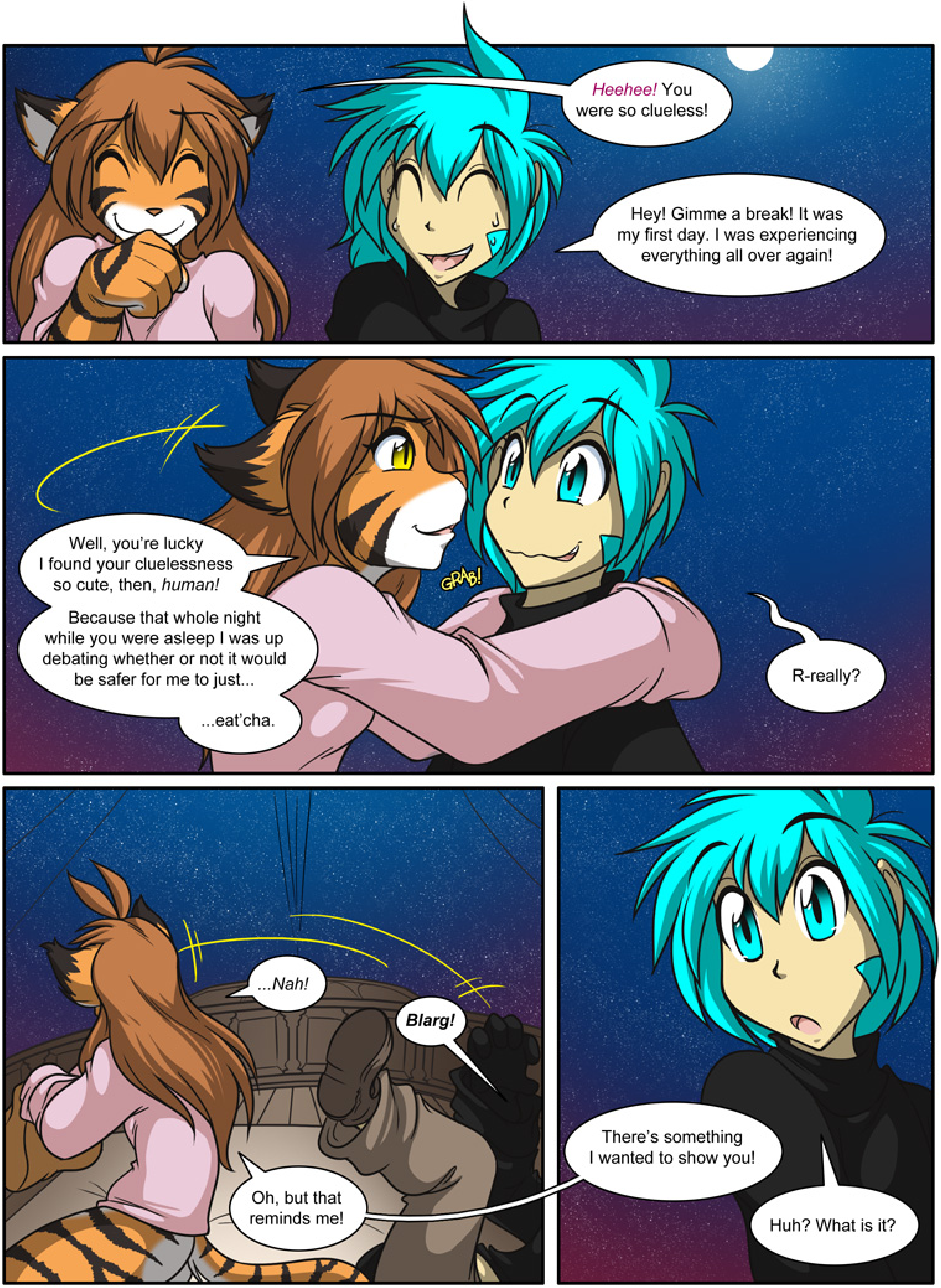
TwoKindS 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

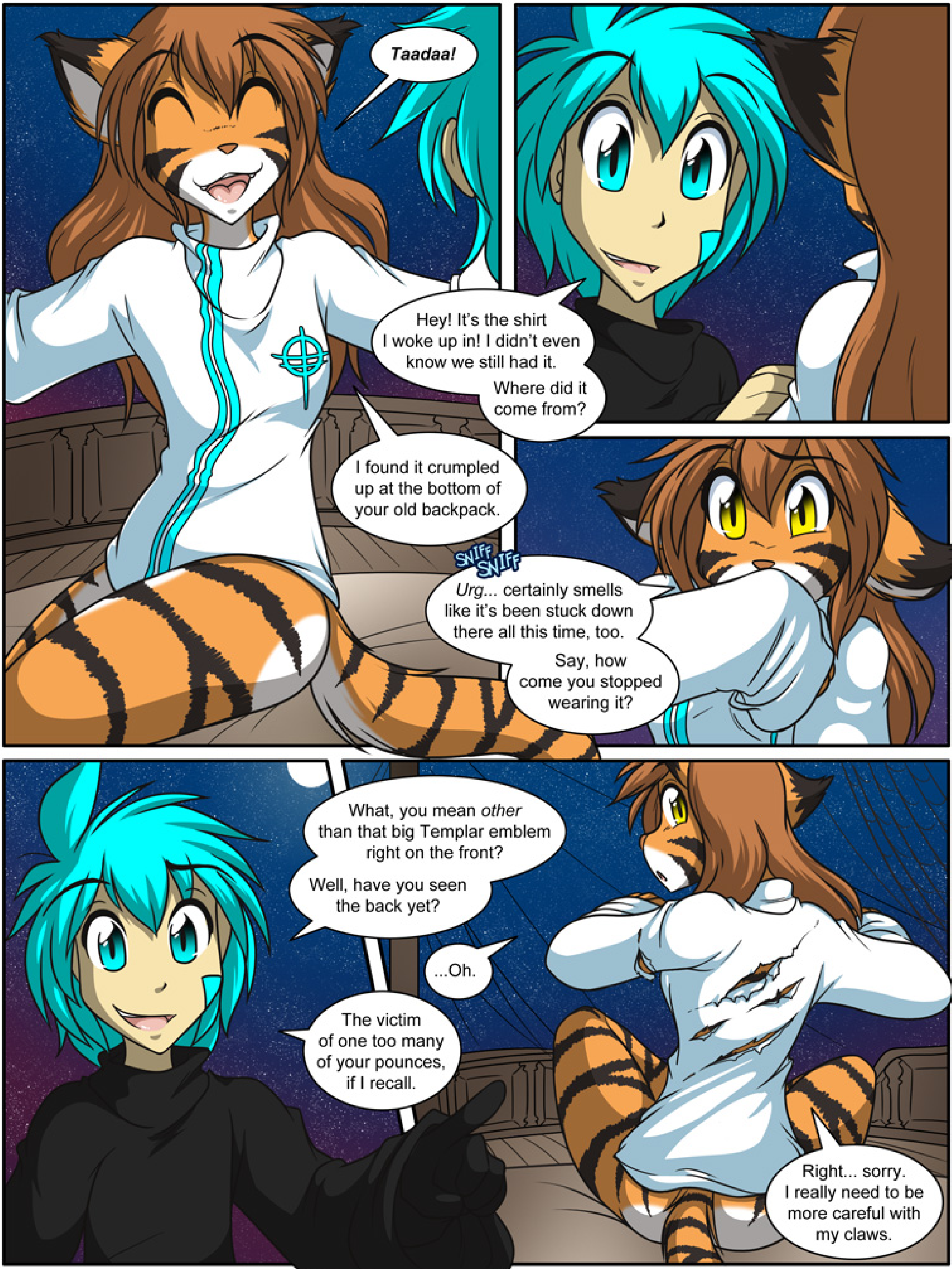
REFLECTIONS

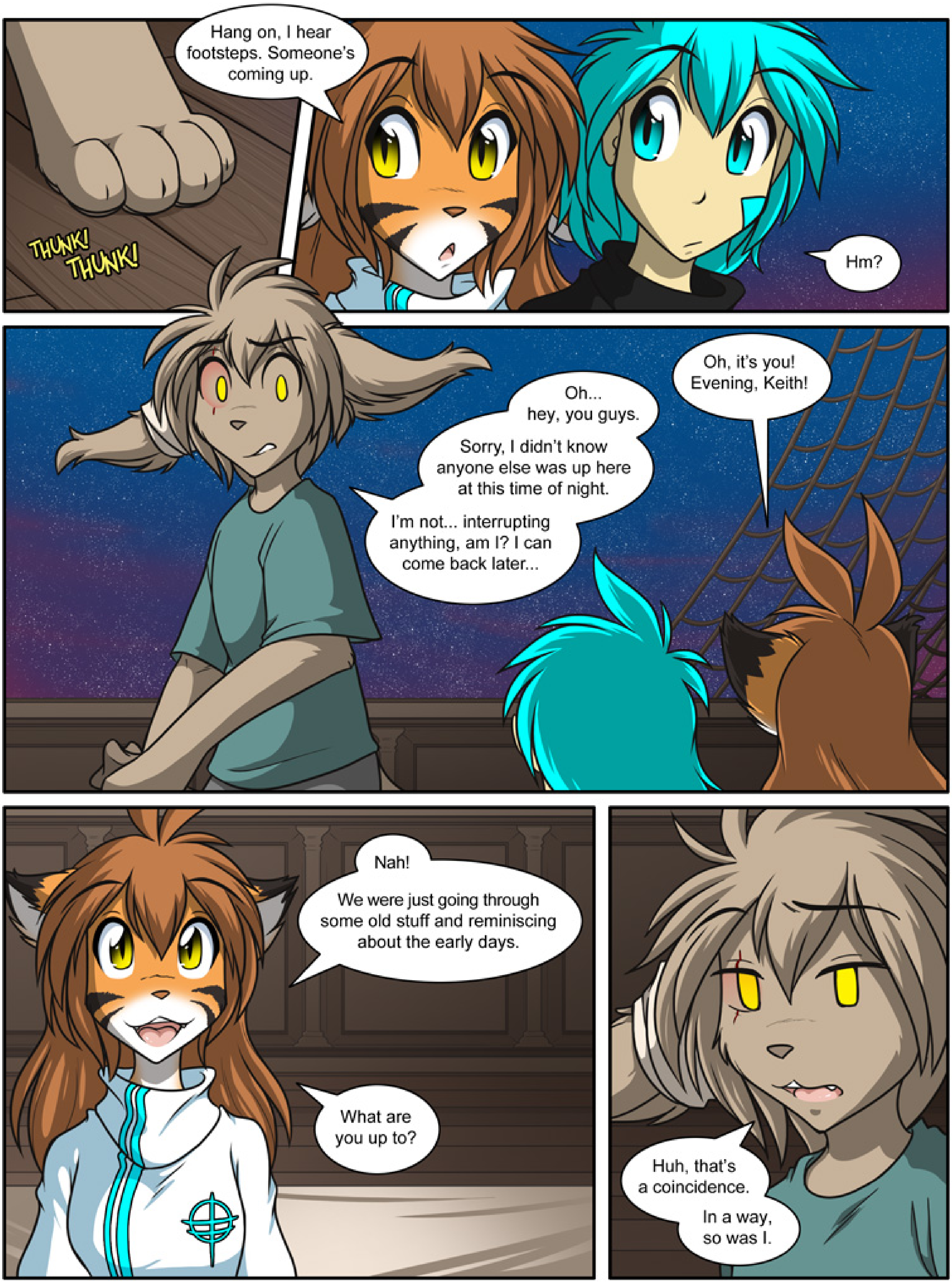

You were right, Flora.
Getting out of the cabin for a while was a good idea.
SIGH...
Yeah, this is nice.
After everything that's been going on lately, all I want to do right now is kick up my paws and relax.
Well, you've been under a lot of stress lately. You deserve it.
You know, looking up at the stars like this, it almost reminds me of the first night we met.
Do you remember that night in the forest?
How could I forget? It's the very first day I have any memory of.
From my perspective, that night was the first night I had ever experienced.

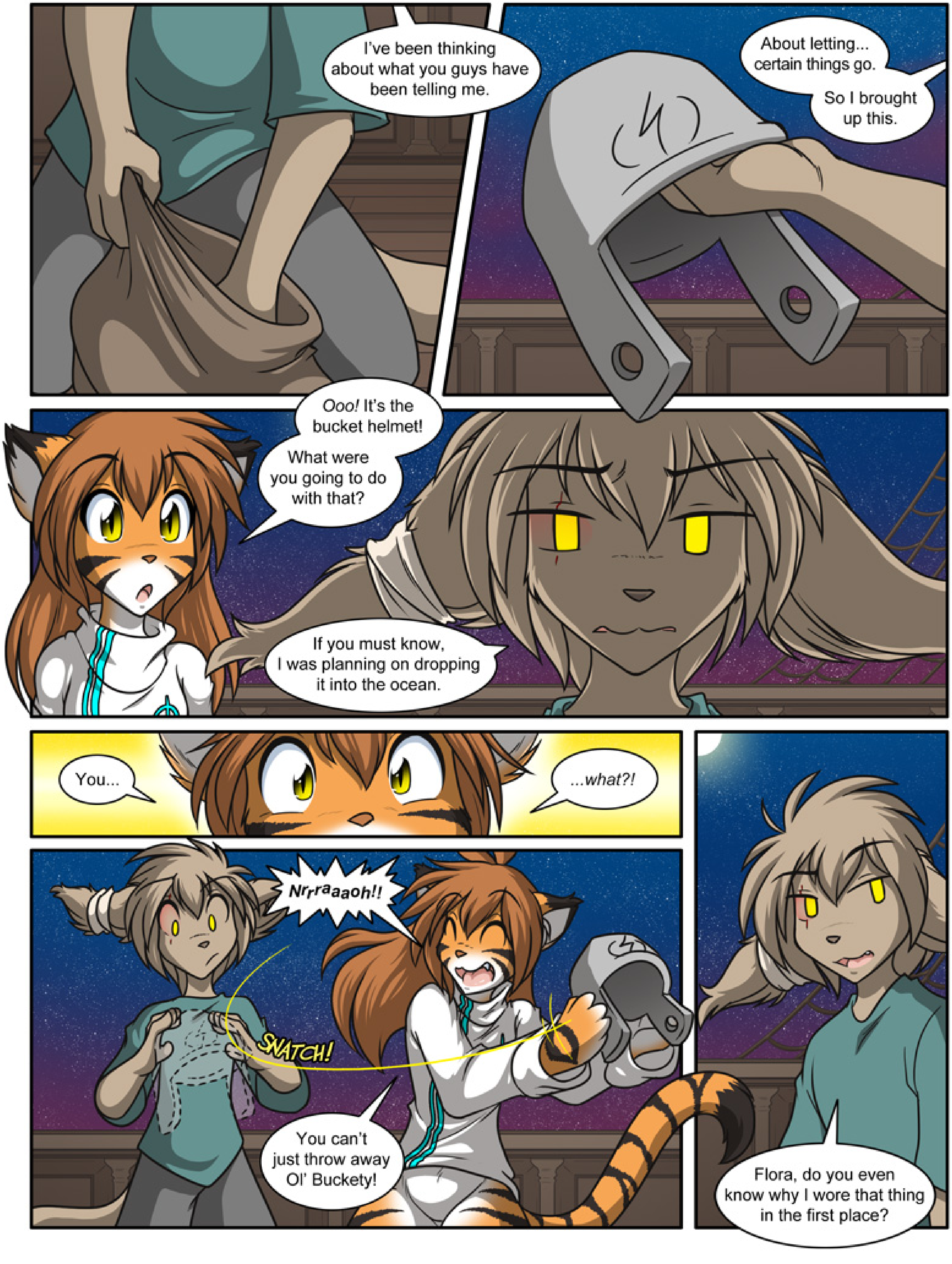

That night, long ago...
Alright, that should be enough to last for now.
Oh, hey!
You're still up. I didn't wake you, did I? I just left to gather more firewood.
No. I've been awake.
Oh... okay.
So, um... since we're both still up, there's something I wanted to ask you earlier, but... I wasn't sure if it'd be rude to do so.
That guy from before called you a "Keidran."
Is that the name of your... species?
...Do you really not know?
This isn't some elaborate trick or something? Playing dumb to bring me back?
What? No, no!
I'm not trying to "bring you back" anywhere. I was just curious.
All I know for sure about Keidran so far is that they have orange fur and stripes.
What? We don't all have... wow, you don't know much, do you?

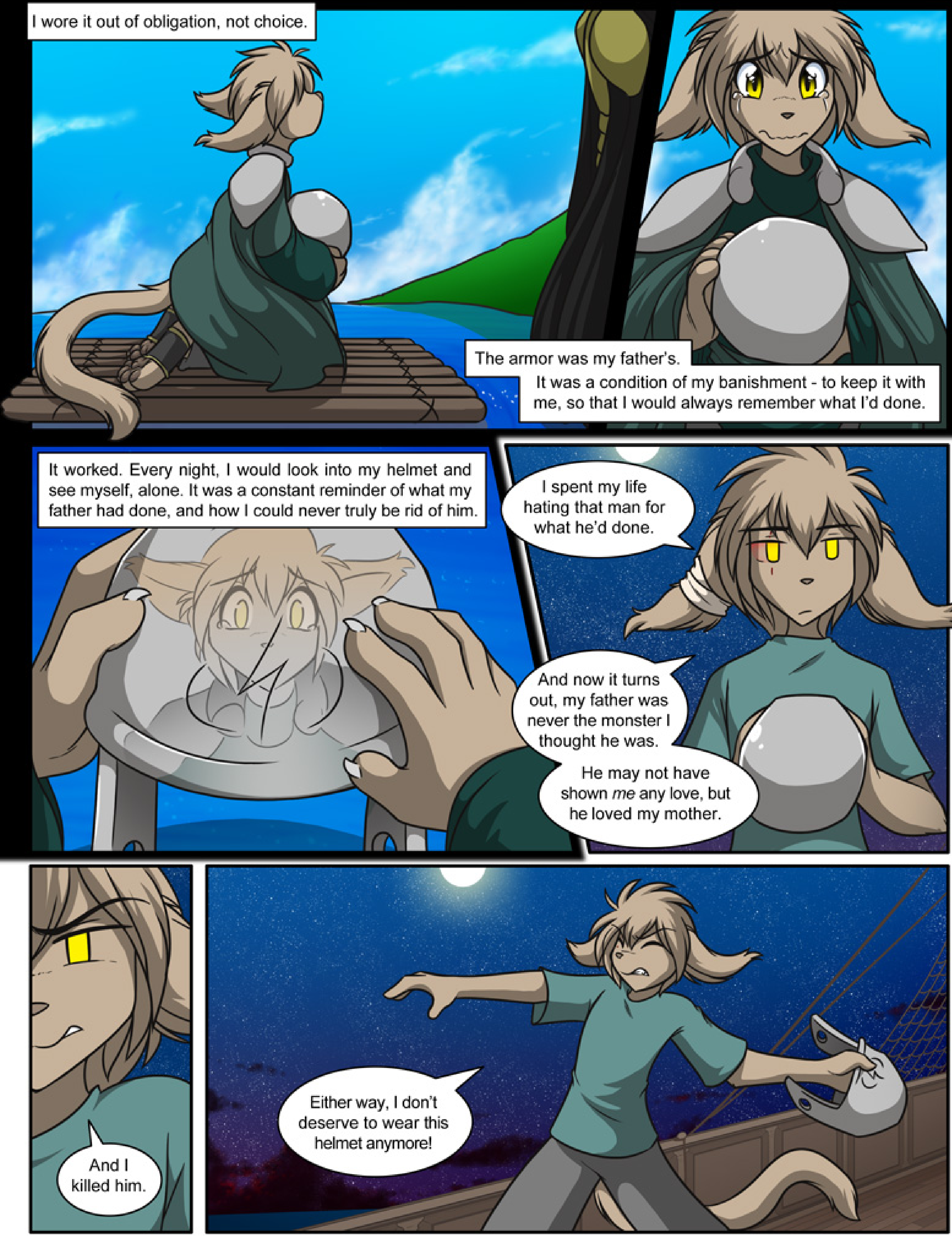

Okay, let me get this straight... there are tiger Keidran, wolf Keidran, dog Keidran, and fox Keidran...
Right.
And then... rabbit Keidran, and lizard Keid and fish Keid
No, no, no! That's wrong. I mean, yes, there are supposedly merfolk in the sea and I had heard stories from people about a species of reptiles in the mountains... but none of those count as Keidran. Just canids and felids.
Well... what's the difference?
If both canids and felids count as Keidran, why not the others?
The difference is canid and felid Keidran are closely related.
The other creatures are more primitive than our two species. They're usually classified as beasts.... but then again, so are Keidran sometimes.
Oh, and have I mentioned Basitins yet?
I'm so confused.
SIGH...
It's alright, Trace.
The only ones you'll need to know are us Keidran. All the rest are either far away or might not even exist.
And I can guarantee you'll never have to worry about meeting a Basitin. They live far off on some weird island or something.
Well, I'm sure glad I have you here to teach me about this stuff.
I'd be totally lost right now without you.
Oh... erm, you... you're welcome.

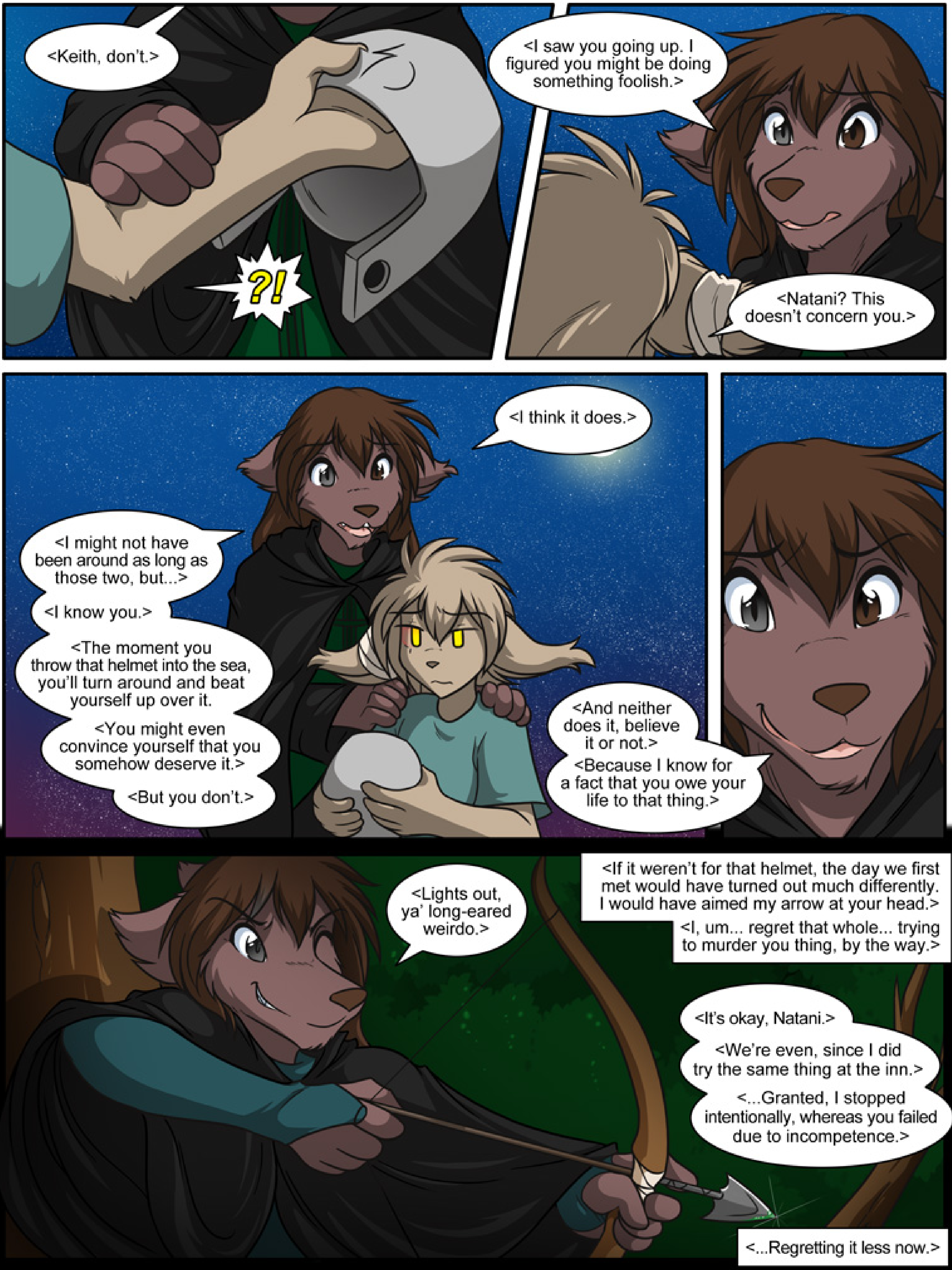

Heehee! You were so clueless!
Hey! Gimme a break! It was my first day. I was experiencing everything all over again!
GRAB!
Well, you're lucky I found your cluelessness so cute, then, *human!*
Because that whole night while you were asleep I was up debating whether or not it would be safer for me to just...
...eat'cha.
R-really?
...*Nah!*
Blarg!
Oh, but that reminds me!
There's something I wanted to show you!
Huh? What is it?

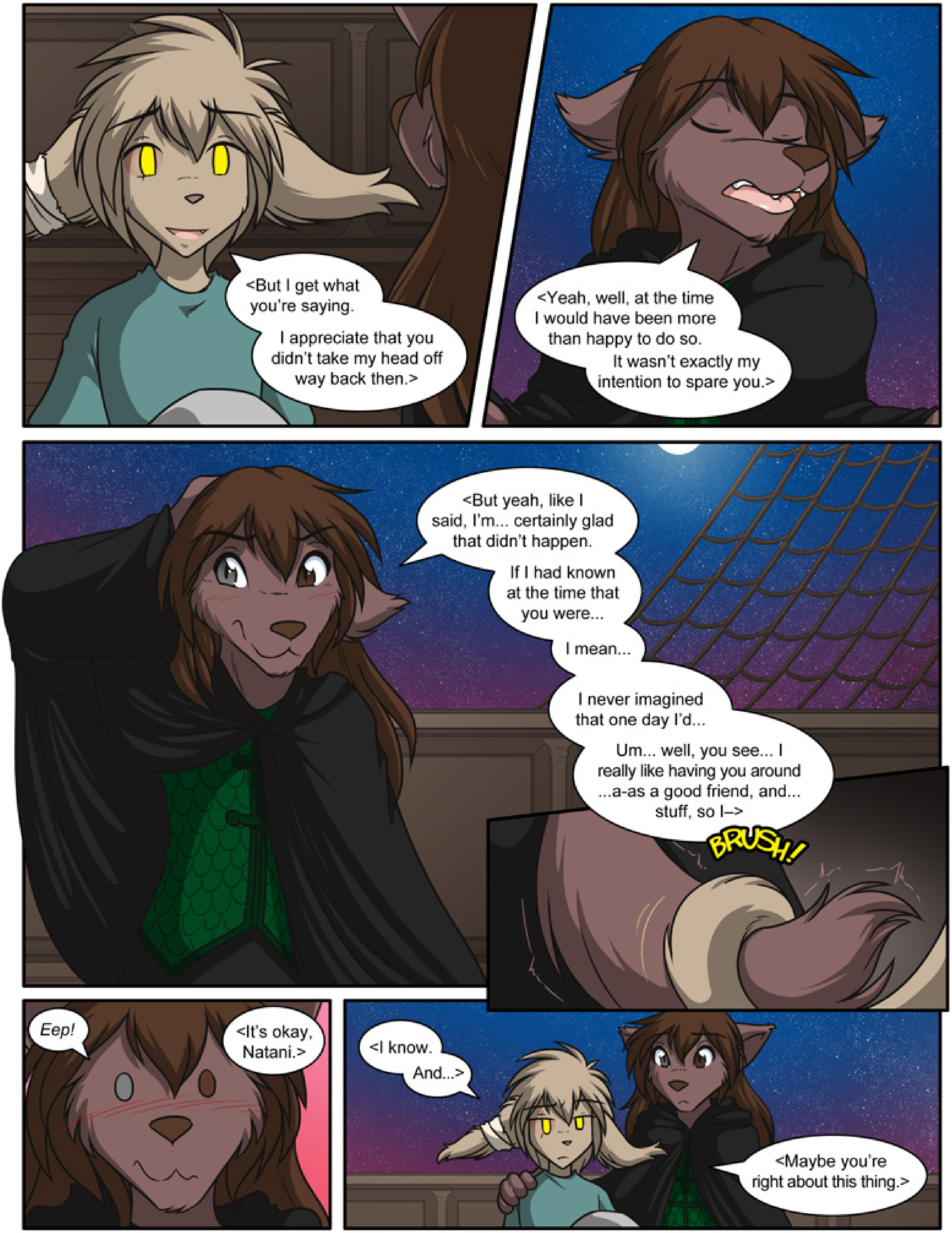

Taadaa!
Hey! It's the shirt I woke up in! I didn't even know we still had it.
Where did it come from?
I found it crumpled up at the bottom of your old backpack.
SNIFF SNIFF
Urg... certainly smells like it's been stuck down there all this time, too.
Say, how come you stopped wearing it?
What, you mean *other* than that big Templar emblem right on the front?
Well, have you seen the back yet?
...Oh.
The victim of one too many of your pounces, if I recall.
Right... sorry. I really need to be more careful with my claws.

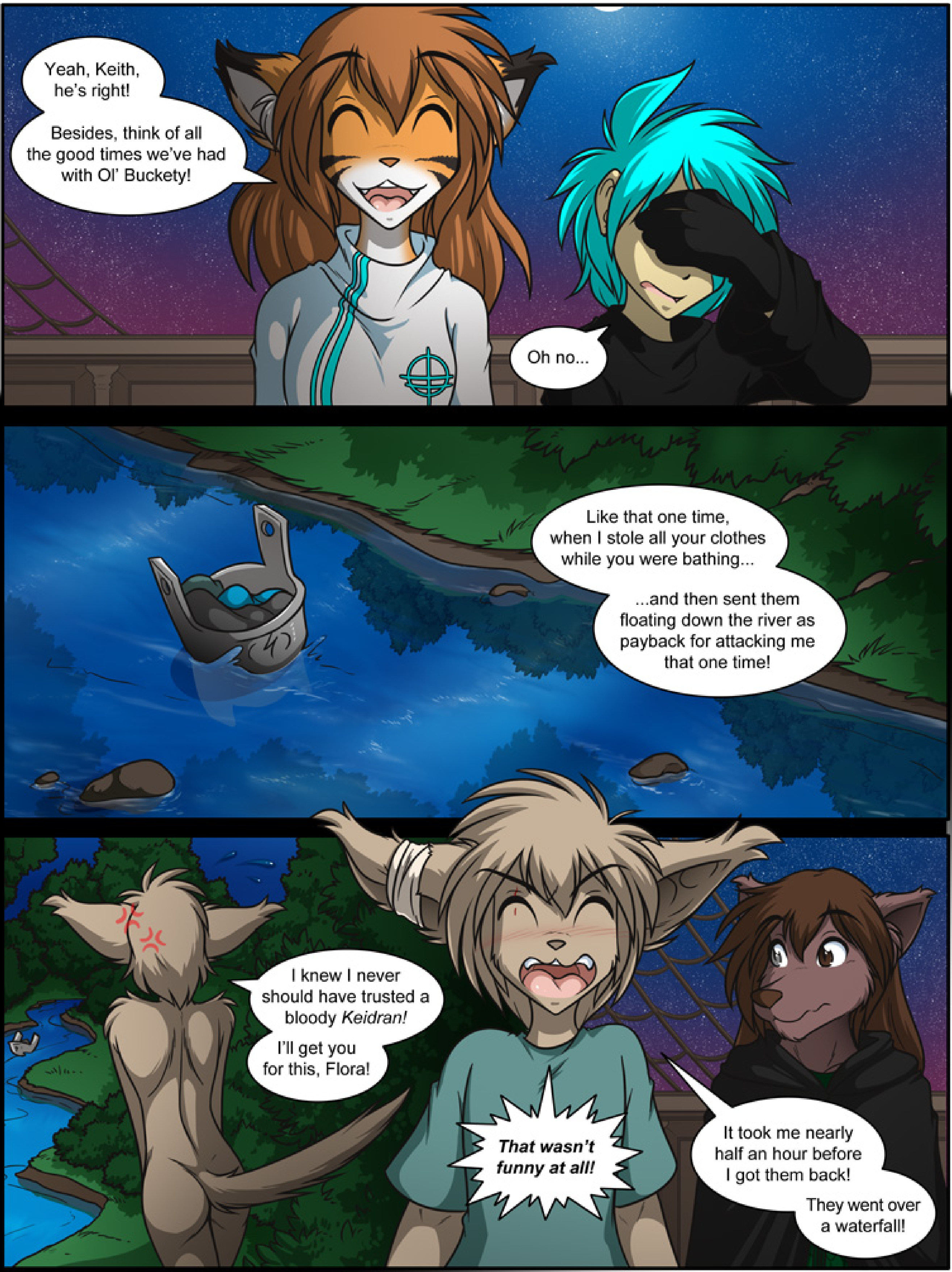

Hang on, I hear footsteps. Someone's coming up.
THUNK! THUNK!
Hm?
Oh, it's you! Evening, Keith!
Oh... hey, you guys.
Sorry, I didn't know anyone else was up here at this time of night.
I'm not... interrupting anything, am I? I can come back later...
Nah!
We were just going through some old stuff and reminiscing about the early days.
What are you up to?
Huh, that's a coincidence.
In a way, so was I.

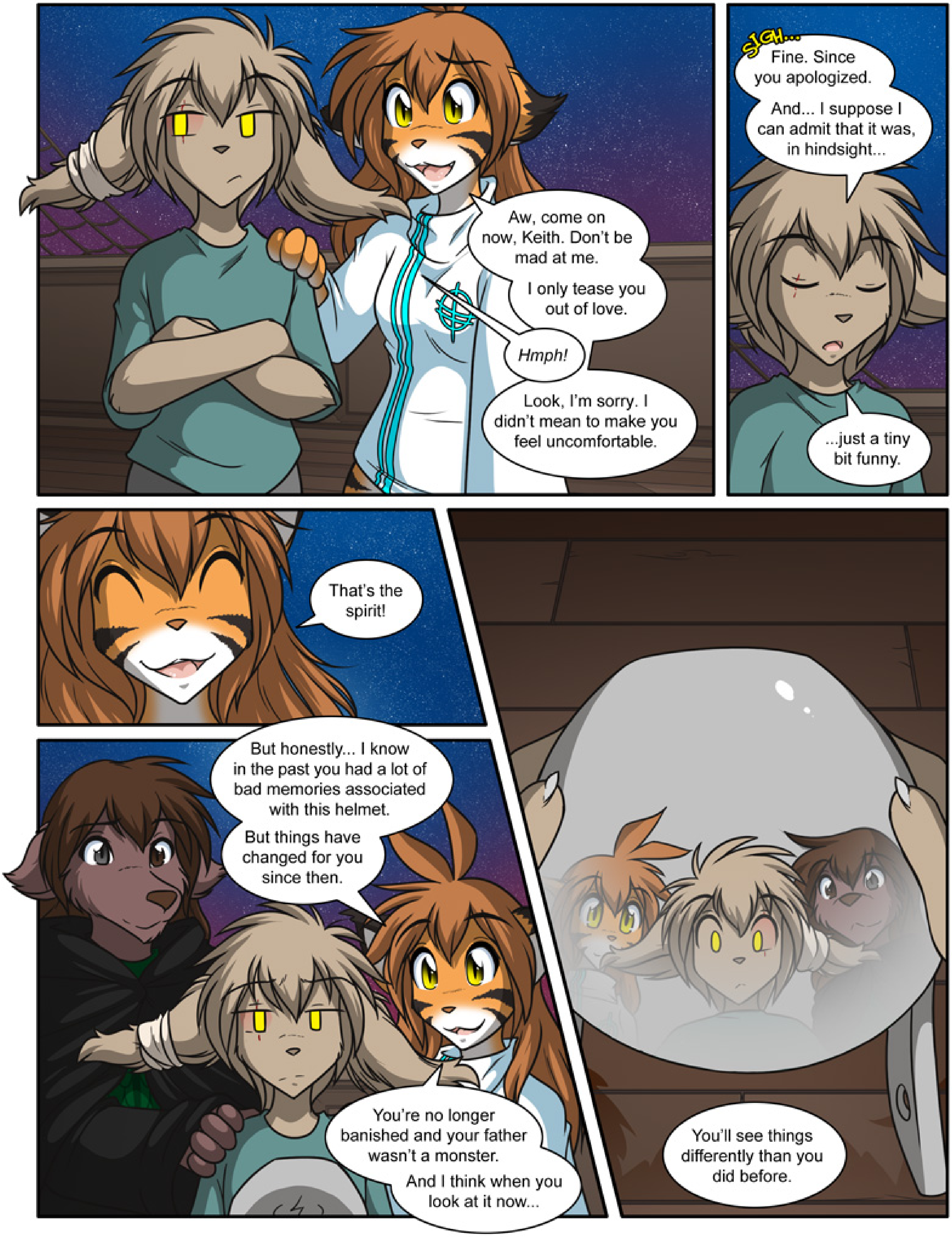

I've been thinking about what you guys have been telling me.
About letting... certain things go.
So I brought up this.
Ooo! It's the bucket helmet!
What were you going to do with that?
If you must know, I was planning on dropping it into the ocean.
You...
...what?!
Nrrraaaoh!!
SNATCH!
You can't just throw away Ol' Buckety!
Flora, do you even know why I wore that thing in the first place?

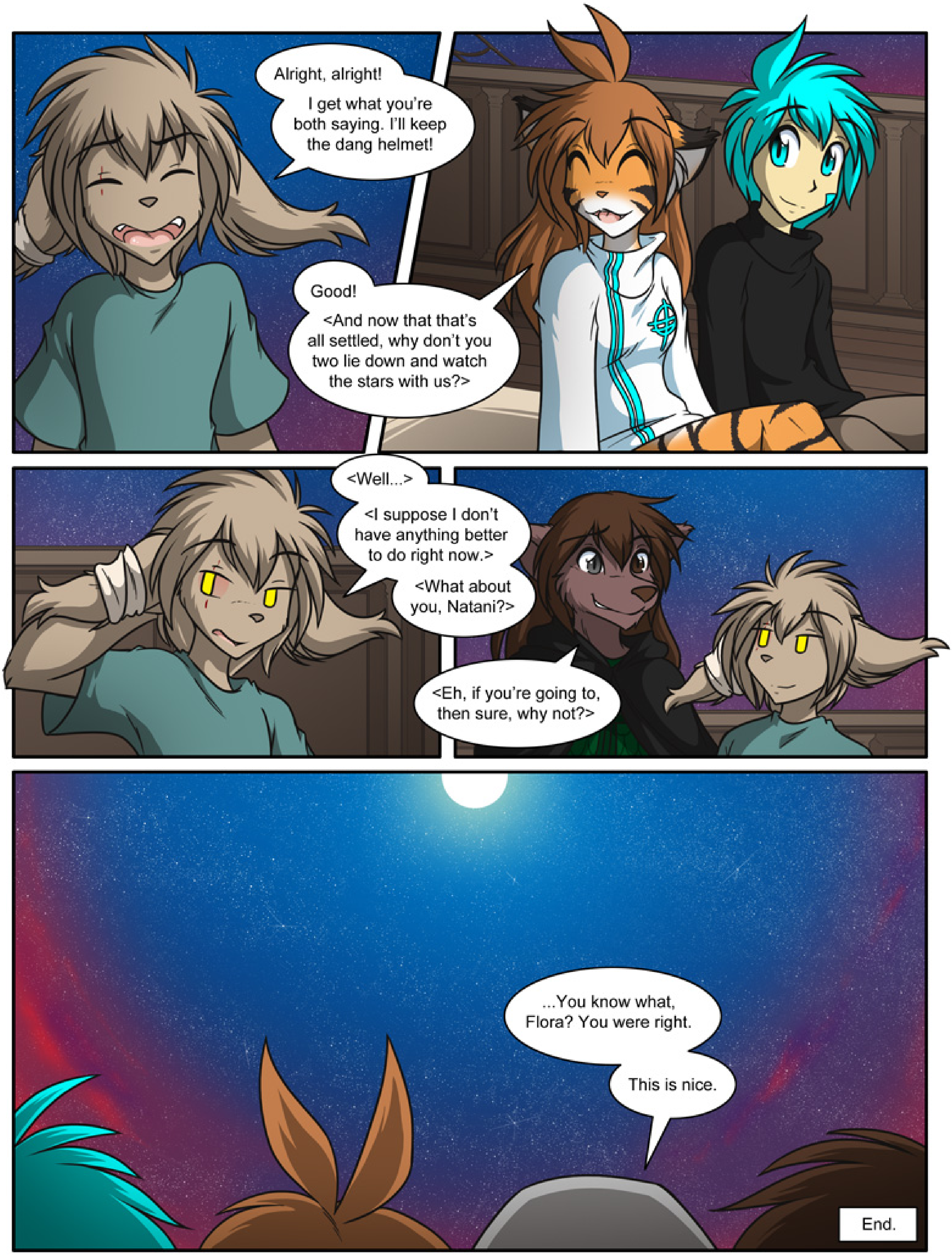

I wore it out of obligation, not choice.
The armor was my father's.
It was a condition of my banishment - to keep it with me, so that I would always remember what I'd done.
It worked. Every night, I would look into my helmet and see myself, alone. It was a constant reminder of what my father had done, and how I could never truly be rid of him.
I spent my life hating that man for what he'd done.
And now it turns out, my father was never the monster I thought he was.
He may not have shown *me* any love, but he loved my mother.
And I killed him.
Either way, I don't deserve to wear this helmet anymore!

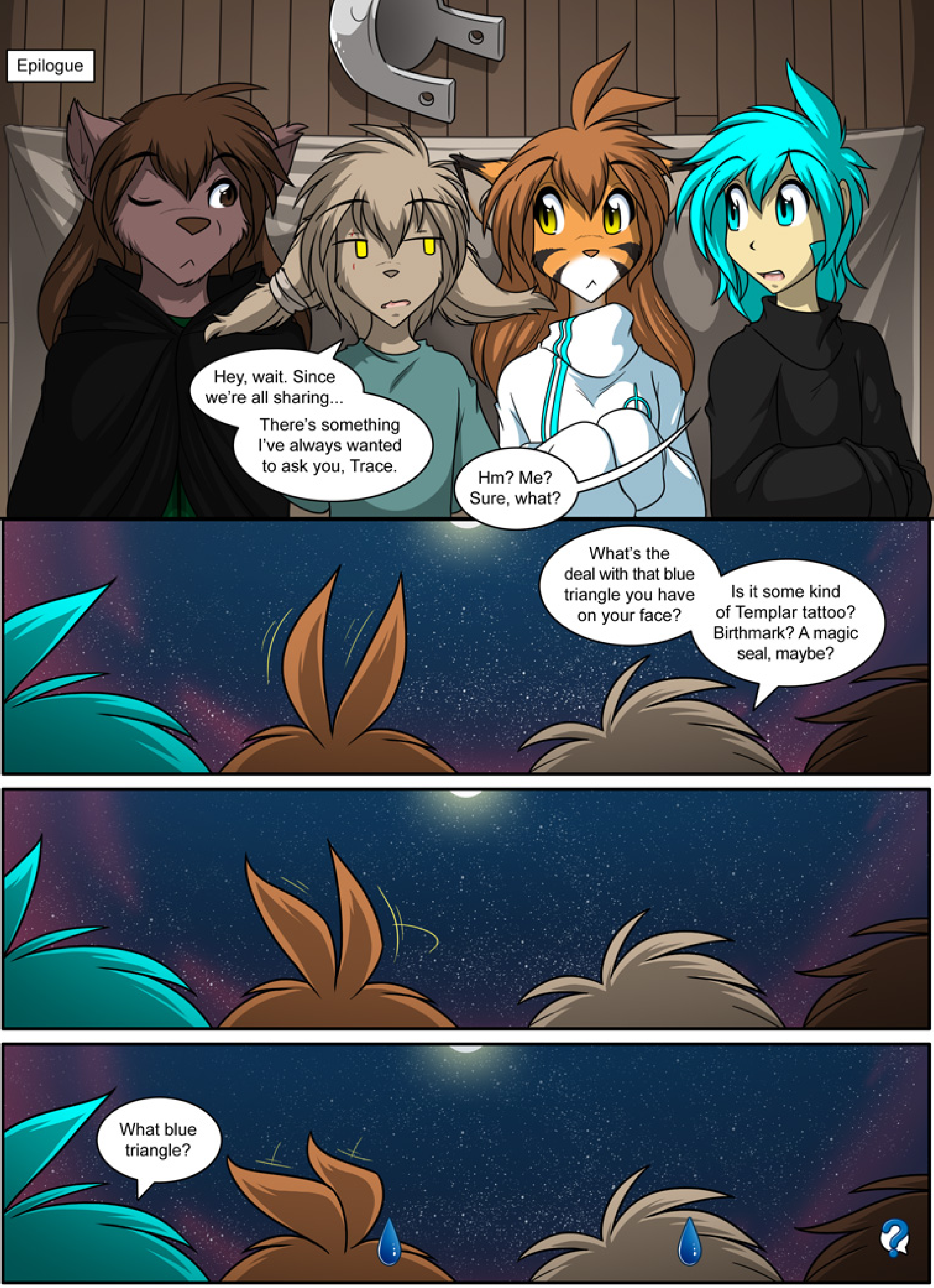

<Keith, don't.>
?!
<I saw you going up. I figured you might be doing something foolish.>
<Natani? This doesn't concern you.>
<I think it does.>
<I might not have been around as long as those two, but...>
<I know you.>
<The moment you throw that helmet into the sea, you'll turn around and beat yourself up over it.
<You might even convince yourself that you somehow deserve it.>
<But you don't.>
<And neither does it, believe it or not.>
<Because I know for a fact that you owe your life to that thing.>
<Lights out, ya' long-eared weirdo.>
<If it weren't for that helmet, the day we first met would have turned out much differently. I would have aimed my arrow at your head.>
<I, um... regret that whole... trying to murder you thing, by the way.>
<It's okay, Natani.>
<We're even, since I did try the same thing at the inn.>
<...Granted, I stopped intentionally, whereas you failed due to incompetence.>
<...Regretting it less now.>


<But I get what you're saying.
I appreciate that you didn't take my head off way back then.>
<Yeah, well, at the time I would have been more than happy to do so.
It wasn't exactly my intention to spare you.>
<But yeah, like I said, I'm... certainly glad that didn't happen.
If I had known at the time that you were...
I mean...
I never imagined that one day I'd...
Um... well, you see... I really like having you around ...a-as a good friend, and... stuff, so I–>
BRUSH!
Eep!
<It's okay, Natani.>
<I know.
And...>
<Maybe you're right about this thing.>

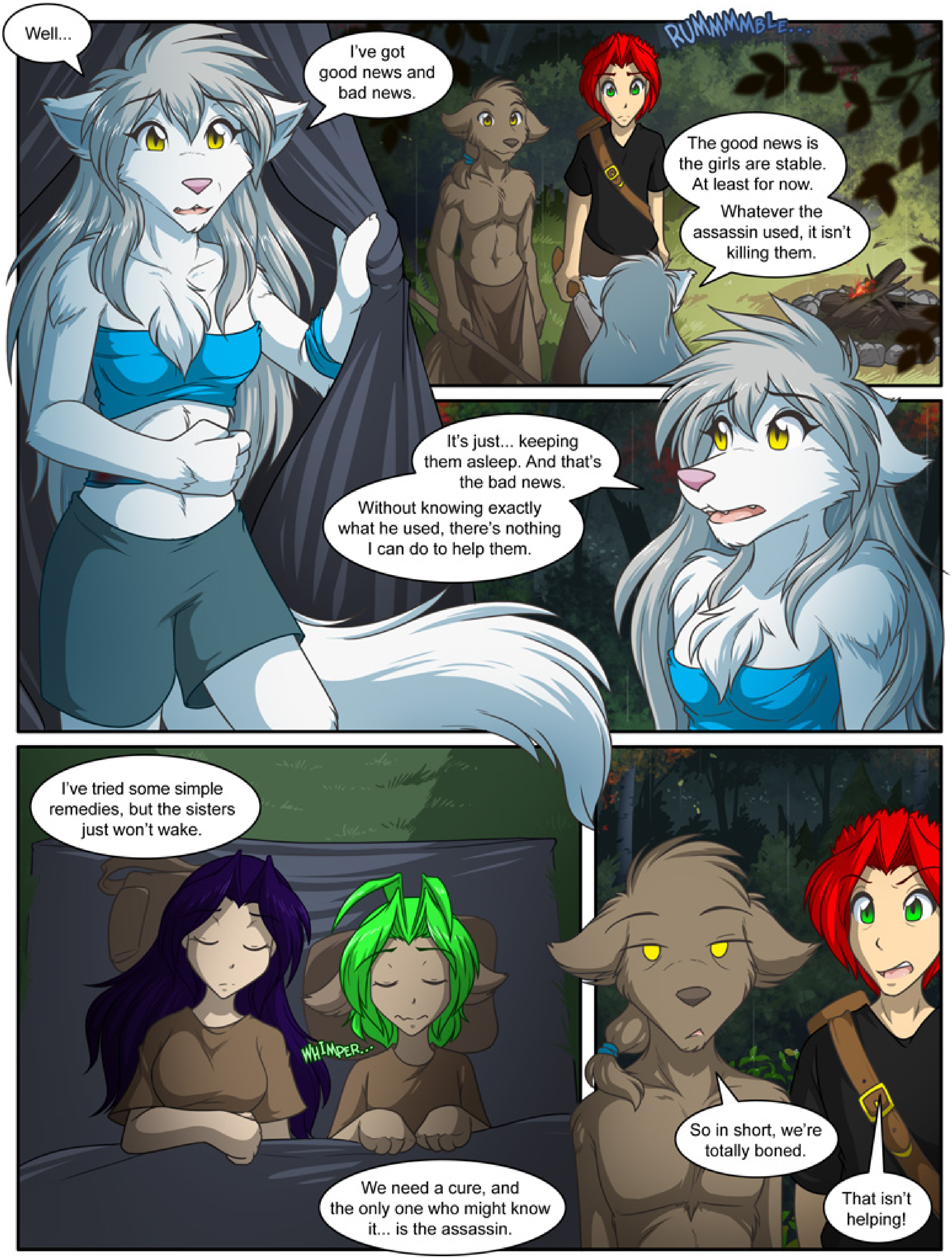

Yeah, Keith, he's right!
Besides, think of all the good times we've had with Ol' Buckety!
Oh no...
Like that one time, when I stole all your clothes while you were bathing...
...and then sent them floating down the river as payback for attacking me that one time!
I knew I never should have trusted a bloody *Keidran!*
I'll get you for this, Flora!
That wasn't funny at all!
It took me nearly half an hour before I got them back!
They went over a waterfall!

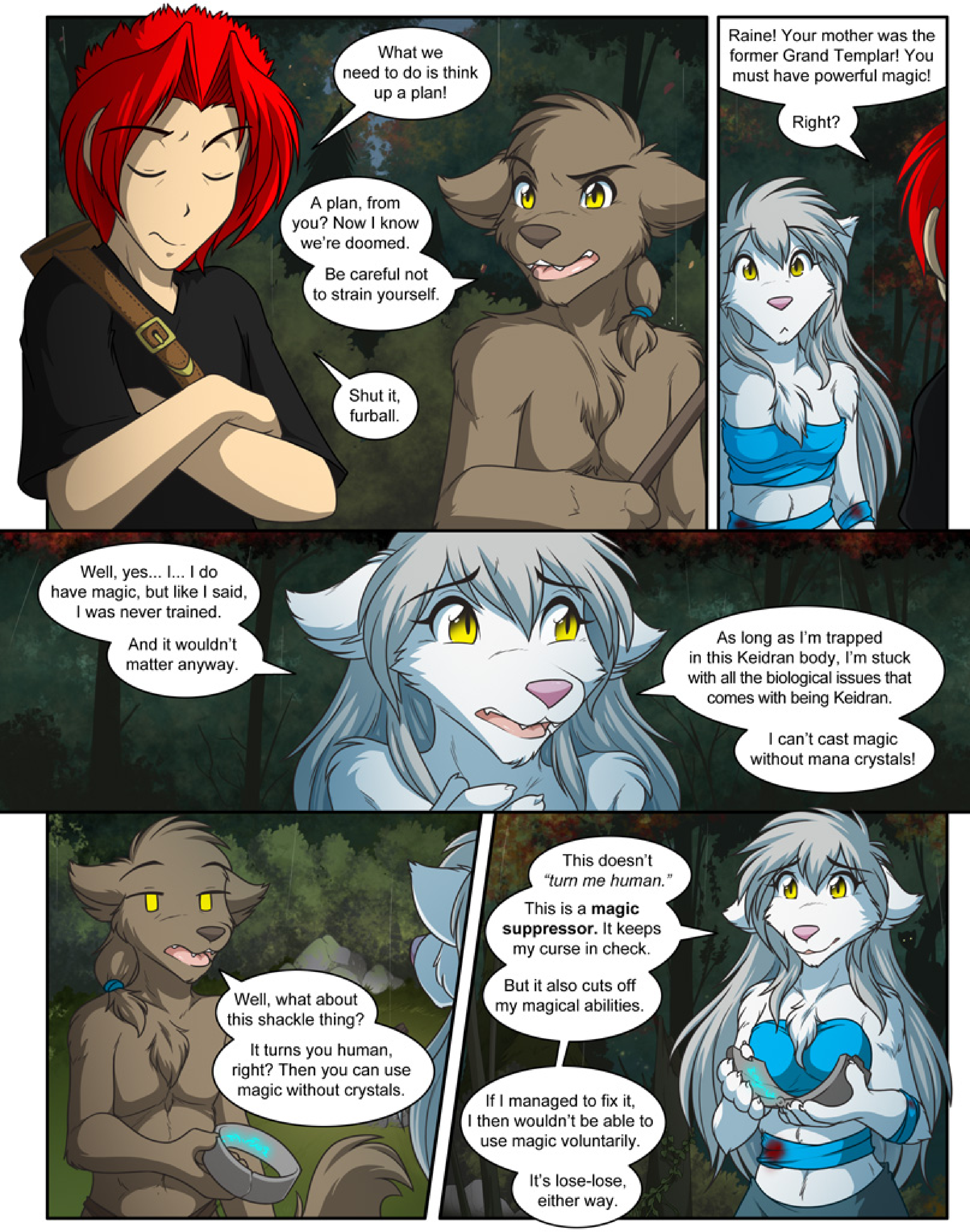

Aw, come on now, Keith. Don't be mad at me.
I only tease you out of love.
Hmph!
Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make you feel uncomfortable.
SIGH...
Fine. Since you apologized.
And... I suppose I can admit that it was, in hindsight...
...just a tiny bit funny.
That's the spirit!
But honestly... I know in the past you had a lot of bad memories associated with this helmet.
But things have changed for you since then.
You're no longer banished and your father wasn't a monster.
And I think when you look at it now...
You'll see things differently than you did before.

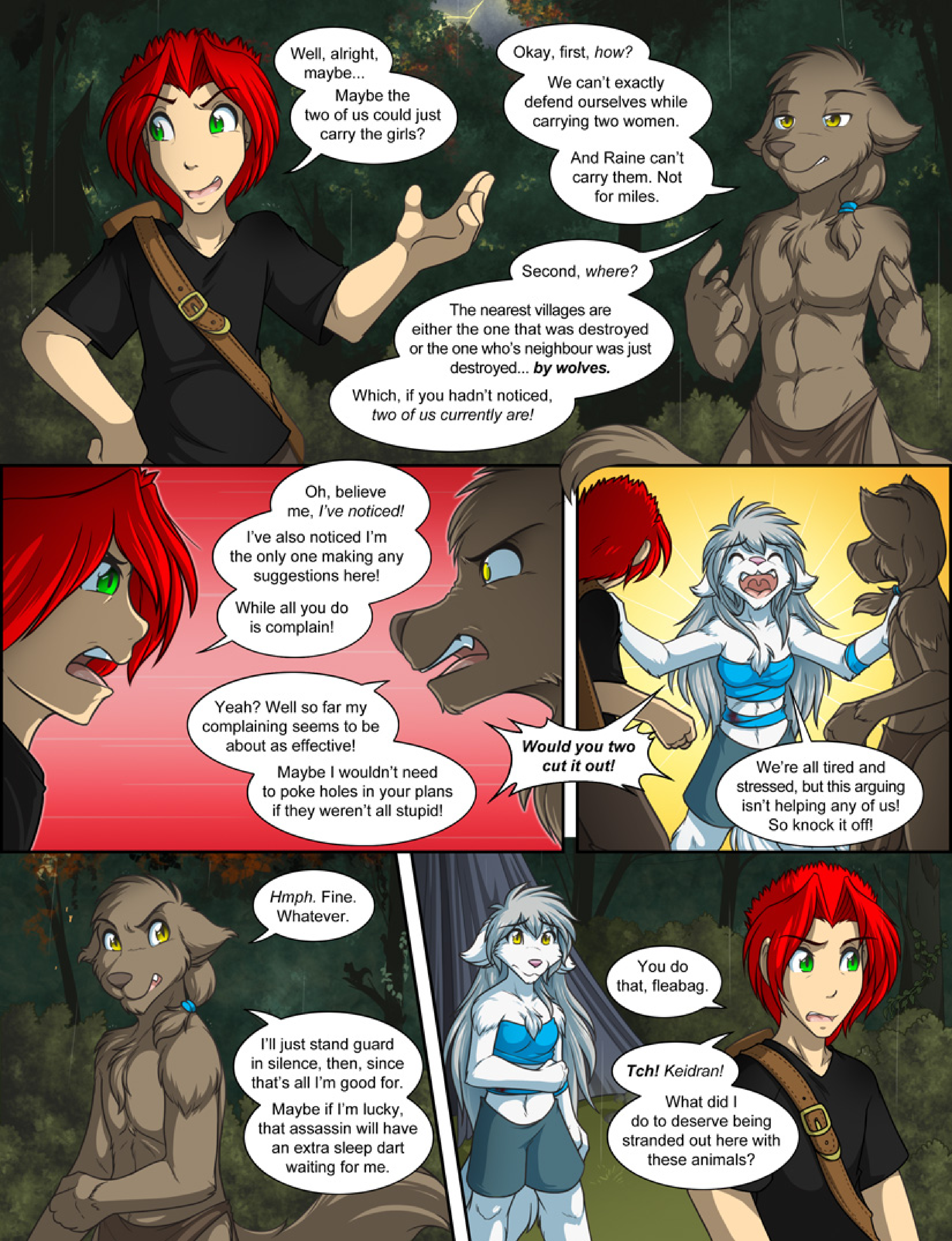

Alright, alright!
I get what you're both saying. I'll keep the dang helmet!
Good!
<And now that that's all settled, why don't you two lie down and watch the stars with us?>
<Well...>
<I suppose I don't have anything better to do right now.>
<What about you, Natani?>
<Eh, if you're going to, then sure, why not?>
...You know what, Flora? You were right.
This is nice.
End.

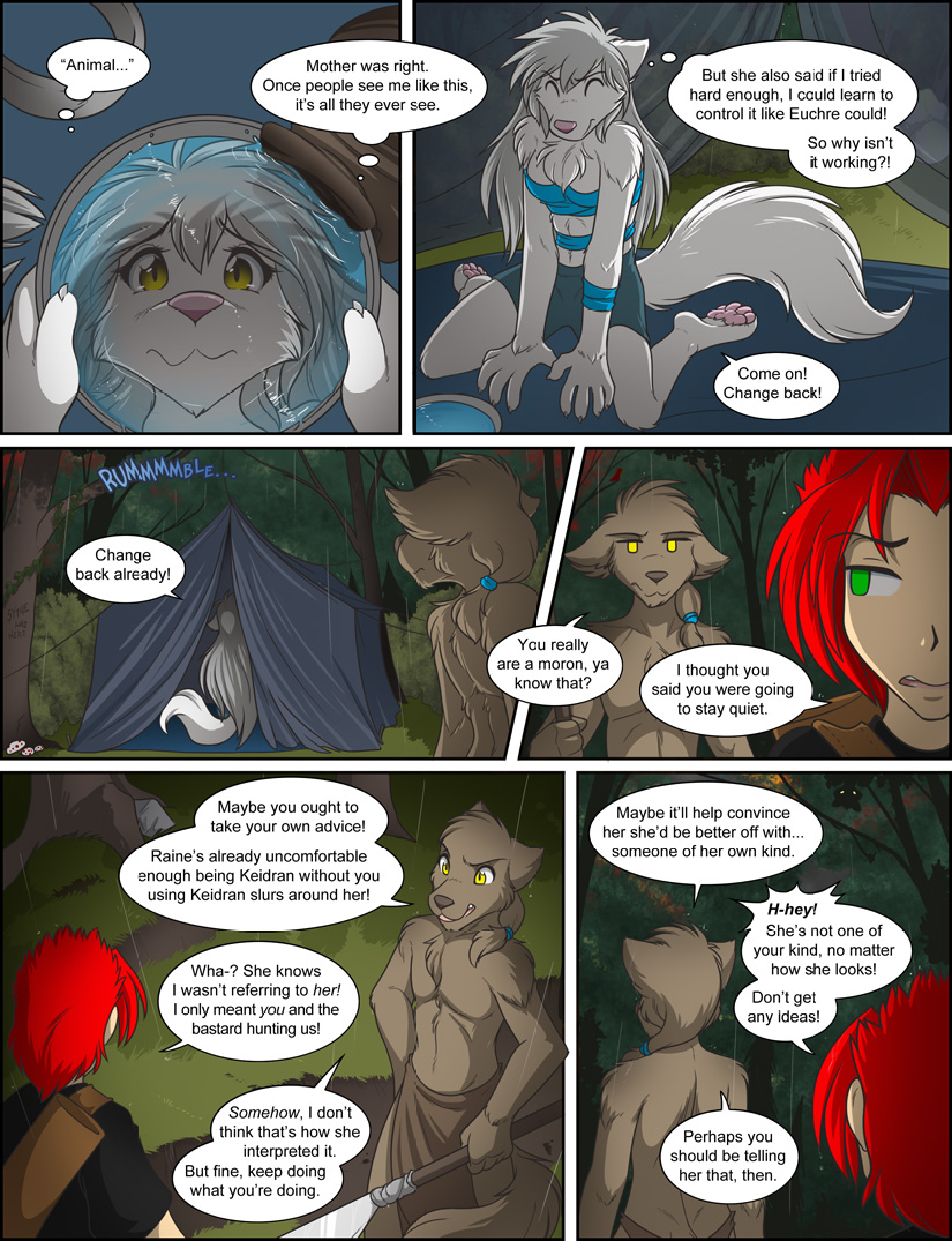

Epilogue
Hey, wait. Since we're all sharing...
There's something I've always wanted to ask you, Trace.
Hm? Me? Sure, what?
What's the deal with that blue triangle you have on your face?
Is it some kind of Templar tattoo? Birthmark? A magic seal, maybe?
What blue triangle?
?

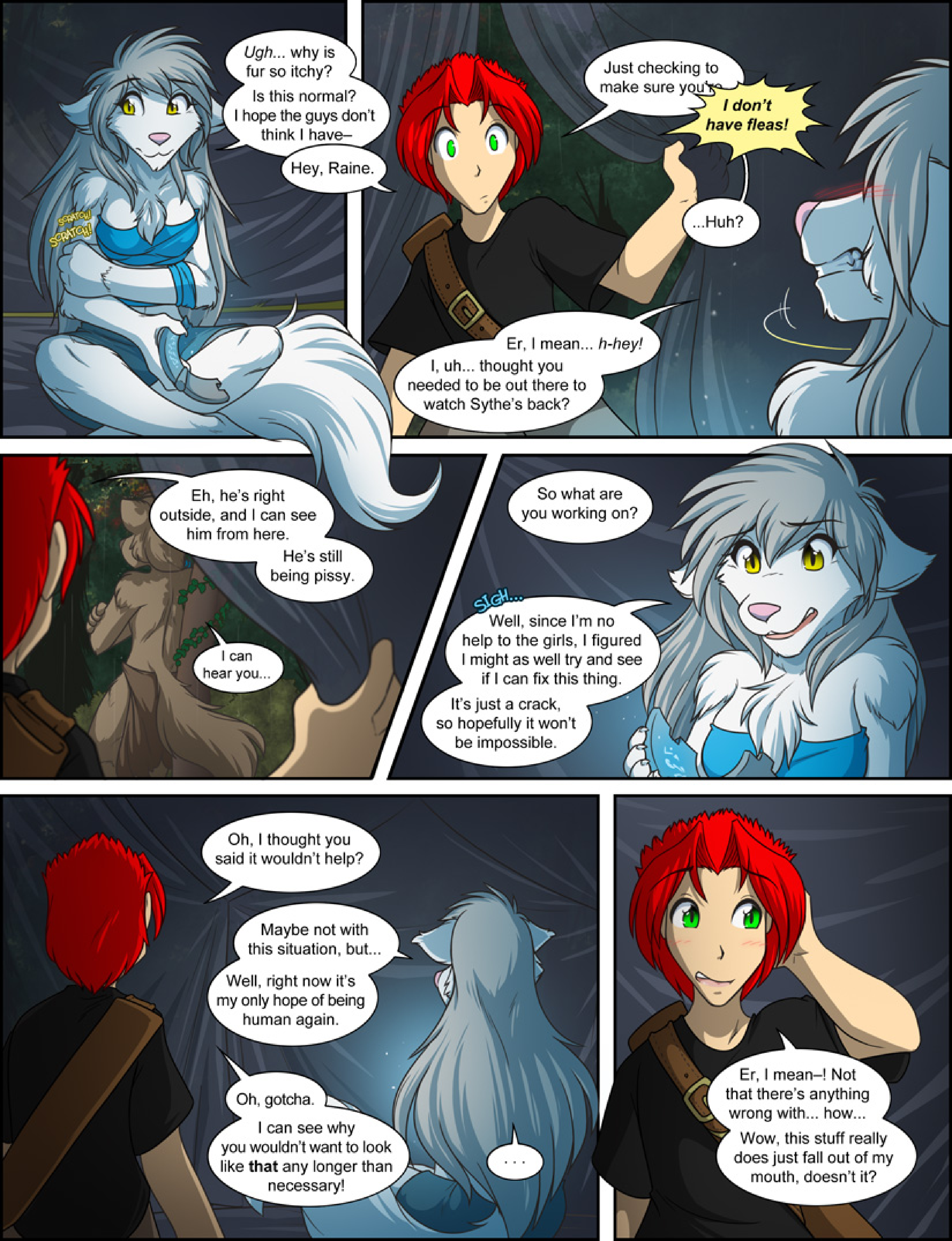
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN STRANDED

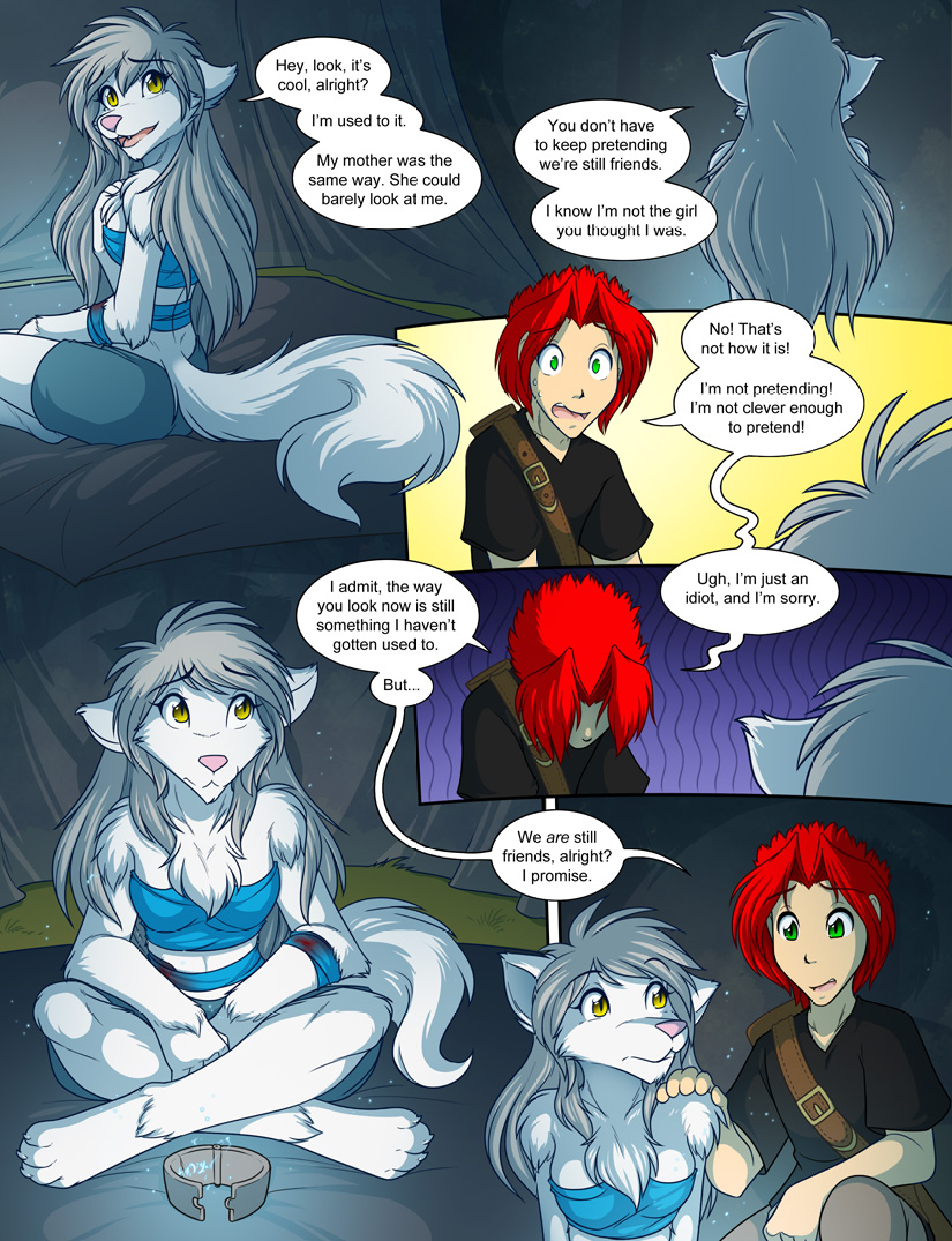

Well...
I've got good news and bad news.
RUMMMMBLE...
The good news is the girls are stable. At least for now.
Whatever the assassin used, it isn't killing them.
It's just... keeping them asleep. And that's the bad news.
Without knowing exactly what he used, there's nothing I can do to help them.
I've tried some simple remedies, but the sisters just won't wake.
WHIMPER...
We need a cure, and the only one who might know it... is the assassin.
So in short, we're totally boned.
That isn't helping!

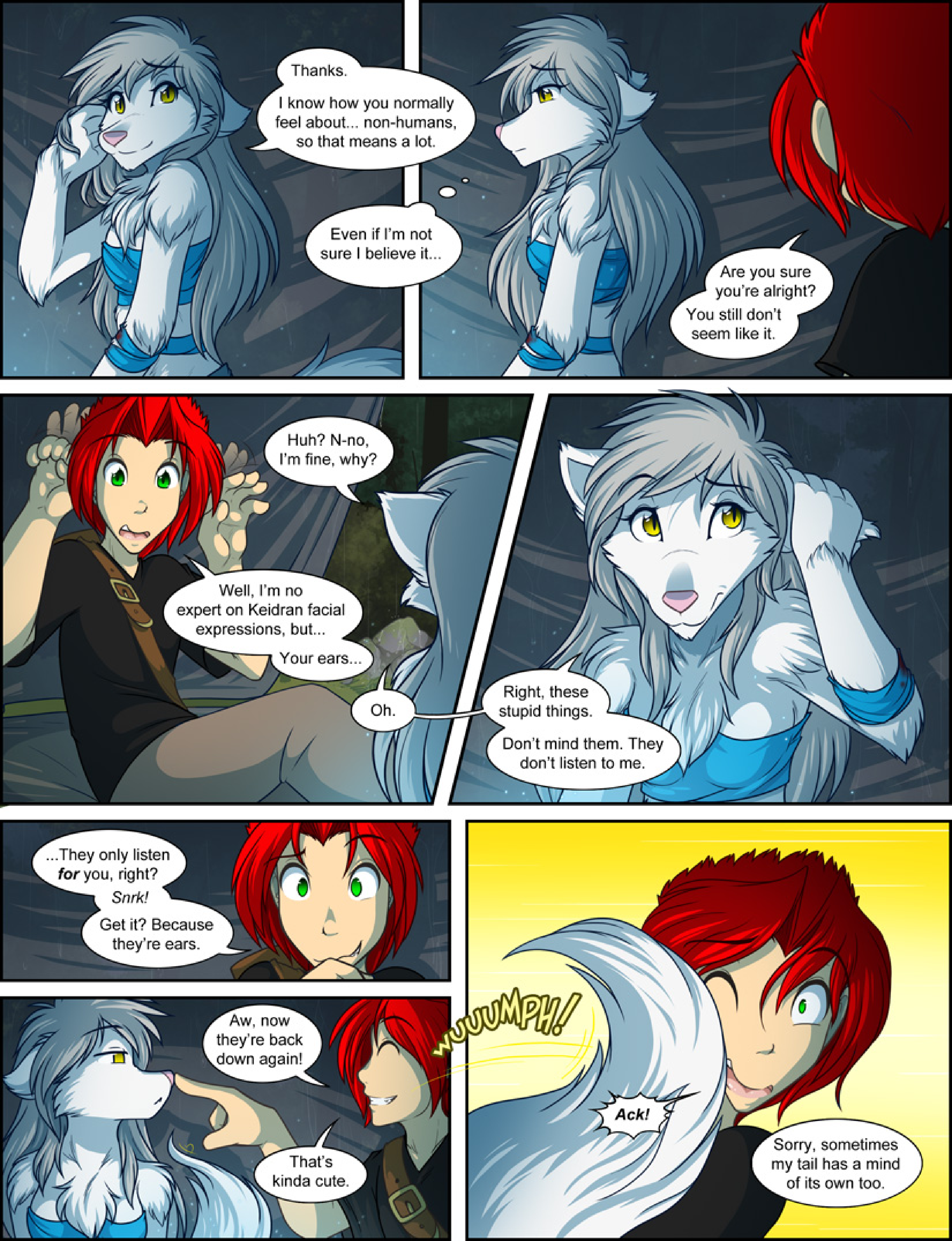

What we need to do is think up a plan!
A plan, from you? Now I know we're doomed.
Be careful not to strain yourself.
Shut it, furball.
Raine! Your mother was the former Grand Templar! You must have powerful magic!
Right?
Well, yes... I... I do have magic, but like I said, I was never trained.
And it wouldn't matter anyway.
As long as I'm trapped in this Keidran body, I'm stuck with all the biological issues that comes with being Keidran.
I can't cast magic without mana crystals!
Well, what about this shackle thing?
It turns you human, right? Then you can use magic without crystals.
This doesn't *"turn me human."*
This is a **magic suppressor.** It keeps my curse in check.
But it also cuts off my magical abilities.
If I managed to fix it, I then wouldn't be able to use magic voluntarily.
It's lose-lose, either way.

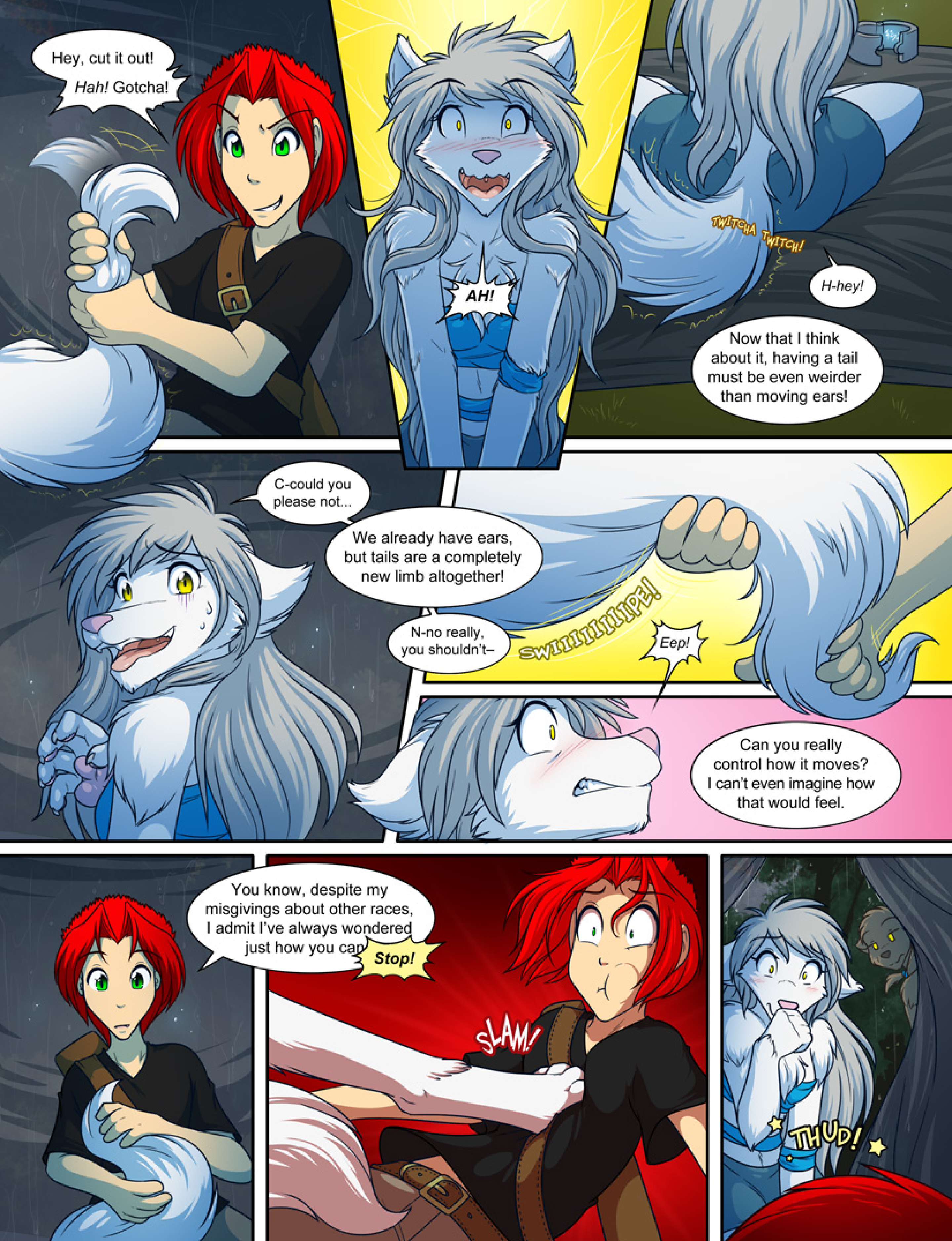

Well, alright, maybe...
Maybe the two of us could just carry the girls?
Okay, first, *how?*
We can't exactly defend ourselves while carrying two women.
And Raine can't carry them. Not for miles.
Second, *where?*
The nearest villages are either the one that was destroyed or the one who's neighbour was just destroyed... ***by wolves.***
Which, if you hadn't noticed, *two of us currently are!*
Oh, believe me, *I've noticed!*
I've also noticed I'm the only one making any suggestions here!
While all you do is complain!
Yeah? Well so far my complaining seems to be about as effective!
Maybe I wouldn't need to poke holes in your plans if they weren't all stupid!
Would you two cut it out!
We're all tired and stressed, but this arguing isn't helping any of us! So knock it off!
Hmph. Fine. Whatever.
I'll just stand guard in silence, then, since that's all I'm good for.
Maybe if I'm lucky, that assassin will have an extra sleep dart waiting for me.
You do that, fleabag.
***Tch!** Keidran!*
What did I do to deserve being stranded out here with these animals?


"Animal..."
Mother was right. Once people see me like this, it's all they ever see.
But she also said if I tried hard enough, I could learn to control it like Euchre could!
So why isn't it working?!
Come on! Change back!
RUMMMMBLE...
Change back already!
You really are a moron, ya know that?
I thought you said you were going to stay quiet.
Maybe you ought to take your own advice!
Raine's already uncomfortable enough being Keidran without you using Keidran slurs around her!
Wha-? She knows I wasn't referring to *her!* I only meant *you* and the bastard hunting us!
Somehow, I don't think that's how she interpreted it.
But fine, keep doing what you're doing.
Maybe it'll help convince her she'd be better off with... someone of her own kind.
H-hey! She's not one of your kind, no matter how she looks!
Don't get any ideas!
Perhaps you should be telling her that, then.

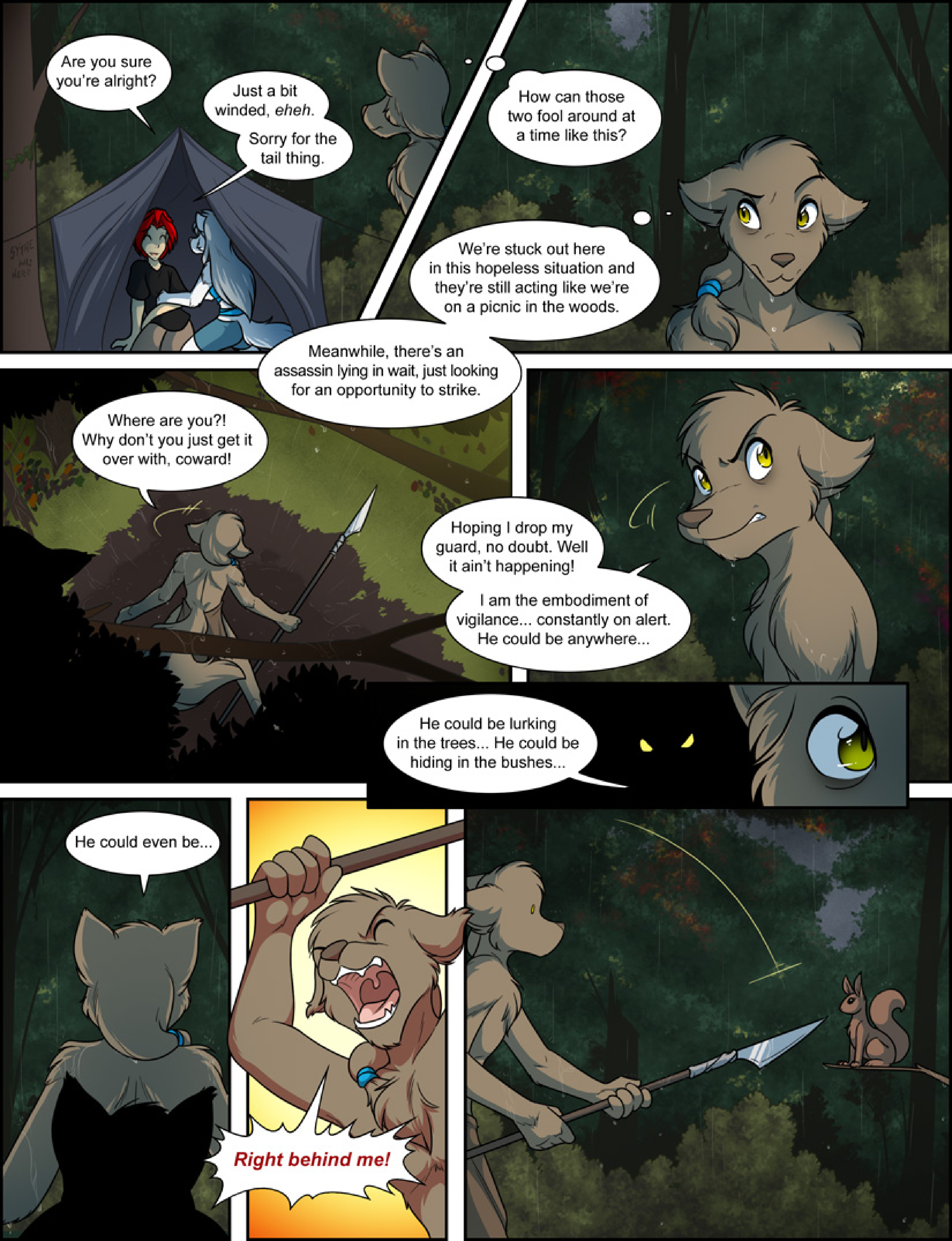

Ugh... why is fur so itchy?
Is this normal? I hope the guys don't think I have–
SCRATCH! SCRATCH!
Hey, Raine.
Just checking to make sure you'r
I don't have fleas!
...Huh?
Er, I mean... *h-hey!*
I, uh... thought you needed to be out there to watch Sythe's back?
Eh, he's right outside, and I can see him from here.
He's still being pissy.
I can hear you...
So what are you working on?
SIGH...
Well, since I'm no help to the girls, I figured I might as well try and see if I can fix this thing.
It's just a crack, so hopefully it won't be impossible.
Oh, I thought you said it wouldn't help?
Maybe not with this situation, but...
Well, right now it's my only hope of being human again.
Oh, gotcha.
I can see why you wouldn't want to look like **that** any longer than necessary!
. . .
Er, I mean–! Not that there's anything wrong with... how...
Wow, this stuff really does just fall out of my mouth, doesn't it?

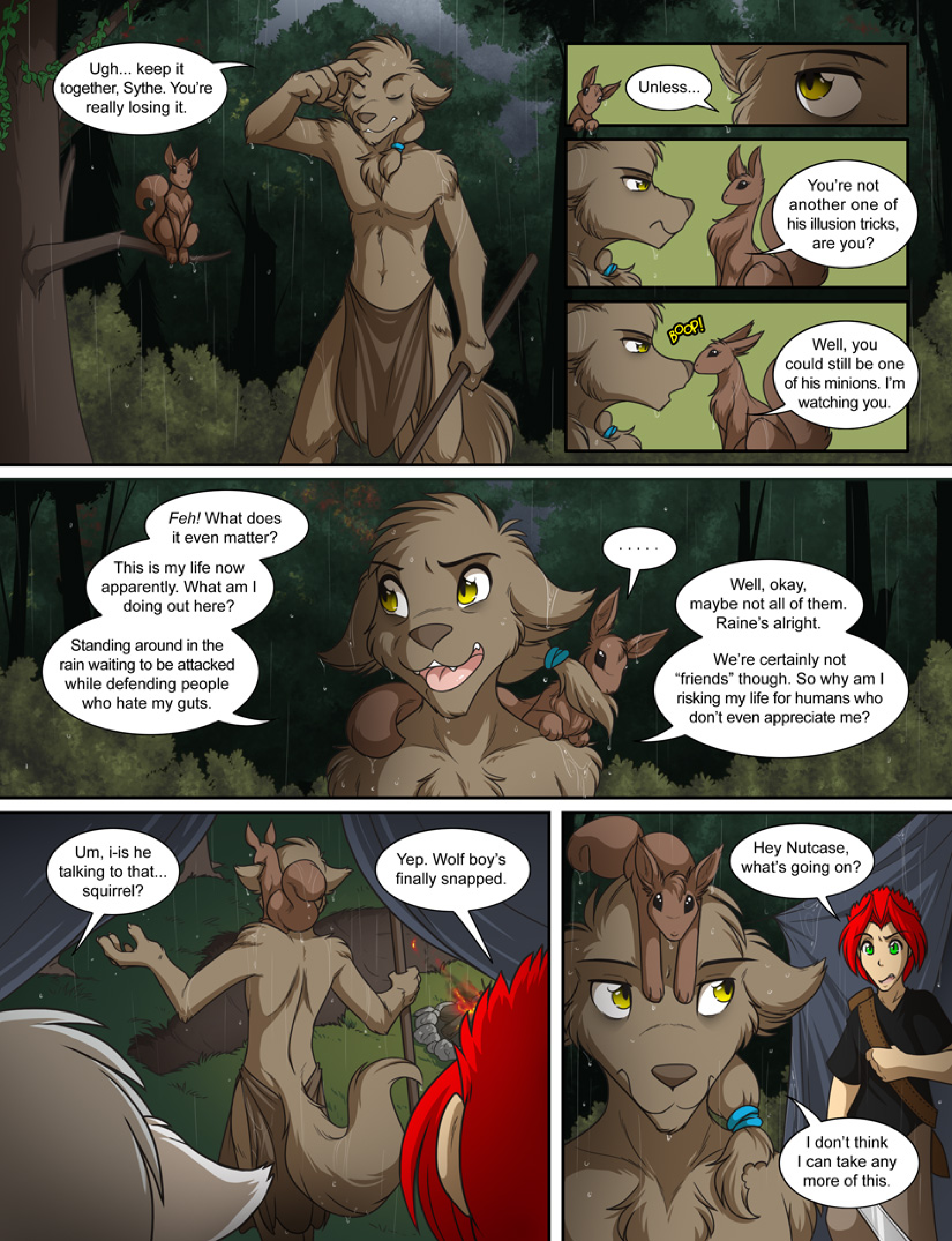

Hey, look, it's cool, alright?
I'm used to it.
My mother was the same way. She could barely look at me.
You don't have to keep pretending we're still friends.
I know I'm not the girl you thought I was.
No! That's not how it is!
I'm not pretending! I'm not clever enough to pretend!
Ugh, I'm just an idiot, and I'm sorry.
I admit, the way you look now is still something I haven't gotten used to.
But...
We *are* still friends, alright? I promise.

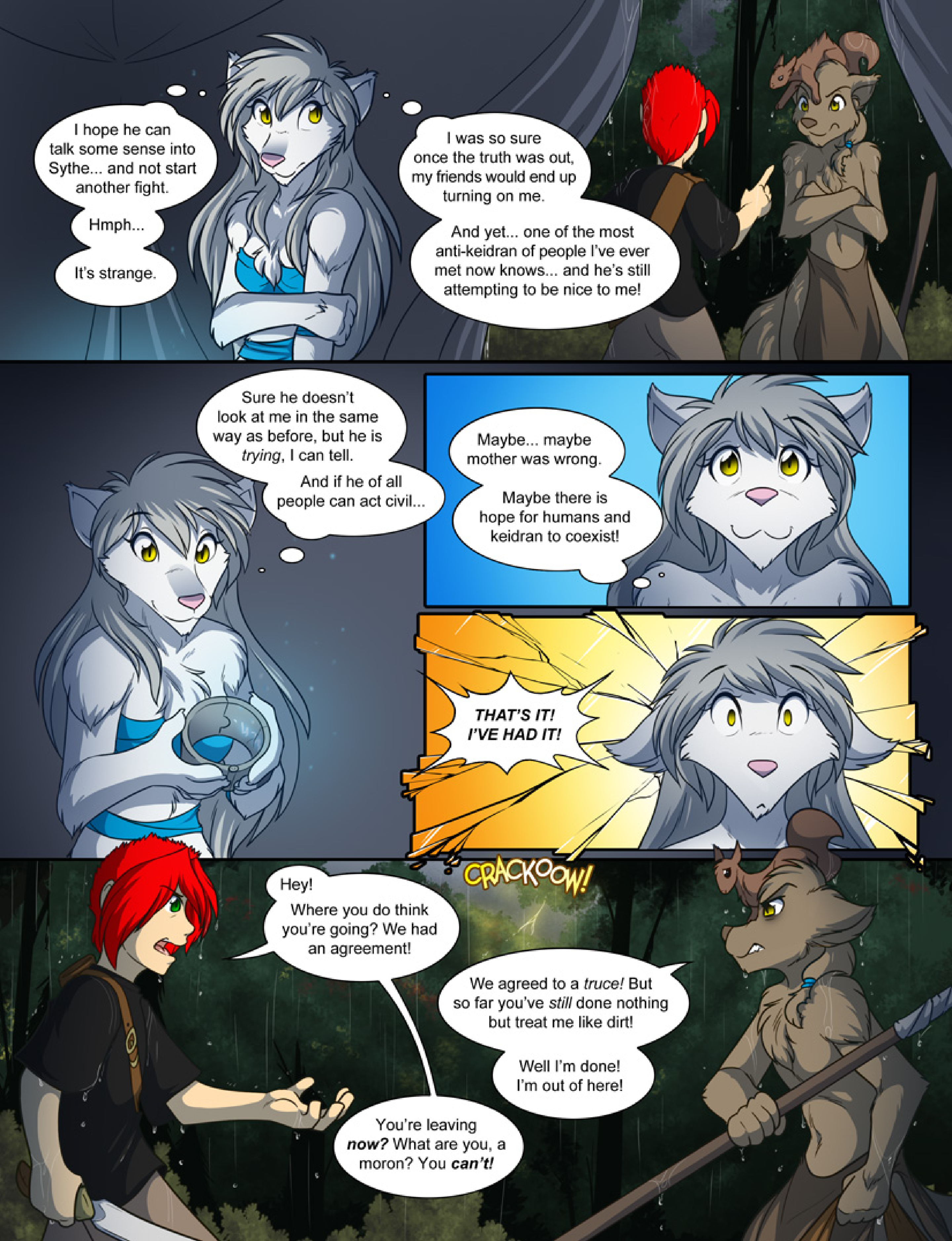

Thanks.
I know how you normally feel about... non-humans, so that means a lot.
Even if I'm not sure I believe it...
Are you sure you're alright?
You still don't seem like it.
Huh? N-no, I'm fine, why?
Well, I'm no expert on Keidran facial expressions, but...
Your ears...
Oh.
Right, these stupid things.
Don't mind them. They don't listen to me.
...They only listen **for** you, right?
Snrk!
Get it? Because they're ears.
Aw, now they're back down again!
That's kinda cute.
WUUUMPH!
Ack!
Sorry, sometimes my tail has a mind of its own too.

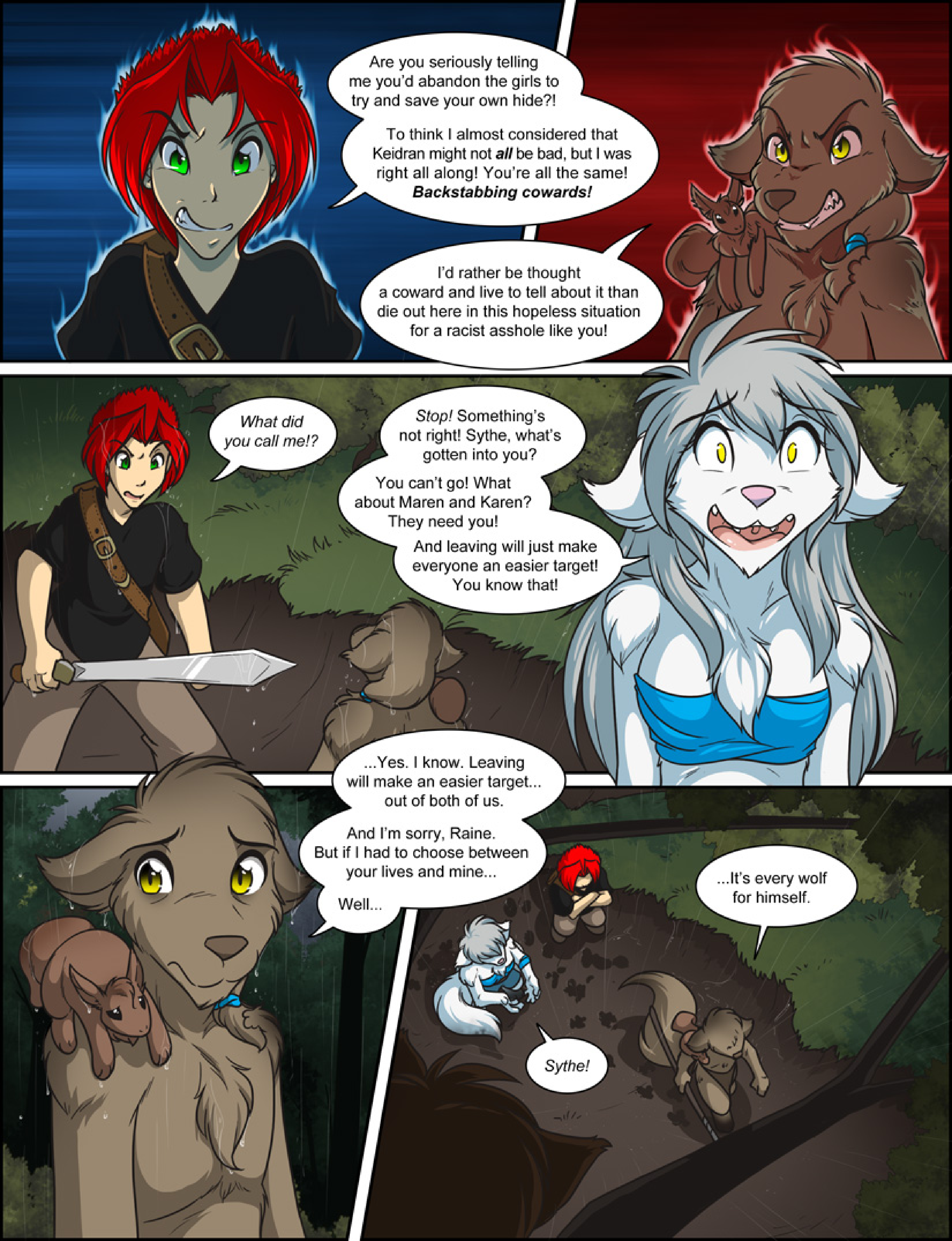

Hey, cut it out!
Hah! Gotcha!
AH!
TWITCHA TWITCH!
H-hey!
Now that I think about it, having a tail must be even weirder than moving ears!
C-could you please not...
We already have ears, but tails are a completely new limb altogether!
N-no really, you shouldn't–
SWIIIIIIIIPE!
Eep!
Can you really control how it moves? I can't even imagine how that would feel.
You know, despite my misgivings about other races, I admit I've always wondered just how you can
Stop!
SLAM!
THUD!

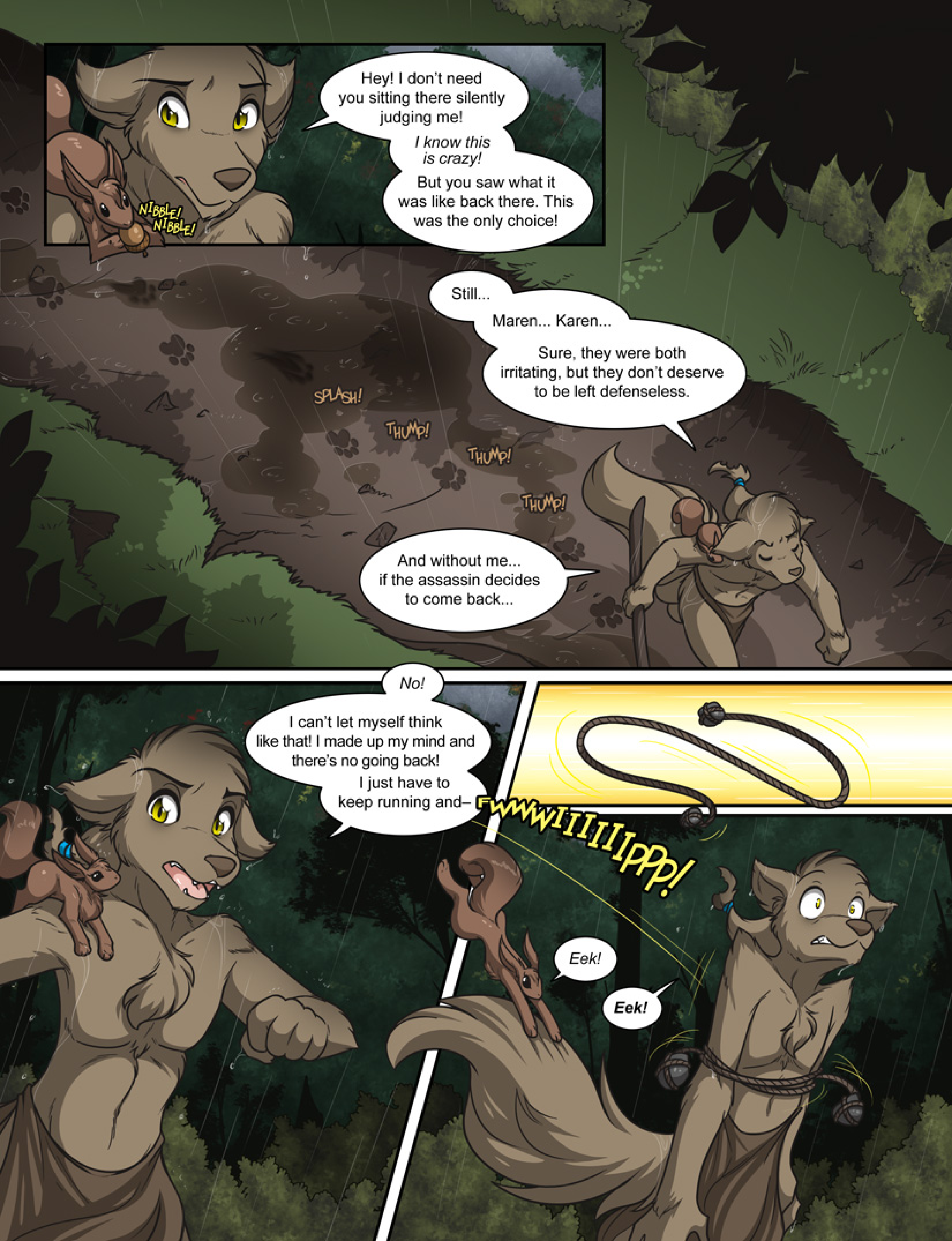
HAVE A WARM AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!

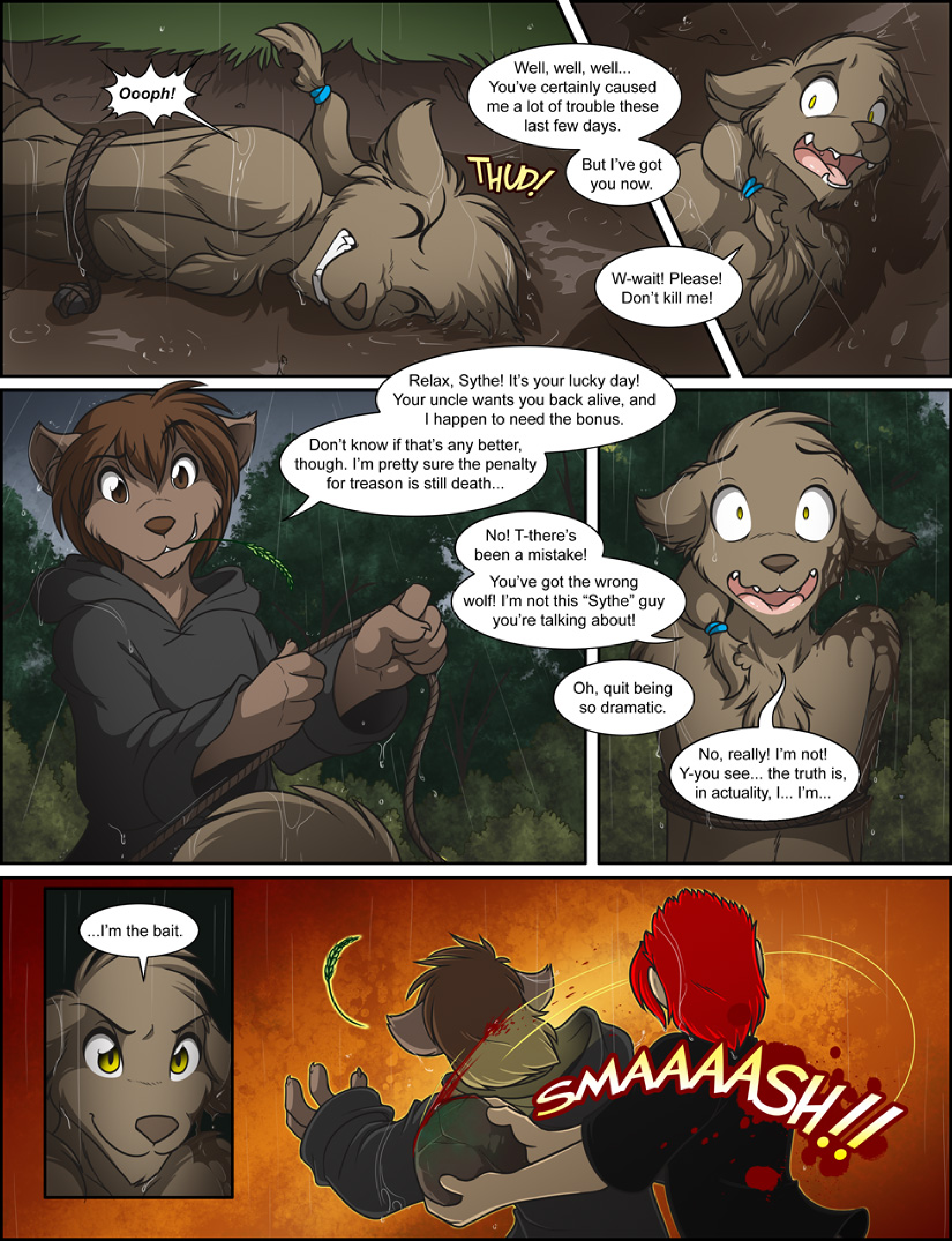

Are you sure you're alright?
Just a bit winded, *eheh*.
Sorry for the tail thing.
SYTHE WAS HERE
How can those two fool around at a time like this?
We're stuck out here in this hopeless situation and they're still acting like we're on a picnic in the woods.
Meanwhile, there's an assassin lying in wait, just looking for an opportunity to strike.
Where are you?! Why don't you just get it over with, coward!
Hoping I drop my guard, no doubt. Well it ain't happening!
I am the embodiment of vigilance... constantly on alert. He could be anywhere...
He could be lurking in the trees... He could be hiding in the bushes...
He could even be...
Right behind me!

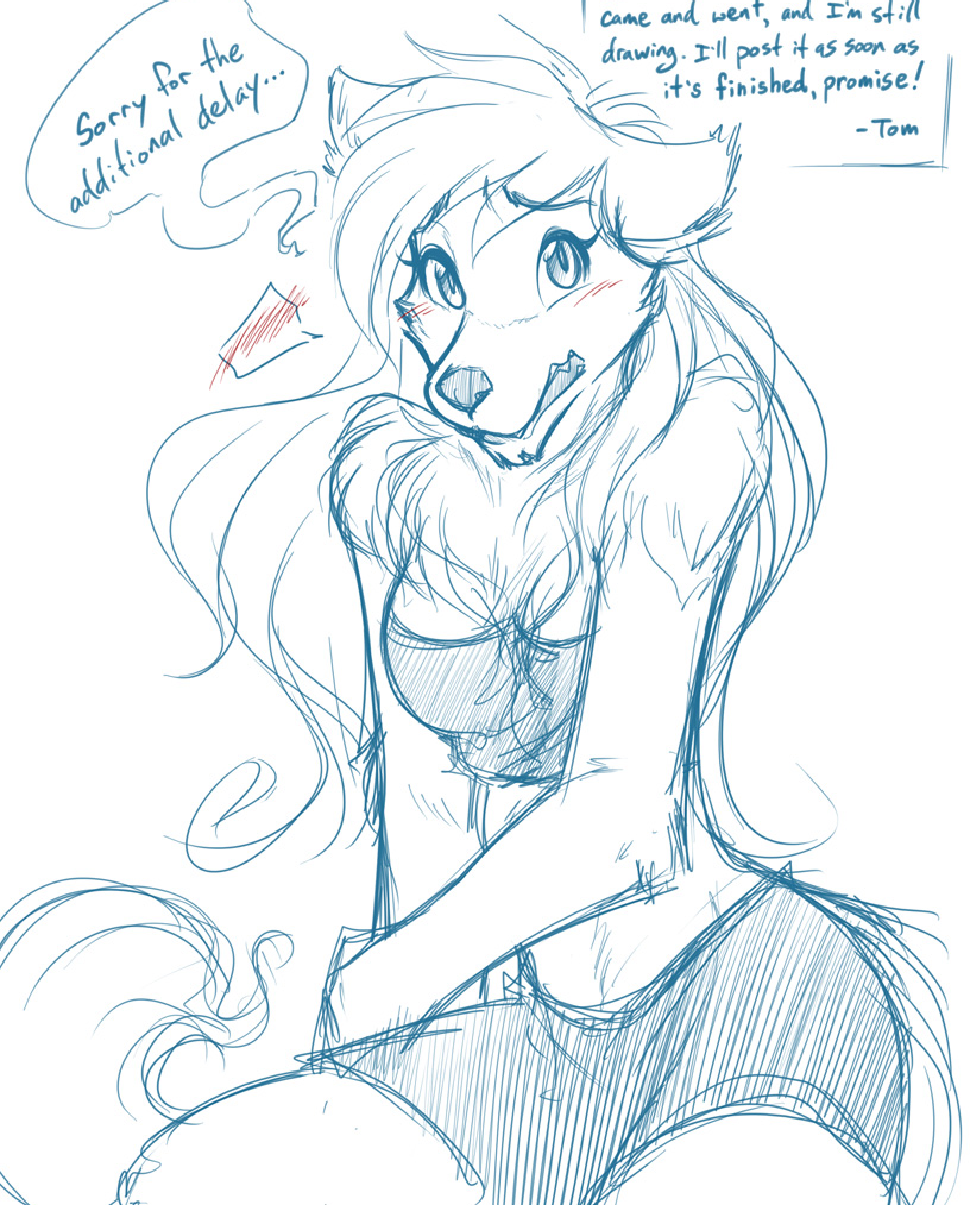

Ugh... keep it together, Sythe. You're really losing it.
Unless...
You're not another one of his illusion tricks, are you?
BOOP!
Well, you could still be one of his minions. I'm watching you.
Feh! What does it even matter?
This is my life now apparently. What am I doing out here?
Standing around in the rain waiting to be attacked while defending people who hate my guts.
. . . . .
Well, okay, maybe not all of them. Raine's alright.
We're certainly not "friends" though. So why am I risking my life for humans who don't even appreciate me?
Um, i-is he talking to that... squirrel?
Yep. Wolf boy's finally snapped.
Hey Nutcase, what's going on?
I don't think I can take any more of this.


I hope he can talk some sense into Sythe... and not start another fight.
Hmph...
It's strange.
I was so sure once the truth was out, my friends would end up turning on me.
And yet... one of the most anti-keidran of people I've ever met now knows... and he's still attempting to be nice to me!
Sure he doesn't look at me in the same way as before, but he is *trying*, I can tell.
And if he of all people can act civil...
Maybe... maybe mother was wrong.
Maybe there is hope for humans and keidran to coexist!
THAT'S IT! I'VE HAD IT!
CRACKOOW!
Hey!
Where you do think you're going? We had an agreement!
We agreed to a *truce!* But so far you've *still* done nothing but treat me like dirt!
Well I'm done! I'm out of here!
You're leaving ***now?*** What are you, a moron? You ***can't!***


Are you seriously telling me you'd abandon the girls to try and save your own hide?!
To think I almost considered that Keidran might not *all* be bad, but I was right all along! You're all the same! ***Backstabbing cowards!***
I'd rather be thought a coward and live to tell about it than die out here in this hopeless situation for a racist asshole like you!
What did you call me!?
Stop! Something's not right! Sythe, what's gotten into you?
You can't go! What about Maren and Karen? They need you!
And leaving will just make everyone an easier target! You know that!
...Yes. I know. Leaving will make an easier target... out of both of us.
And I'm sorry, Raine. But if I had to choose between your lives and mine...
Well...
...It's every wolf for himself.
Sythe!

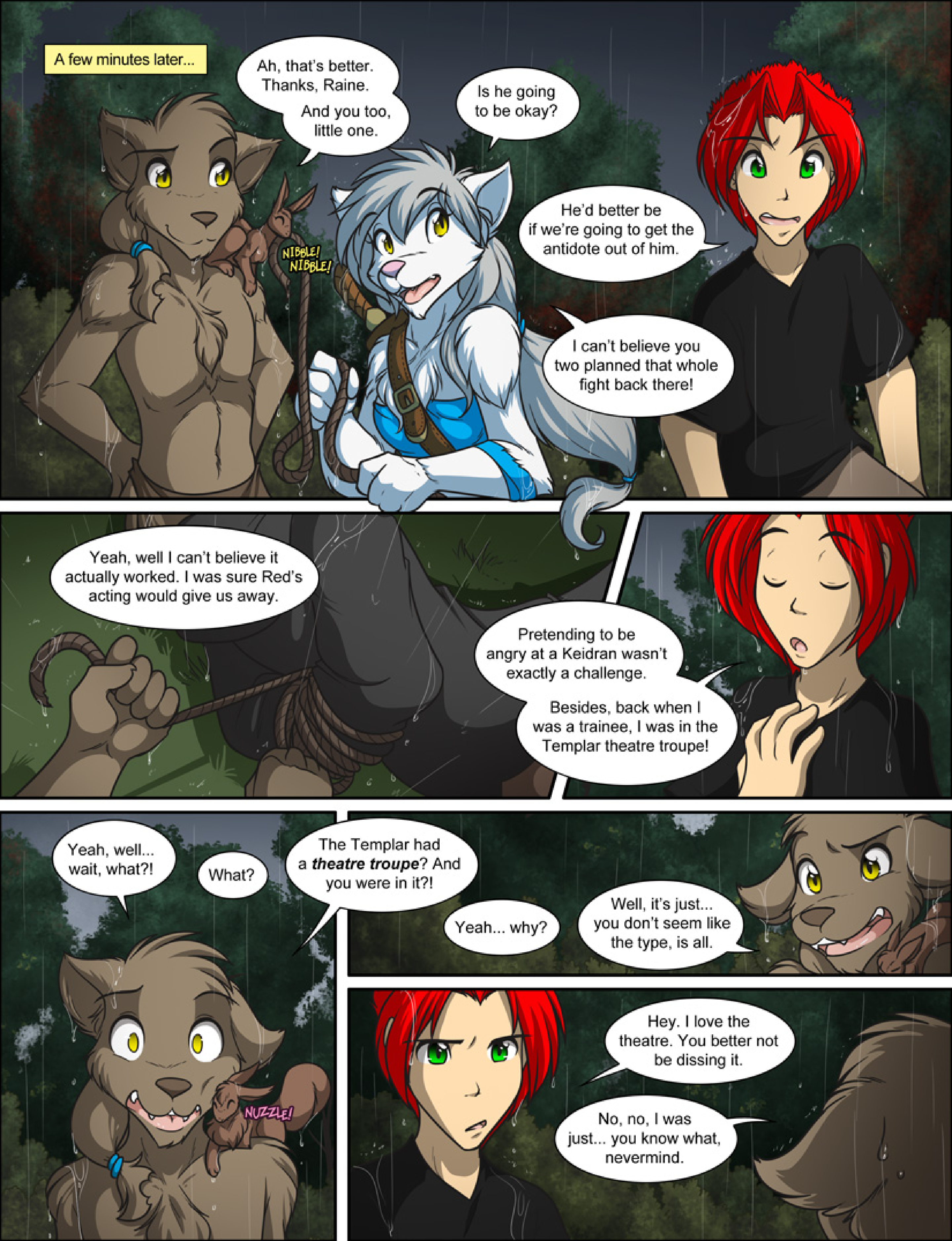

Hey! I don't need you sitting there silently judging me!
I know this is crazy!
But you saw what it was like back there. This was the only choice!
NIBBLE! NIBBLE!
Still...
Maren... Karen...
Sure, they were both irritating, but they don't deserve to be left defenseless.
SPLASH!
THUMP!
THUMP!
THUMP!
And without me... if the assassin decides to come back...
No!
I can't let myself think like that! I made up my mind and there's no going back!
I just have to keep running and–
FWWWIIIIIIPPP!
Eek!
Eek!

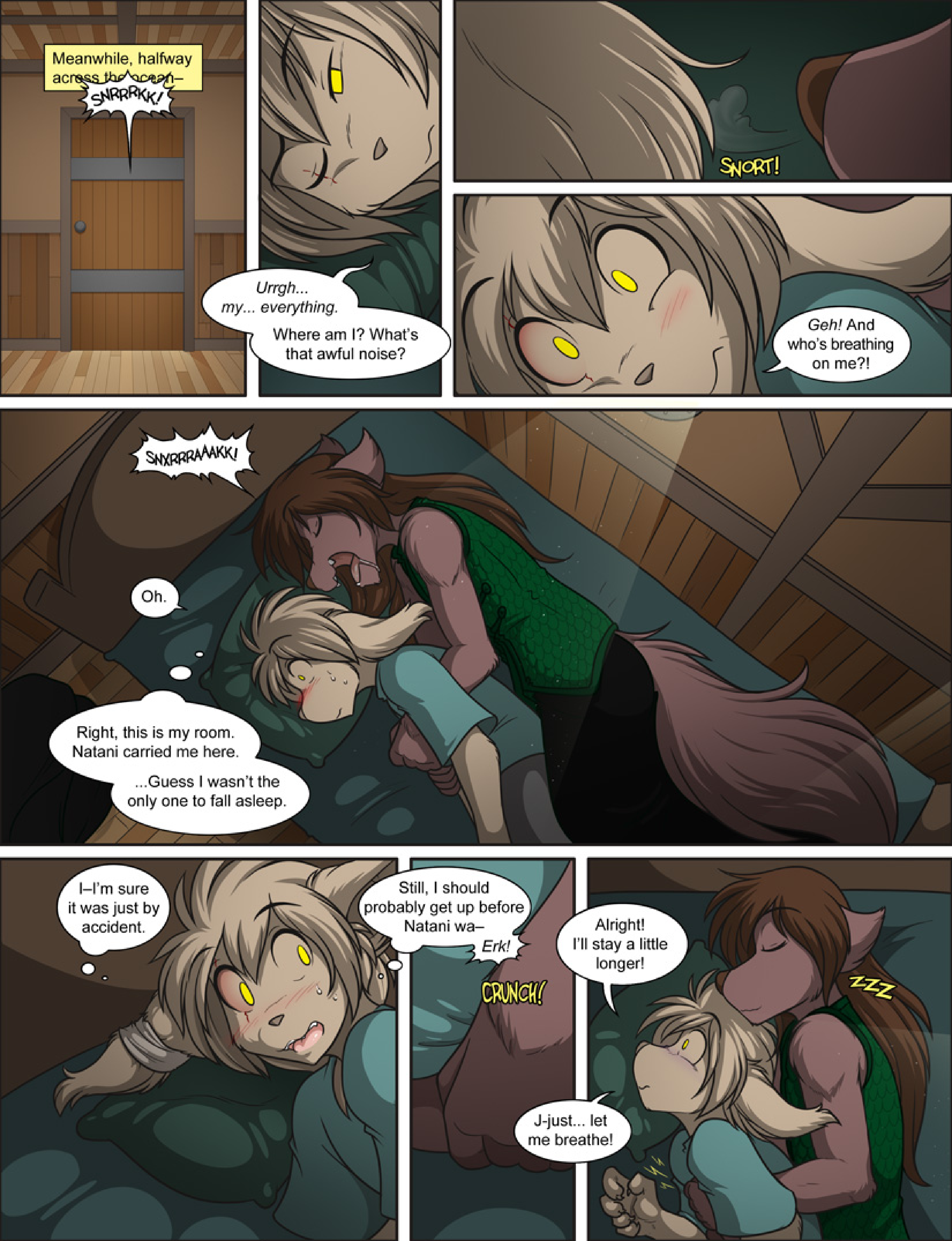

Oooph!
THUD!
Well, well, well... You've certainly caused me a lot of trouble these last few days.
But I've got you now.
W-wait! Please! Don't kill me!
Relax, Sythe! It's your lucky day! Your uncle wants you back alive, and I happen to need the bonus.
Don't know if that's any better, though. I'm pretty sure the penalty for treason is still death...
No! T-there's been a mistake!
You've got the wrong wolf! I'm not this "Sythe" guy you're talking about!
Oh, quit being so dramatic.
No, really! I'm not! Y-you see... the truth is, in actuality, I... I'm...
...I'm the bait.
SMAAAASH!!

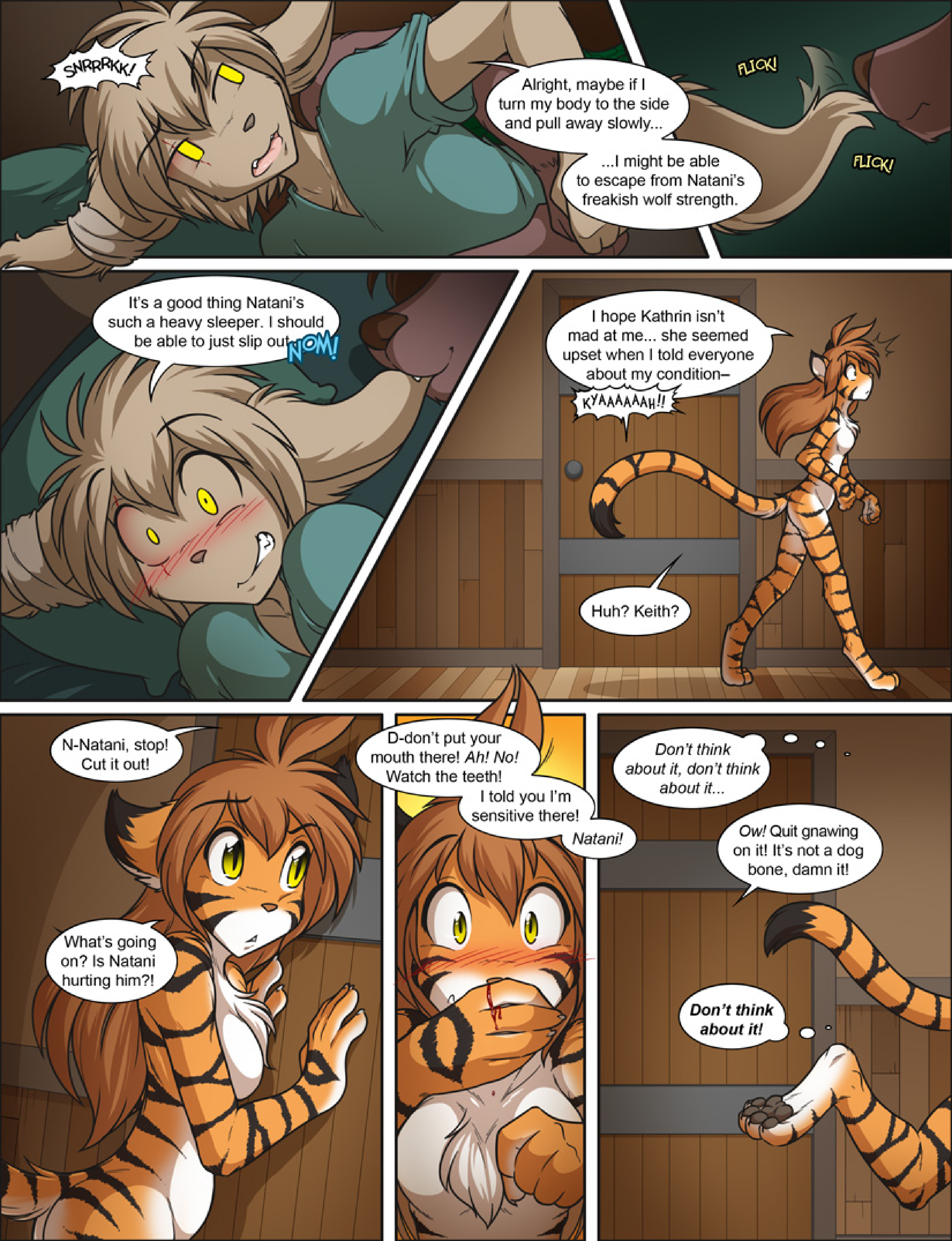

Sorry for the additional delay...

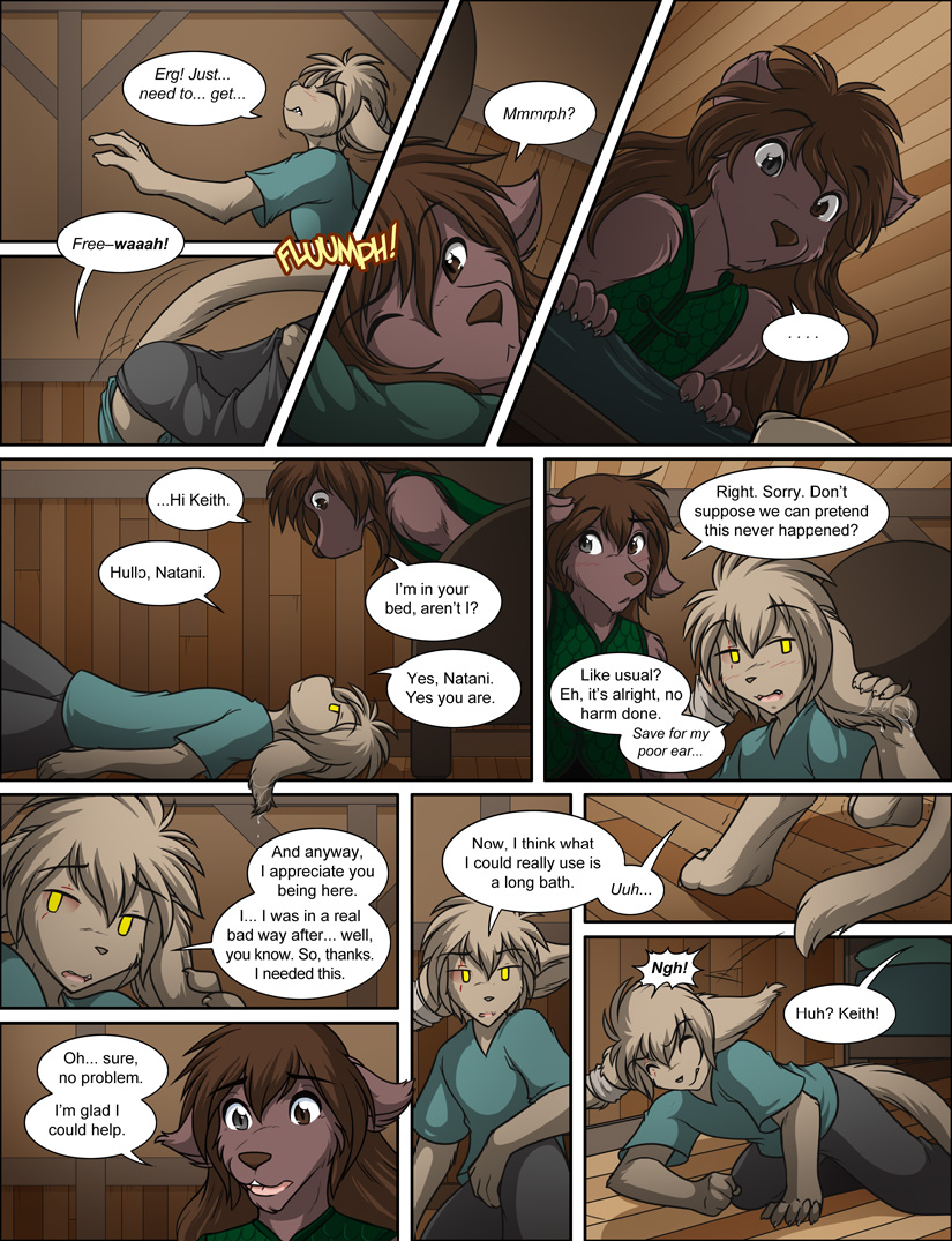
Before I knew it, Saturday came and went, and I'm still drawing. I'll post it as soon as it's finished, promise!

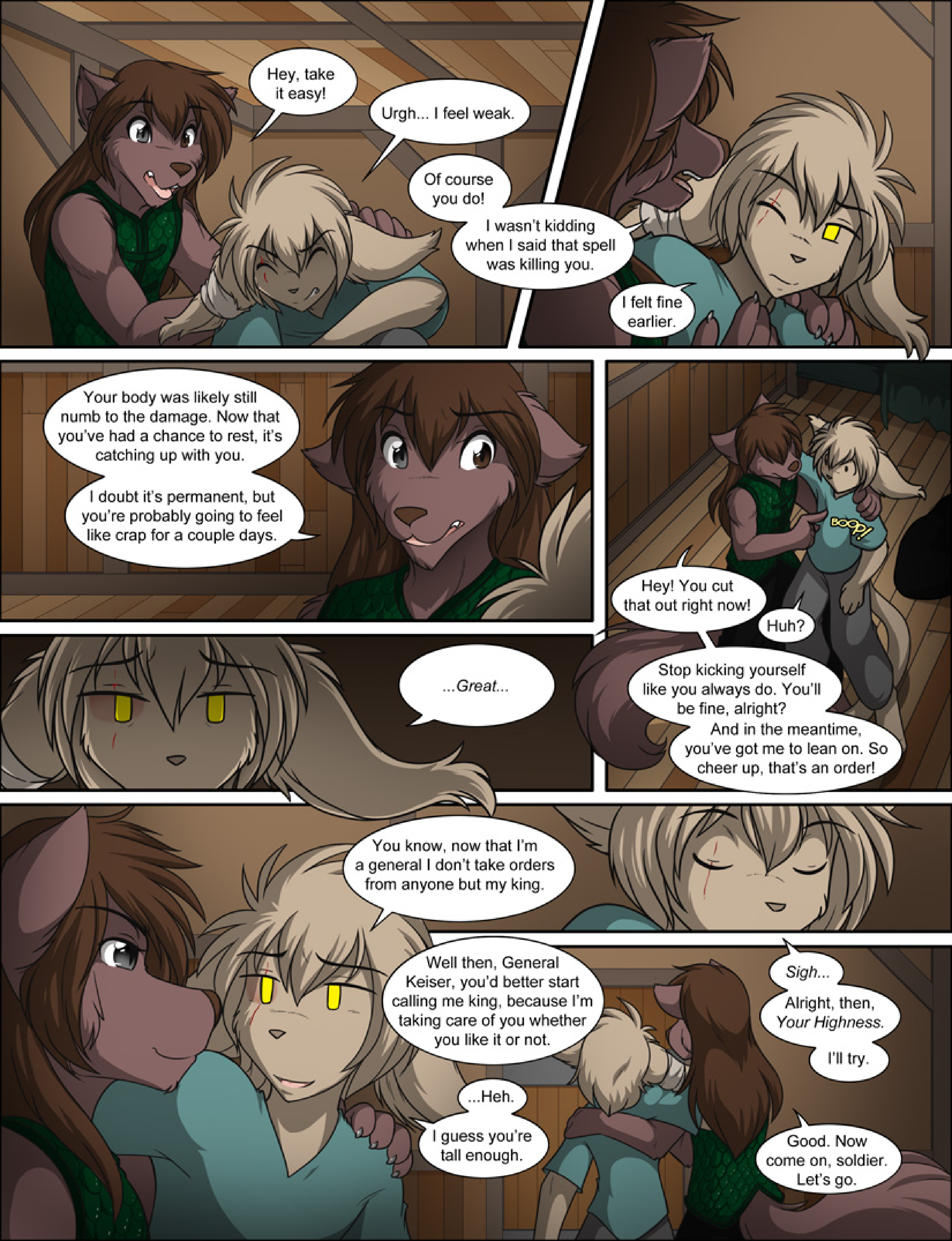
-Tom

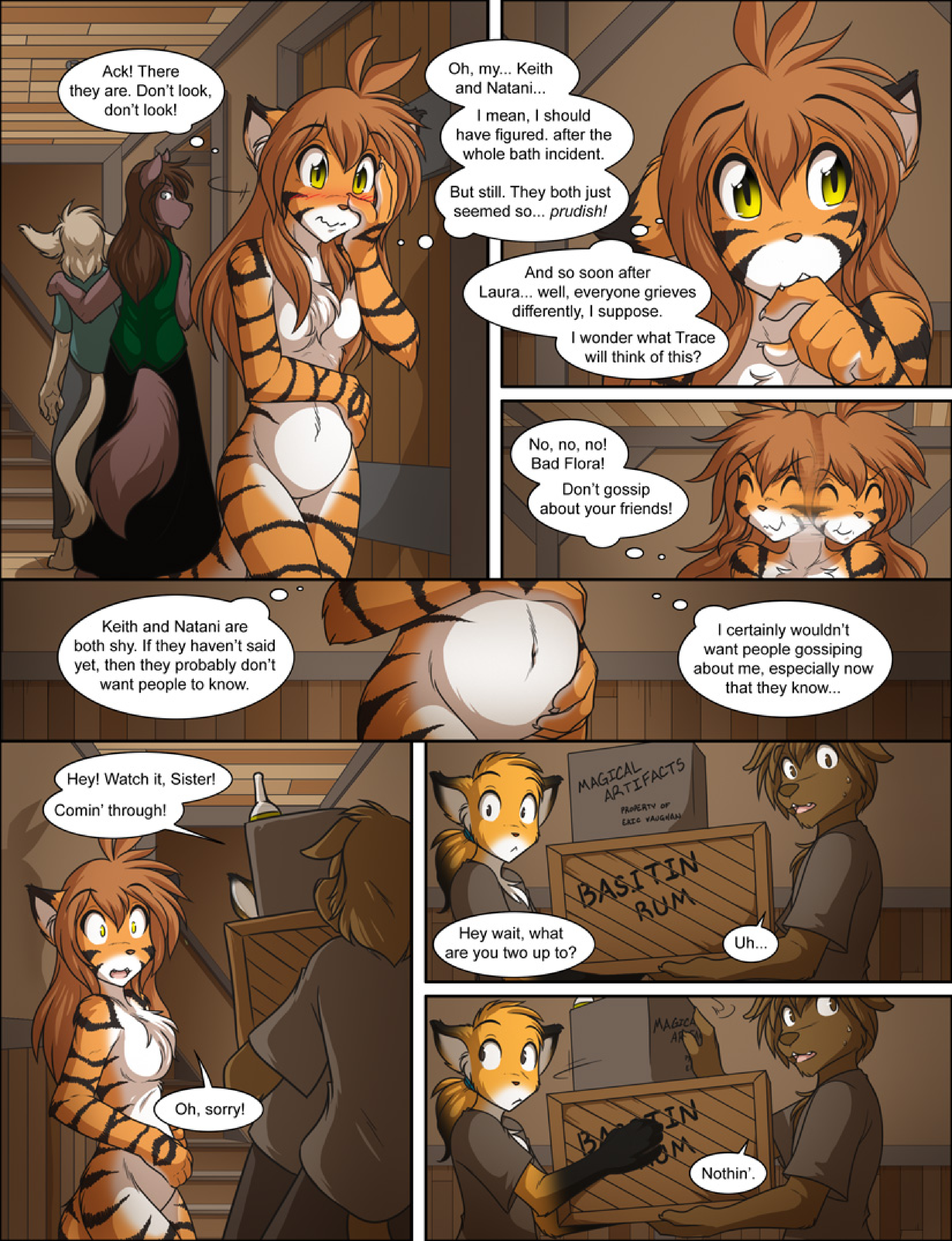

A few minutes later...
Ah, that's better. Thanks, Raine.
And you too, little one.
Is he going to be okay?
NIBBLE! NIBBLE!
He'd better be if we're going to get the antidote out of him.
I can't believe you two planned that whole fight back there!
Yeah, well I can't believe it actually worked. I was sure Red's acting would give us away.
Pretending to be angry at a Keidran wasn't exactly a challenge.
Besides, back when I was a trainee, I was in the Templar theatre troupe!
Yeah, well... wait, what?!
What?
The Templar had a *theatre troupe*? And you were in it?!
NUZZLE!
Yeah... why?
Well, it's just... you don't seem like the type, is all.
Hey. I love the theatre. You better not be dissing it.
No, no, I was just... you know what, nevermind.

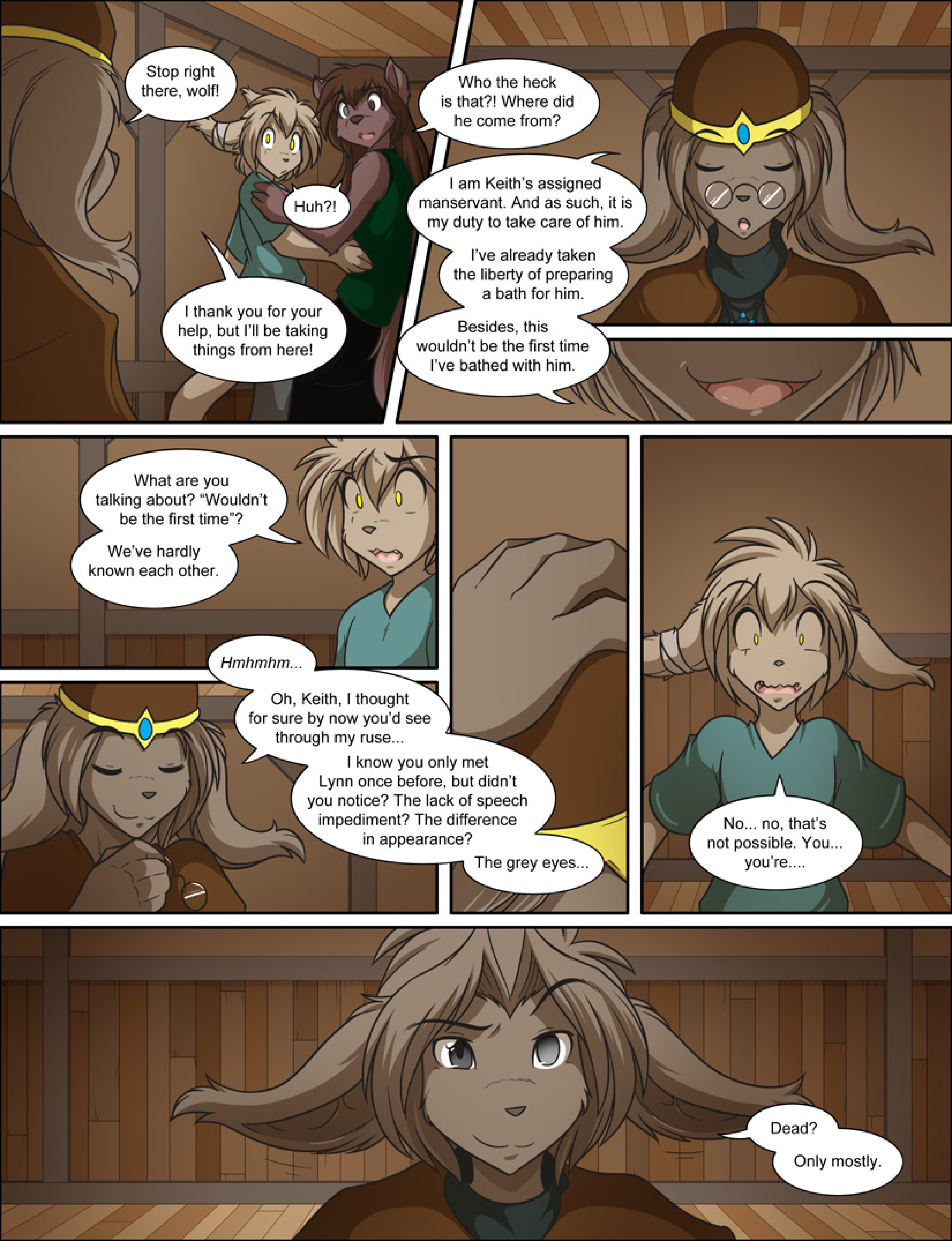

Meanwhile, halfway across the ocean–
SNRRRKK!
Urrgh... my... everything.
Where am I? What's that awful noise?
SNORT!
Geh! And who's breathing on me?!
SNXRRRAAAKK!
Oh.
Right, this is my room. Natani carried me here.
...Guess I wasn't the only one to fall asleep.
I–I'm sure it was just by accident.
Still, I should probably get up before Natani wa–
Erk!
CRUNCH!
Alright! I'll stay a little longer!
ZZZ
J-just... let me breathe!

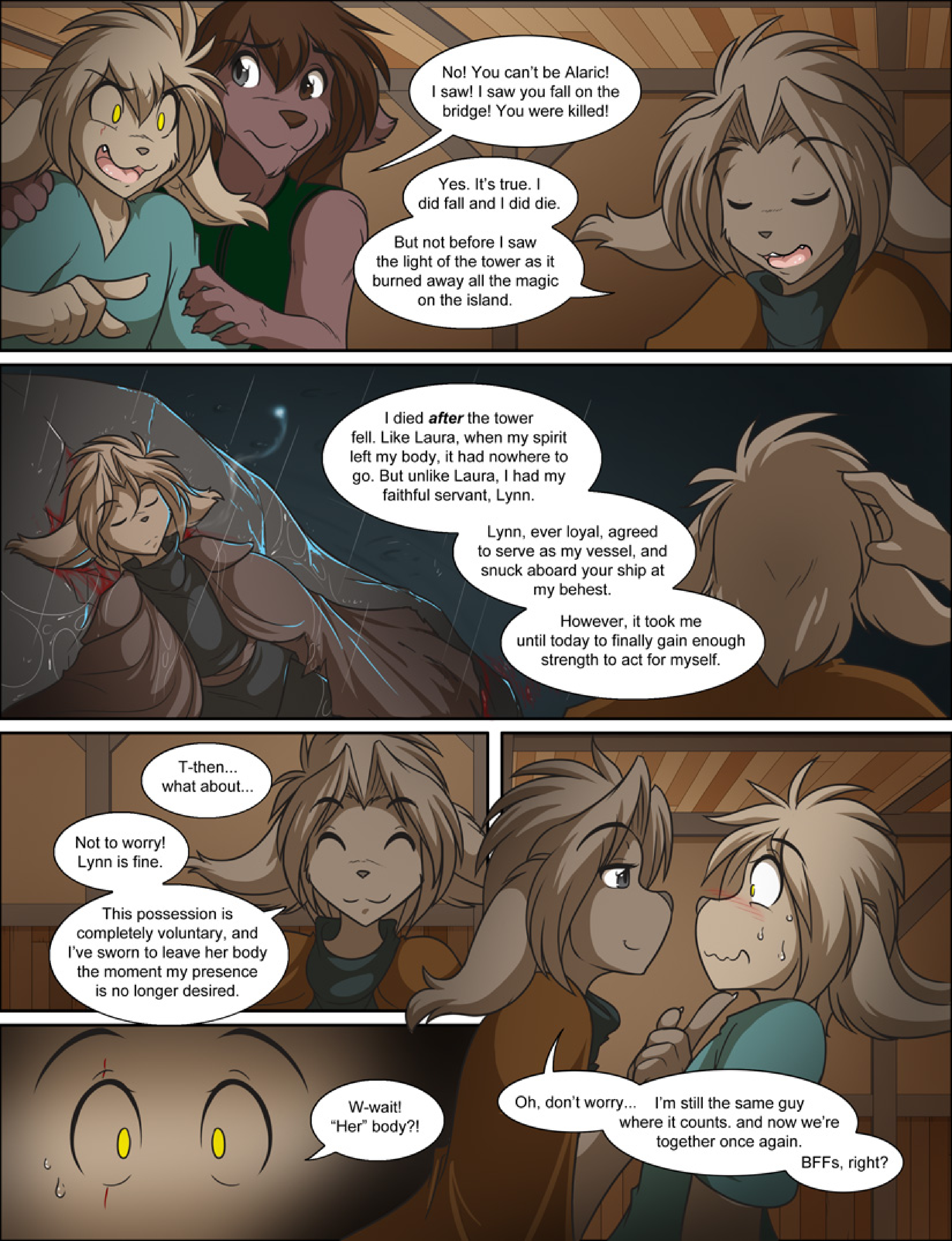

SNRRRKK!
Alright, maybe if I turn my body to the side and pull away slowly...
...I might be able to escape from Natani's freakish wolf strength.
FLICK!
FLICK!
It's a good thing Natani's such a heavy sleeper. I should be able to just slip out
NOM!
I hope Kathrin isn't mad at me... she seemed upset when I told everyone about my condition–
KYAAAAAAAH!!
Huh? Keith?
N-Natani, stop! Cut it out!
What's going on? Is Natani hurting him?!
D-don't put your mouth there! *Ah! No!* Watch the teeth!
I told you I'm sensitive there!
Natani!
Don't think about it, don't think about it...
Ow! Quit gnawing on it! It's not a dog bone, damn it!
Don't think about it!

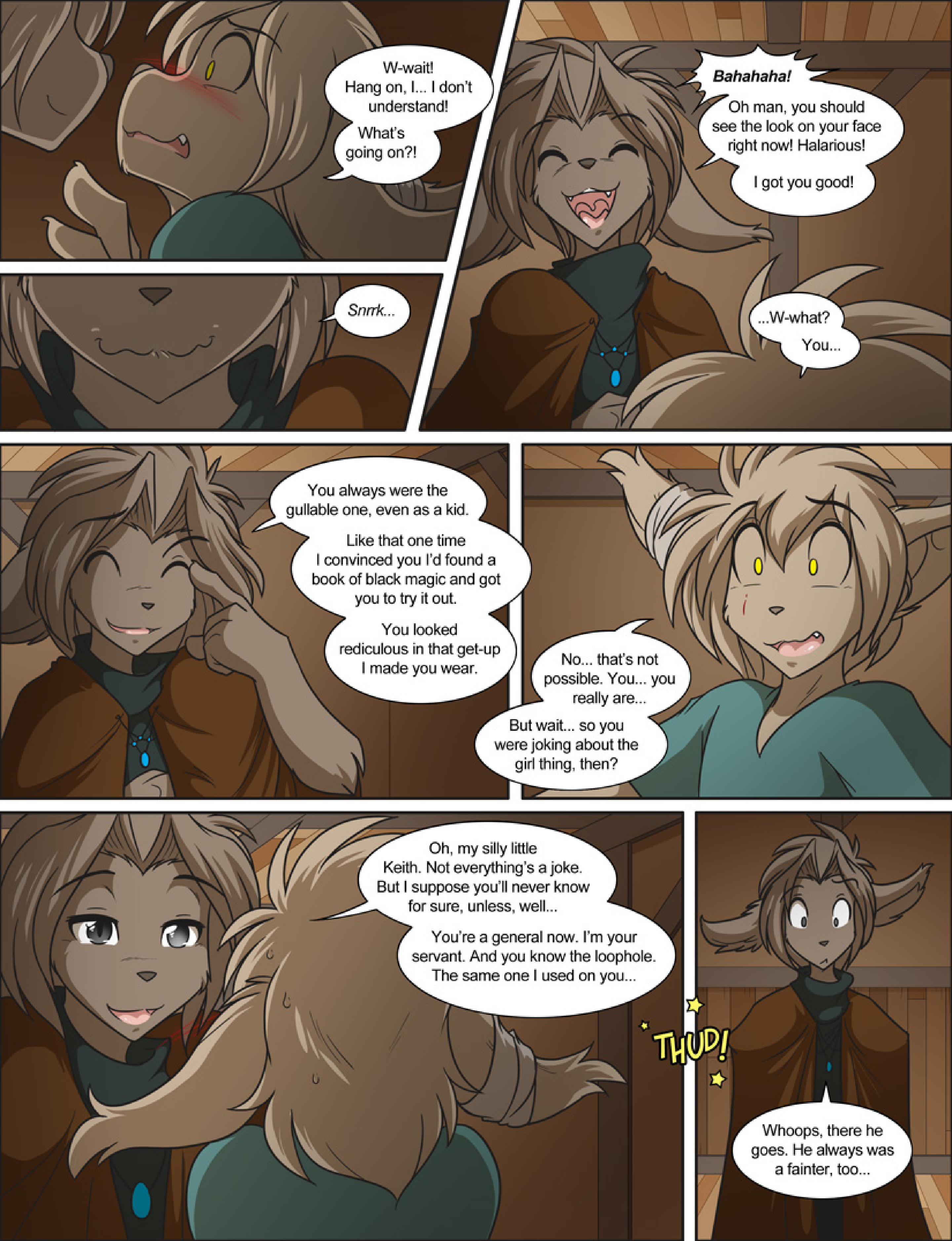

Erg! Just... need to... get...
Free–**waaah!**
FLUUUMPH!
Mmmrph?
. . . .
...Hi Keith.
Hullo, Natani.
I'm in your bed, aren't I?
Yes, Natani. Yes you are.
Right. Sorry. Don't suppose we can pretend this never happened?
Like usual? Eh, it's alright, no harm done.
Save for my poor ear...
And anyway, I appreciate you being here.
I... I was in a real bad way after... well, you know. So, thanks. I needed this.
Oh... sure, no problem.
I'm glad I could help.
Now, I think what I could really use is a long bath.
Uuh...
Ngh!
Huh? Keith!

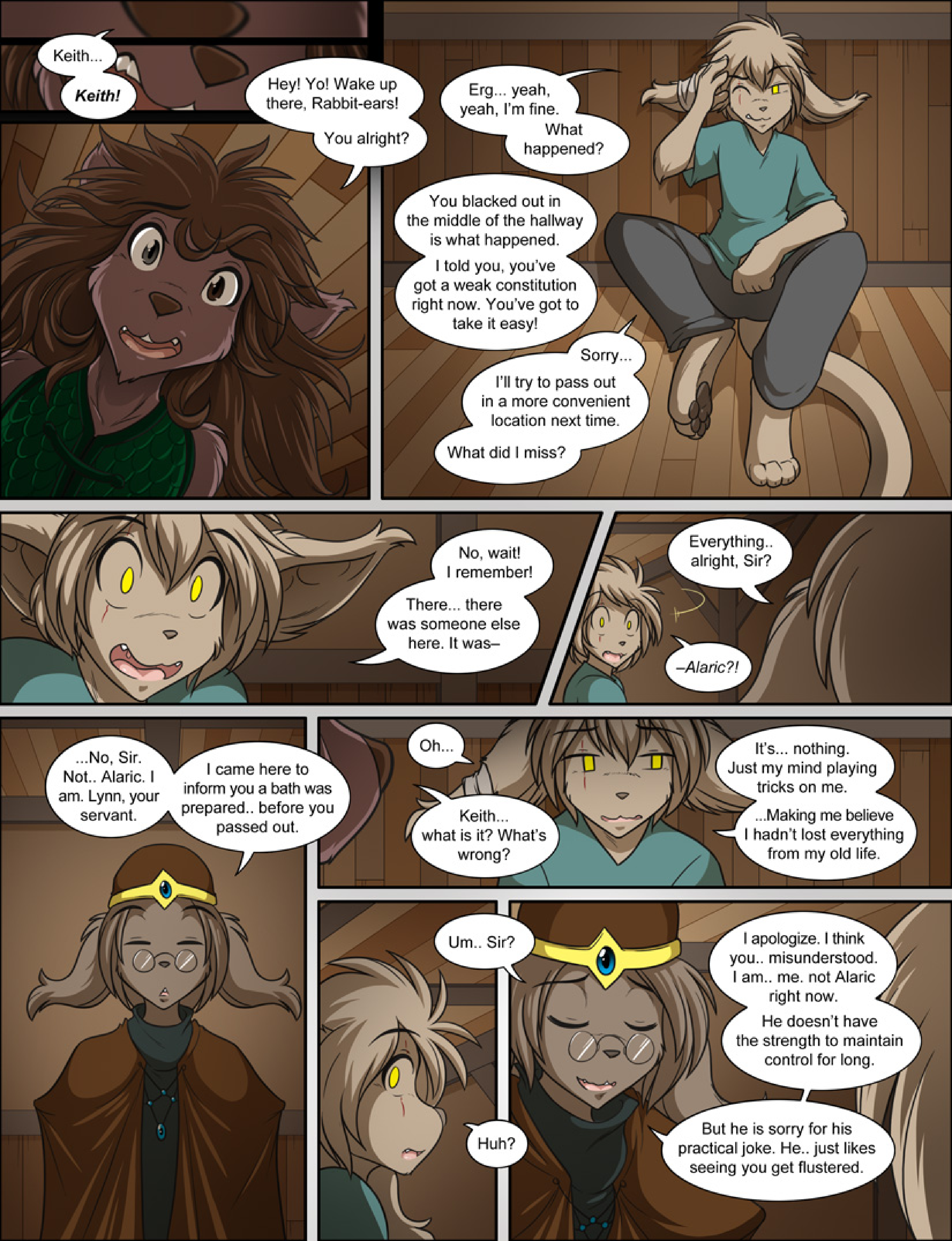

Hey, take it easy!
Urgh... I feel weak.
Of course you do!
I wasn't kidding when I said that spell was killing you.
I felt fine earlier.
Your body was likely still numb to the damage. Now that you've had a chance to rest, it's catching up with you.
I doubt it's permanent, but you're probably going to feel like crap for a couple days.
...*Great*...
BOOP!
Hey! You cut that out right now!
Huh?
Stop kicking yourself like you always do. You'll be fine, alright?
And in the meantime, you've got me to lean on. So cheer up, that's an order!
You know, now that I'm a general I don't take orders from anyone but my king.
Well then, General Keiser, you'd better start calling me king, because I'm taking care of you whether you like it or not.
...Heh.
I guess you're tall enough.
Sigh...
Alright, then, *Your Highness*.
I'll try.
Good. Now come on, soldier. Let's go.

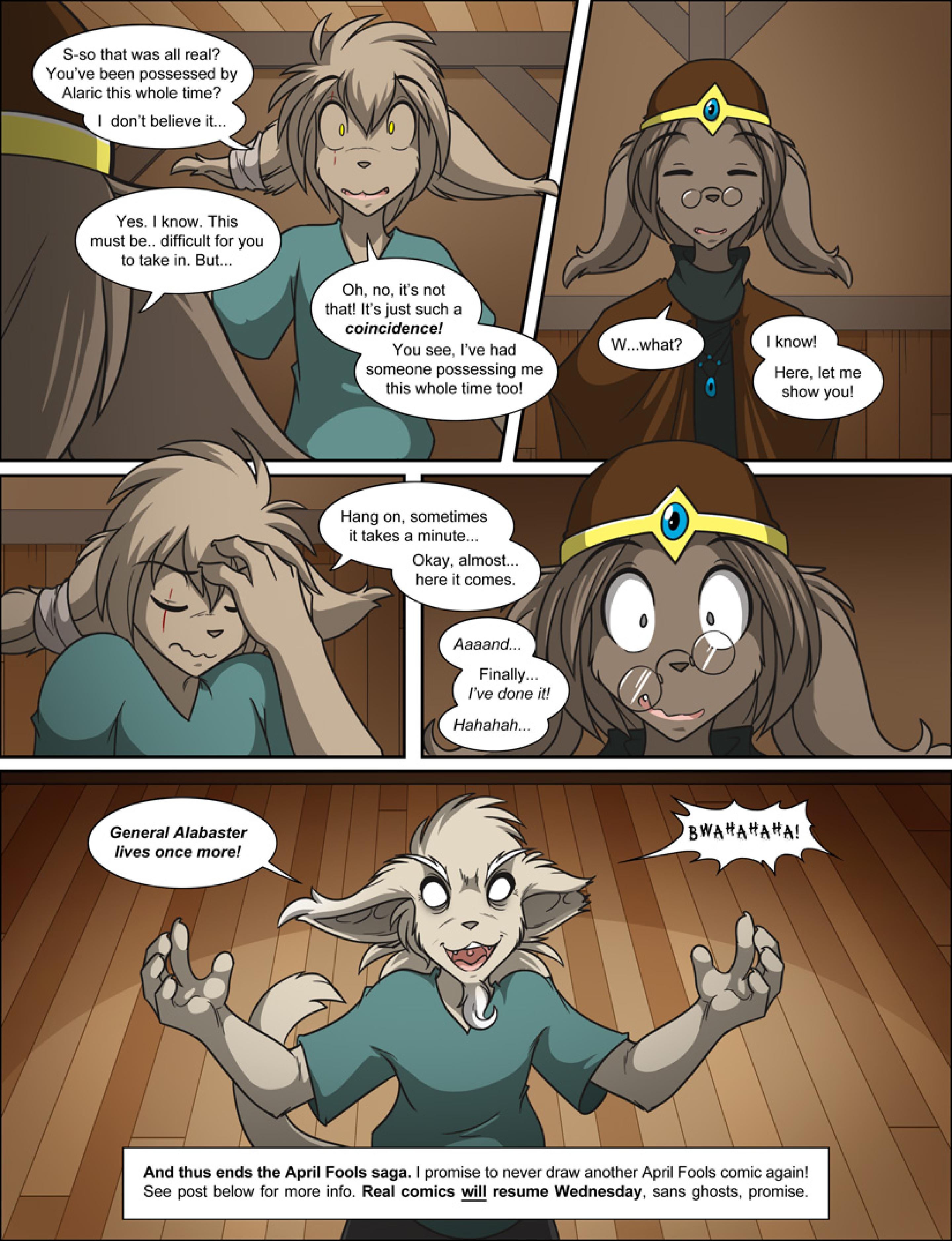

Ack! There they are. Don't look, don't look!
Oh, my... Keith and Natani...
I mean, I should have figured. after the whole bath incident.
But still. They both just seemed so... *prudish!*
And so soon after Laura... well, everyone grieves differently, I suppose.
I wonder what Trace will think of this?
No, no, no! Bad Flora!
Don't gossip about your friends!
Keith and Natani are both shy. If they haven't said yet, then they probably don't want people to know.
I certainly wouldn't want people gossiping about me, especially now that they know...
Hey! Watch it, Sister!
Comin' through!
Oh, sorry!
MAGICAL ARTIFACTS
PROPERTY OF ERIC VAUGHAN
BASITIN RUM
Hey wait, what are you two up to?
Uh...
Nothin'.


Stop right there, wolf!
Huh?!
I thank you for your help, but I'll be taking things from here!
Who the heck is that?! Where did he come from?
I am Keith's assigned manservant. And as such, it is my duty to take care of him.
I've already taken the liberty of preparing a bath for him.
Besides, this wouldn't be the first time I've bathed with him.
What are you talking about? "Wouldn't be the first time"?
We've hardly known each other.
Hmhmhm...
Oh, Keith, I thought for sure by now you'd see through my ruse...
I know you only met Lynn once before, but didn't you notice? The lack of speech impediment? The difference in appearance?
The grey eyes...
No... no, that's not possible. You... you're....
Dead?
Only mostly.

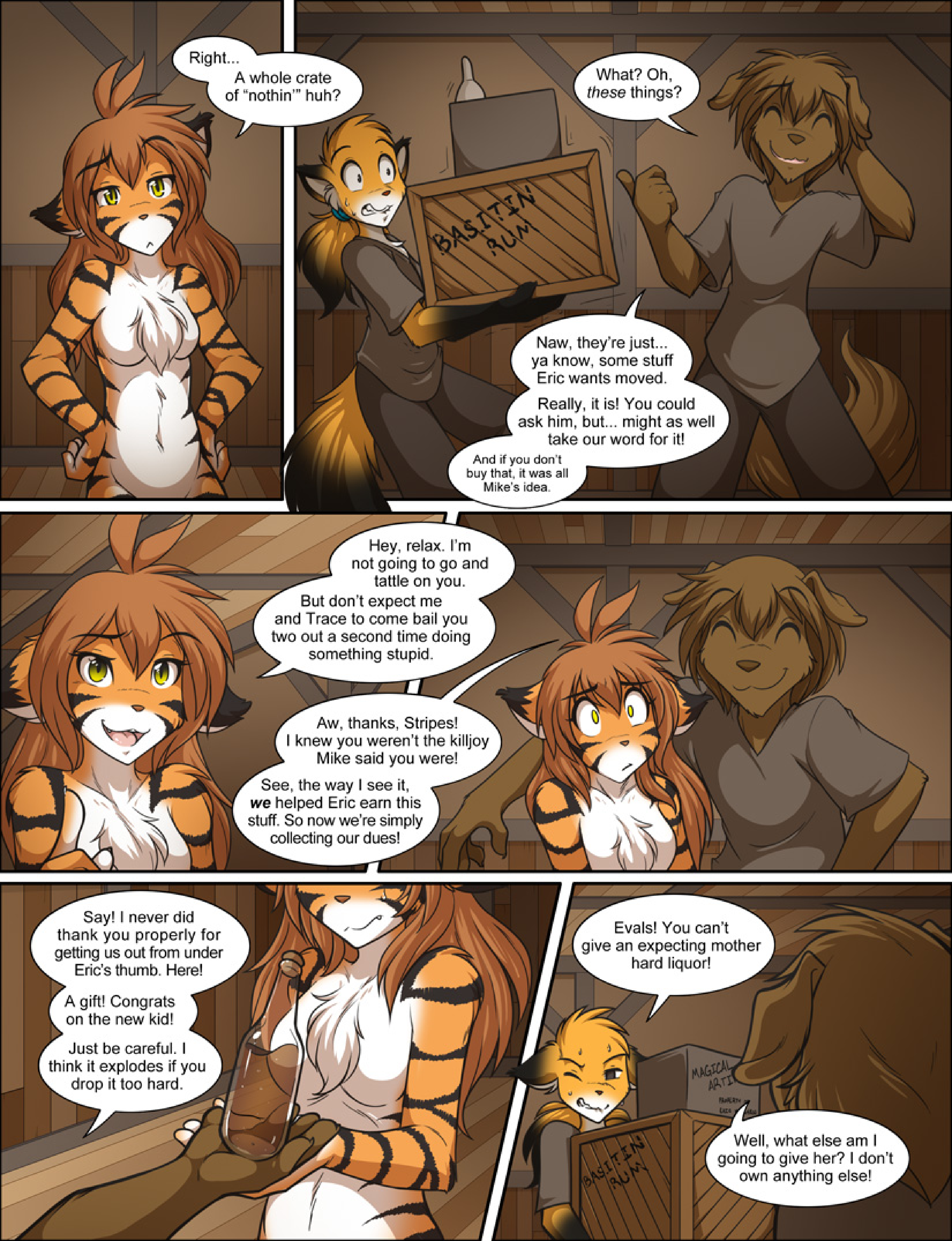

No! You can't be Alaric! I saw! I saw you fall on the bridge! You were killed!
Yes. It's true. I did fall and I did die.
But not before I saw the light of the tower as it burned away all the magic on the island.
I died ***after*** the tower fell. Like Laura, when my spirit left my body, it had nowhere to go. But unlike Laura, I had my faithful servant, Lynn.
Lynn, ever loyal, agreed to serve as my vessel, and snuck aboard your ship at my behest.
However, it took me until today to finally gain enough strength to act for myself.
T-then... what about...
Not to worry! Lynn is fine.
This possession is completely voluntary, and I've sworn to leave her body the moment my presence is no longer desired.
W-wait! "Her" body?!
Oh, don't worry... I'm still the same guy where it counts. and now we're together once again.
BFFs, right?

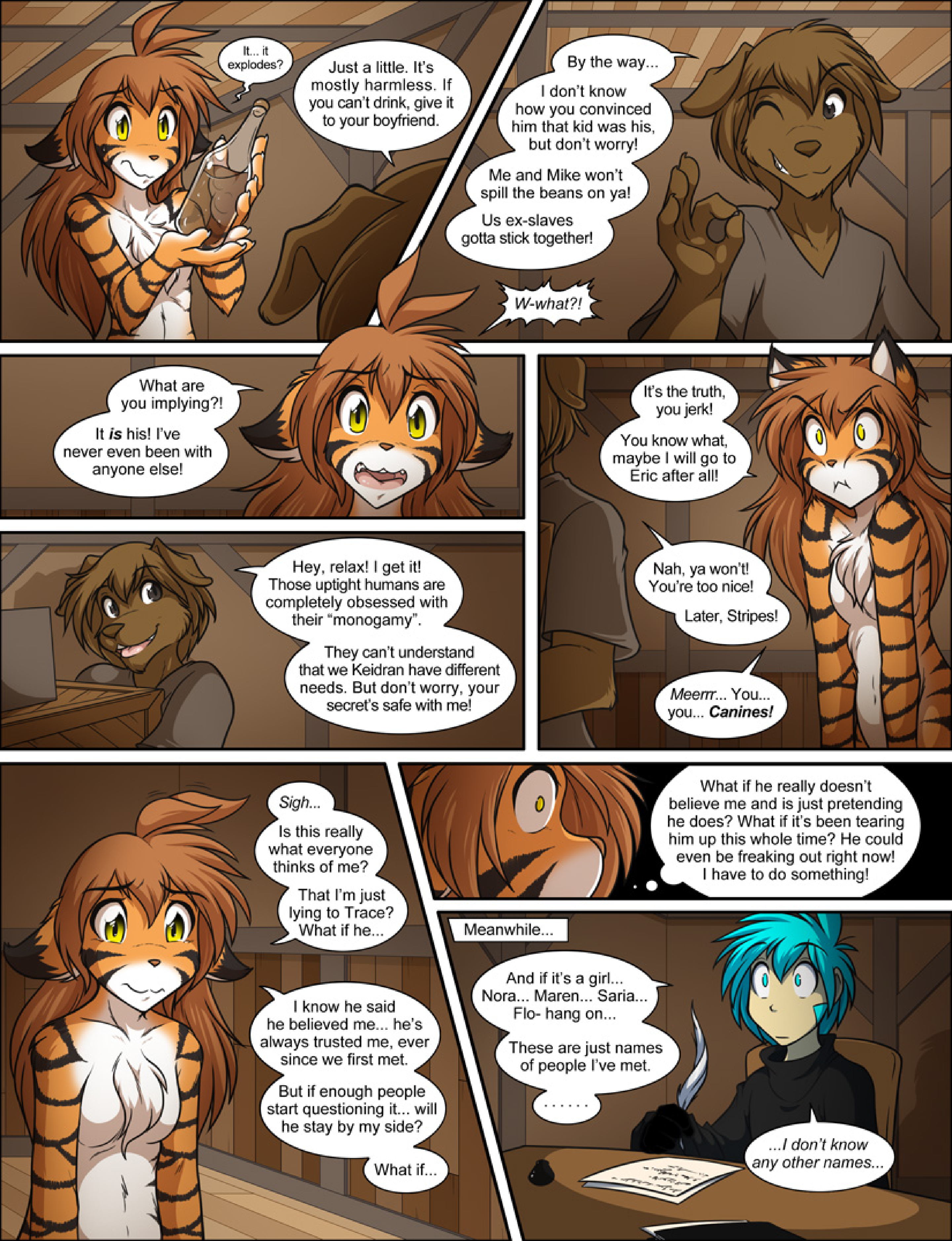

W-wait! Hang on, I... I don't understand!
What's going on?!
Snrrk...
Bahahaha!
Oh man, you should see the look on your face right now! Halarious!
I got you good!
...W-what?
You...
You always were the gullable one, even as a kid.
Like that one time I convinced you I'd found a book of black magic and got you to try it out.
You looked rediculous in that get-up I made you wear.
No... that's not possible. You... you really are...
But wait... so you were joking about the girl thing, then?
Oh, my silly little Keith. Not everything's a joke. But I suppose you'll never know for sure, unless, well...
You're a general now. I'm your servant. And you know the loophole. The same one I used on you...
THUD!
Whoops, there he goes. He always was a fainter, too...

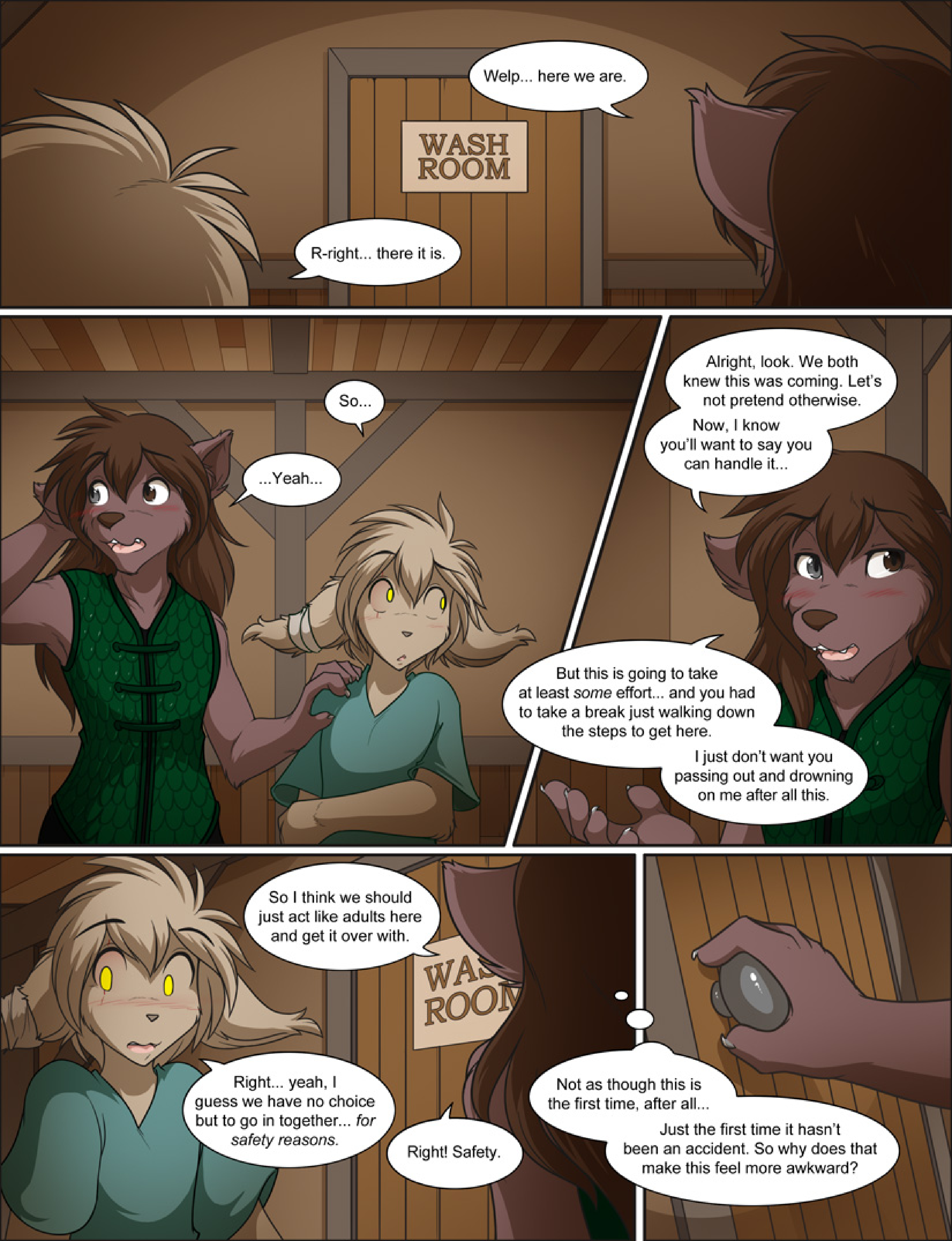

Keith...
Keith!
Hey! Yo! Wake up there, Rabbit-ears!
You alright?
Erg... yeah, yeah, I'm fine.
What happened?
You blacked out in the middle of the hallway is what happened.
I told you, you've got a weak constitution right now. You've got to take it easy!
Sorry...
I'll try to pass out in a more convenient location next time.
What did I miss?
No, wait! I remember!
There... there was someone else here. It was–
Everything.. alright, Sir?
–Alaric?!
...No, Sir. Not.. Alaric. I am. Lynn, your servant.
I came here to inform you a bath was prepared.. before you passed out.
Oh...
Keith... what is it? What's wrong?
It's... nothing. Just my mind playing tricks on me.
...Making me believe I hadn't lost everything from my old life.
Um.. Sir?
Huh?
I apologize. I think you.. misunderstood. I am.. me. not Alaric right now.
He doesn't have the strength to maintain control for long.
But he is sorry for his practical joke. He.. just likes seeing you get flustered.


S-so that was all real? You've been possessed by Alaric this whole time?
I don't believe it...
Yes. I know. This must be.. difficult for you to take in. But...
Oh, no, it's not that! It's just such a ***coincidence!***
You see, I've had someone possessing me this whole time too!
W...what?
I know!
Here, let me show you!
Hang on, sometimes it takes a minute...
Okay, almost... here it comes.
Aaaand...
Finally... *I've done it!*
Hahahah...
General Alabaster lives once more!
BWAHAHAHA!

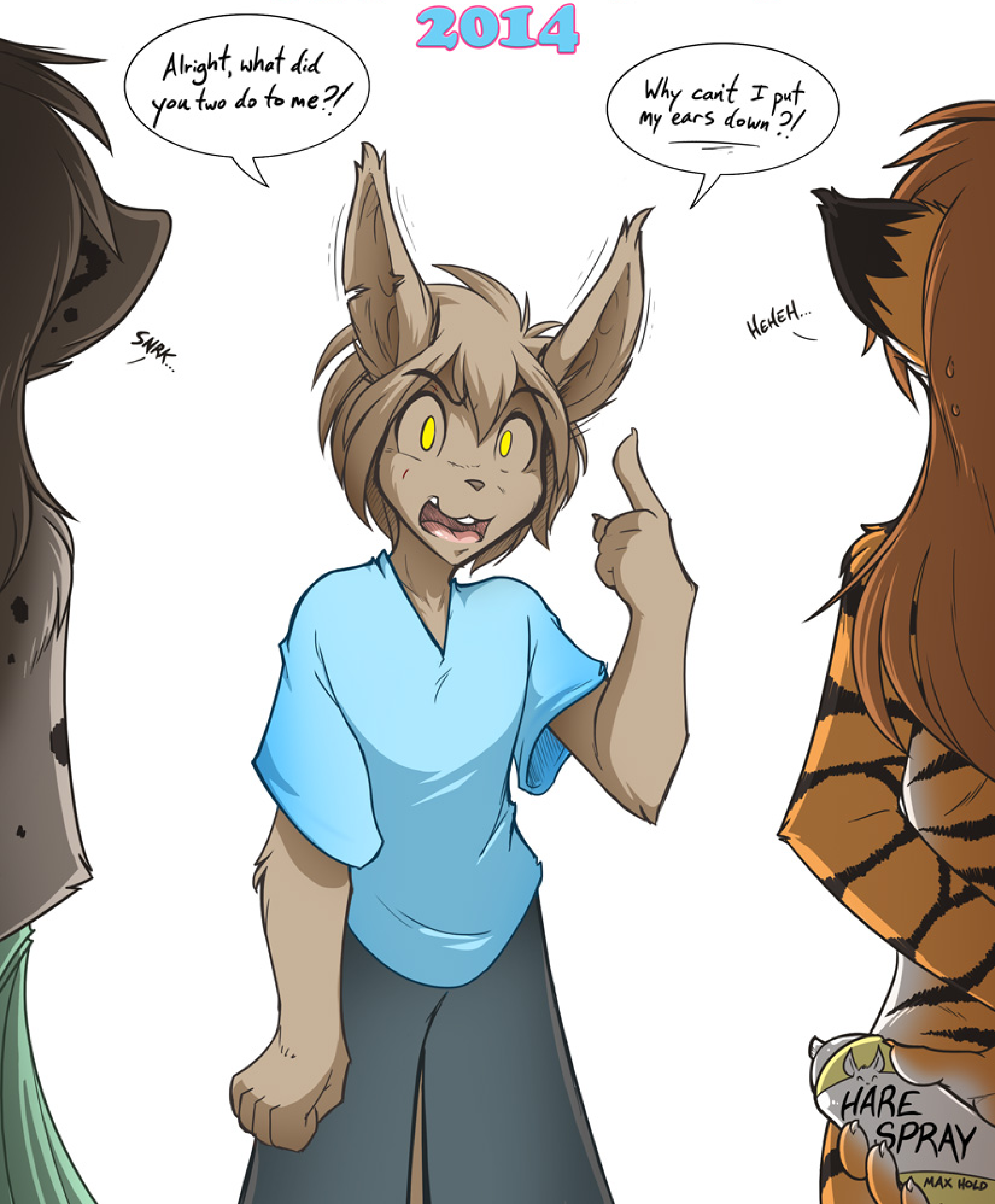
And thus ends the April Fools saga. I promise to never draw another April Fools comic again! See post below for more info. **Real comics will resume Wednesday**, sans ghosts, promise.

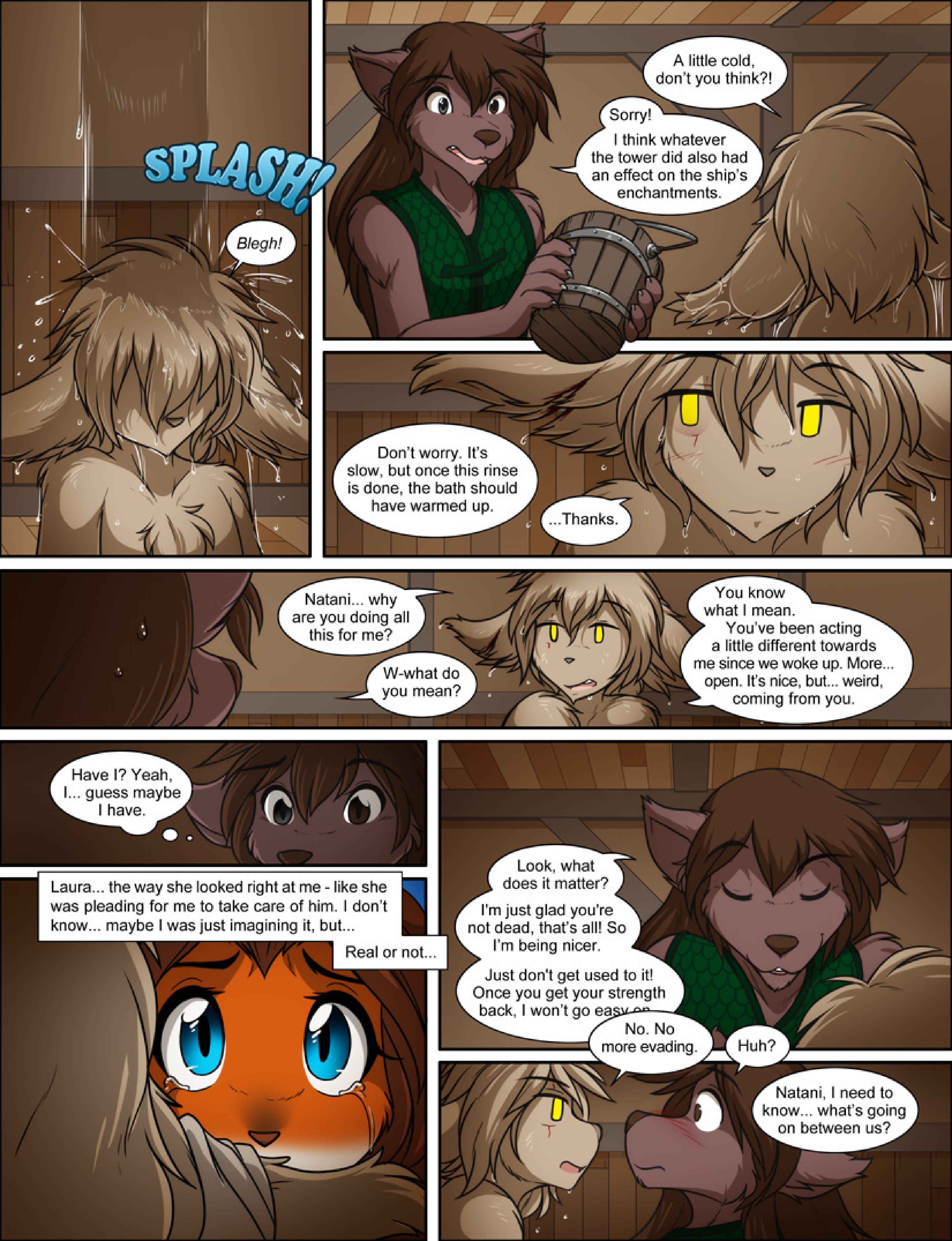

Right... A whole crate of "nothin'" huh?
What? Oh, *these* things?
BASITIN RUM
Naw, they're just... ya know, some stuff Eric wants moved.
Really, it is! You could ask him, but... might as well take our word for it!
And if you don't buy that, it was all Mike's idea.
Hey, relax. I'm not going to go and tattle on you.
But don't expect me and Trace to come bail you two out a second time doing something stupid.
Aw, thanks, Stripes! I knew you weren't the killjoy Mike said you were!
See, the way I see it, ***we*** helped Eric earn this stuff. So now we're simply collecting our dues!
Say! I never did thank you properly for getting us out from under Eric's thumb. Here!
A gift! Congrats on the new kid!
Just be careful. I think it explodes if you drop it too hard.
Evals! You can't give an expecting mother hard liquor!
MAGICAL ARTI
BASITIN RUM
Well, what else am I going to give her? I don't own anything else!

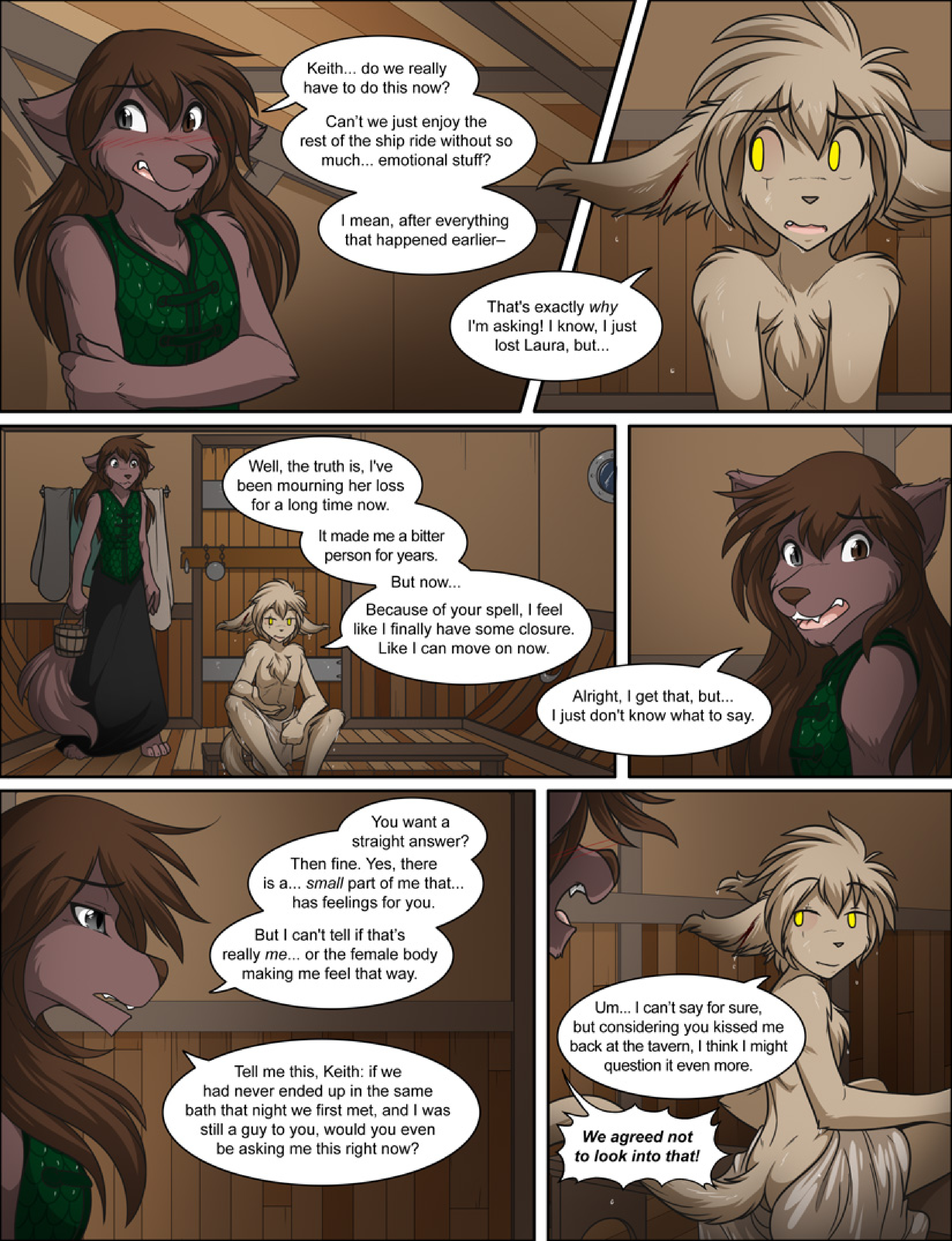

It... it explodes?
Just a little. It's mostly harmless. If you can't drink, give it to your boyfriend.
By the way...
I don't know how you convinced him that kid was his, but don't worry!
Me and Mike won't spill the beans on ya!
Us ex-slaves gotta stick together!
W-what?!
What are you implying?!
It ***is*** his! I've never even been with anyone else!
Hey, relax! I get it! Those uptight humans are completely obsessed with their "monogamy".
They can't understand that we Keidran have different needs. But don't worry, your secret's safe with me!
It's the truth, you jerk!
You know what, maybe I will go to Eric after all!
Nah, ya won't! You're too nice!
Later, Stripes!
Meerrr... You... you... ***Canines!***
Sigh...
Is this really what everyone thinks of me?
That I'm just lying to Trace? What if he...
I know he said he believed me... he's always trusted me, ever since we first met.
But if enough people start questioning it... will he stay by my side?
What if...
What if he really doesn't believe me and is just pretending he does? What if it's been tearing him up this whole time? He could even be freaking out right now! I have to do something!
Meanwhile...
And if it's a girl... Nora... Maren... Saria... Flo- hang on...
These are just names of people I've met.
. . . . . .
...I don't know any other names...

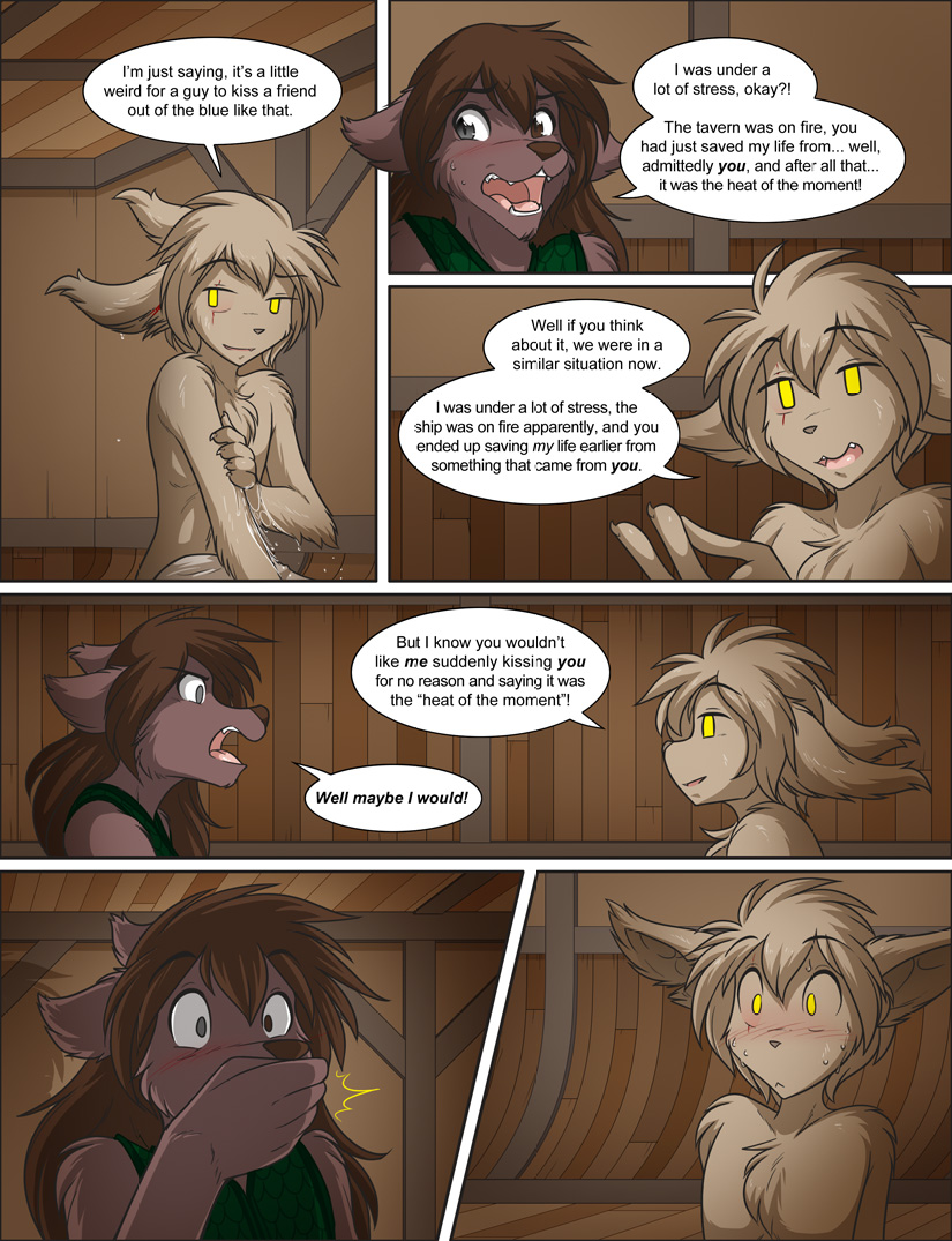

WASH ROOM
Welp... here we are.
R-right... there it is.
So...
...Yeah...
Alright, look. We both knew this was coming. Let's not pretend otherwise.
Now, I know you'll want to say you can handle it...
But this is going to take at least *some* effort... and you had to take a break just walking down the steps to get here.
I just don't want you passing out and drowning on me after all this.
So I think we should just act like adults here and get it over with.
WASH ROOM
Right... yeah, I guess we have no choice but to go in together... *for safety reasons.*
Right! Safety.
Not as though this is the first time, after all...
Just the first time it hasn't been an accident. So why does that make this feel more awkward?

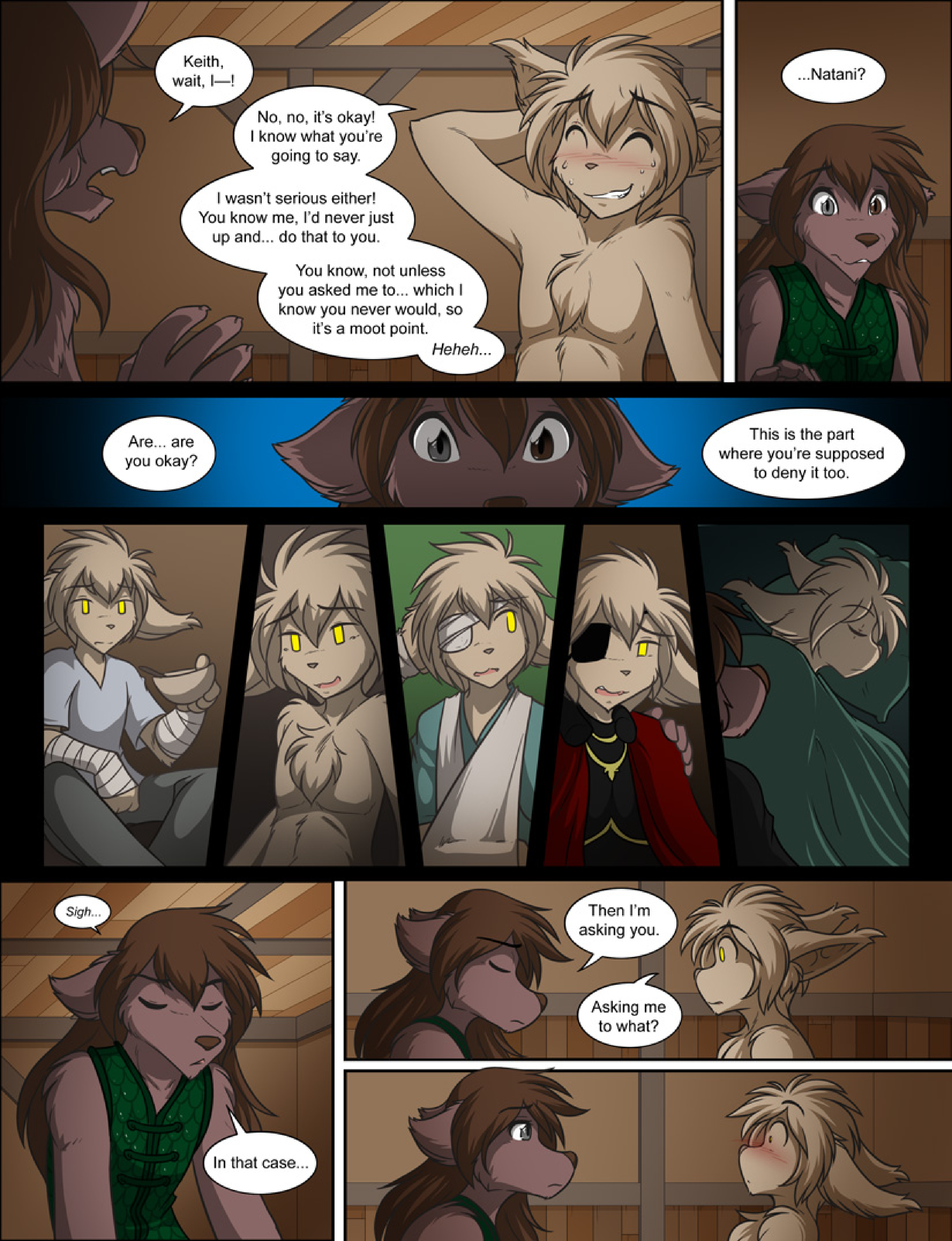
Happy Bunny Day!
2014

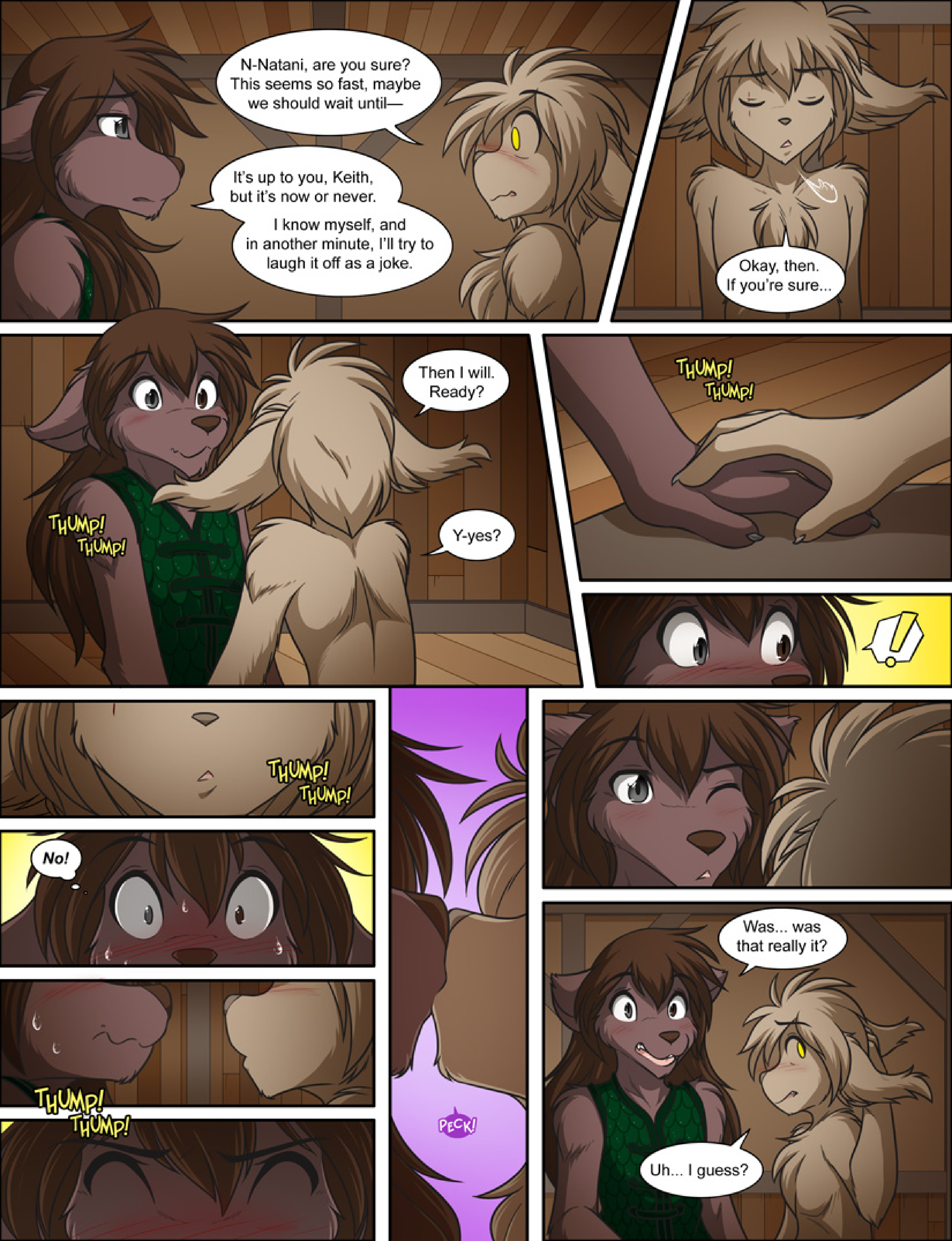

Alright, what did you two do to me?!
Why can't I put my ears down?!
SNRK...
HEHEH...
HARE SPRAY
MAX HOLD

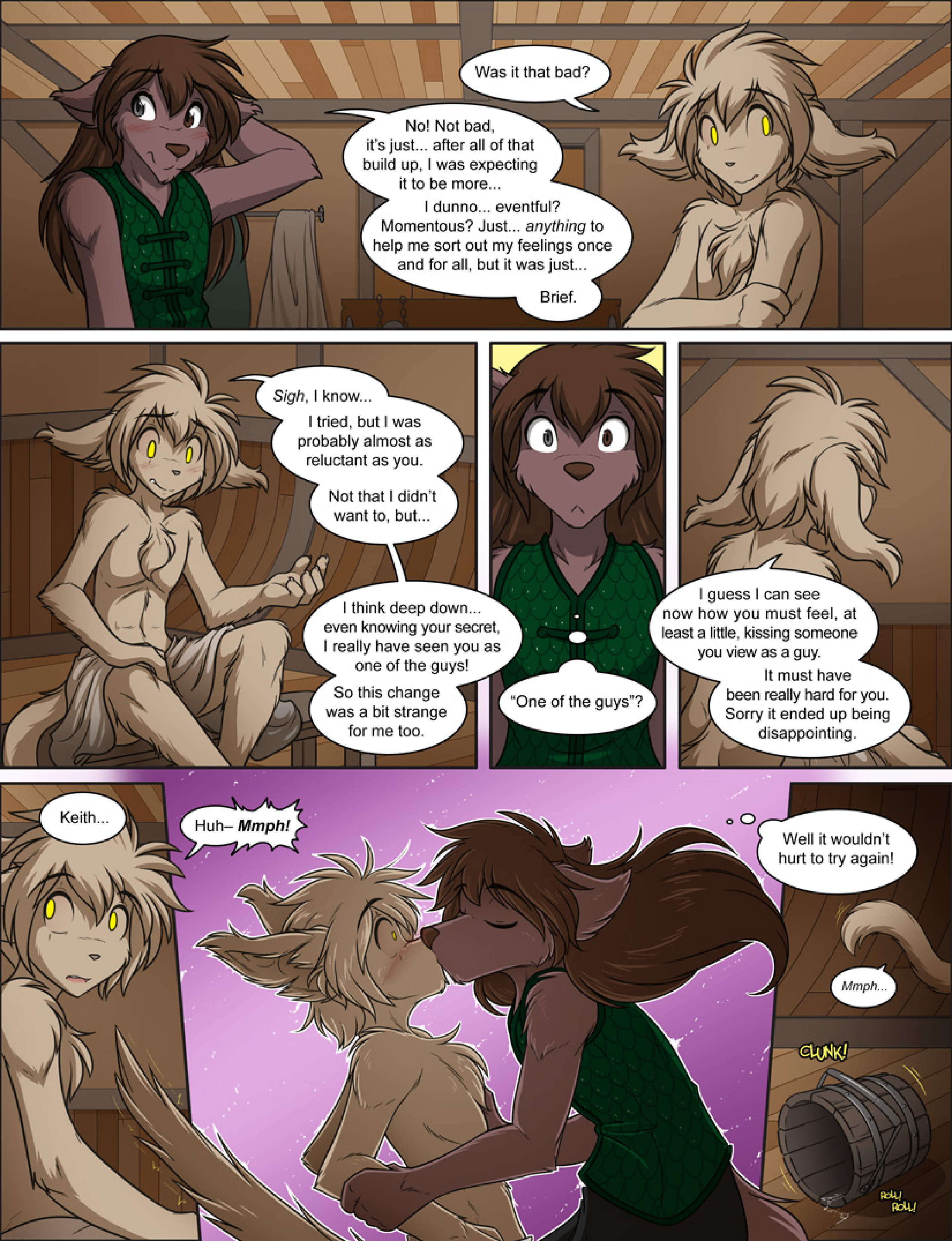

SPLASH!
Blegh!
A little cold, don't you think?!
Sorry!
I think whatever the tower did also had an effect on the ship's enchantments.
Don't worry. It's slow, but once this rinse is done, the bath should have warmed up.
...Thanks.
Natani... why are you doing all this for me?
W-what do you mean?
You know what I mean. You've been acting a little different towards me since we woke up. More... open. It's nice, but... weird, coming from you.
Have I? Yeah, I... guess maybe I have.
Laura... the way she looked right at me - like she was pleading for me to take care of him. I don't know... maybe I was just imagining it, but...
Real or not...
Look, what does it matter?
I'm just glad you're not dead, that's all! So I'm being nicer.
Just don't get used to it! Once you get your strength back, I won't go easy on
No. No more evading.
Huh?
Natani, I need to know... what's going on between us?

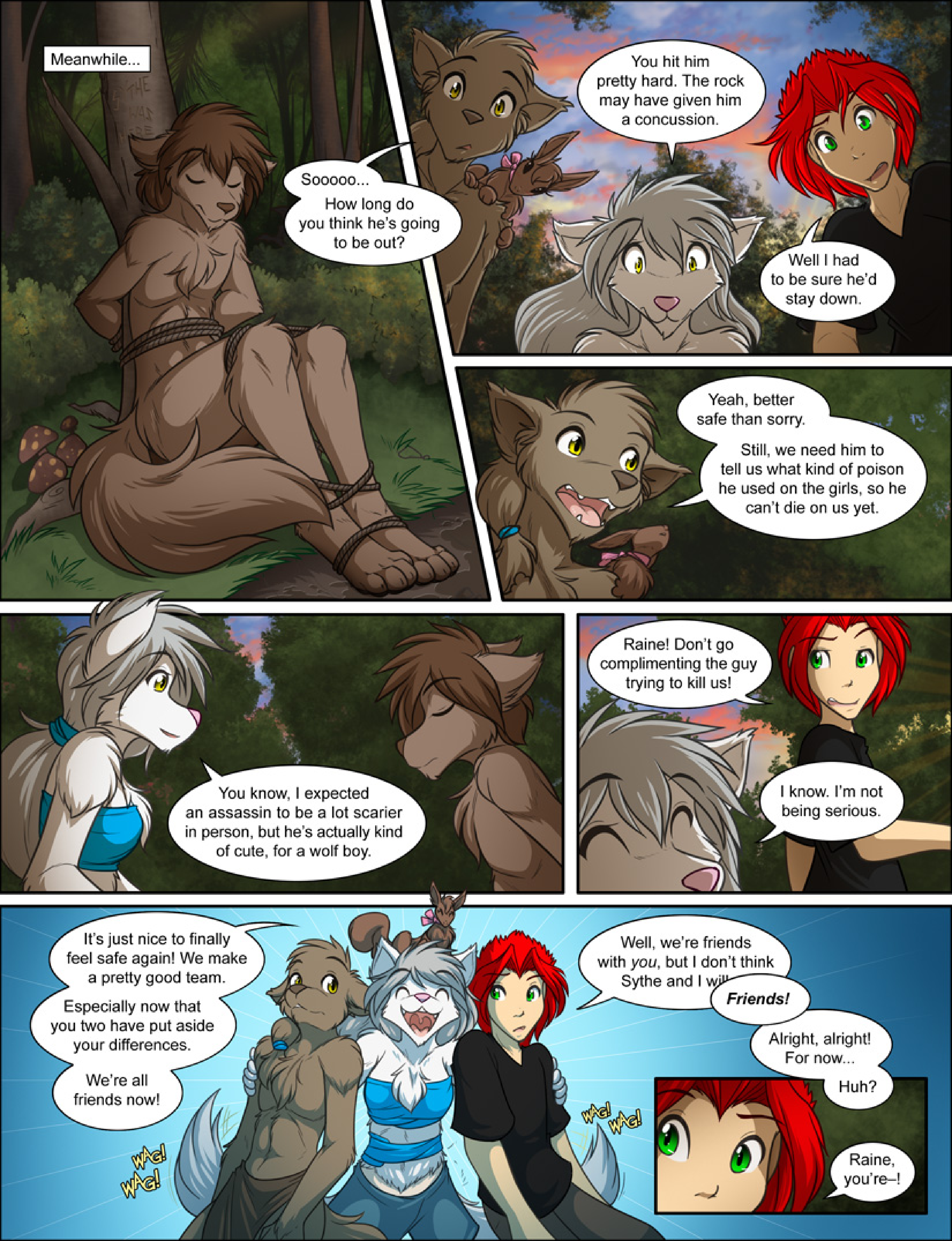

Keith... do we really have to do this now?
Can't we just enjoy the rest of the ship ride without so much... emotional stuff?
I mean, after everything that happened earlier–
That's exactly *why* I'm asking! I know, I just lost Laura, but...
Well, the truth is, I've been mourning her loss for a long time now.
It made me a bitter person for years.
But now...
Because of your spell, I feel like I finally have some closure. Like I can move on now.
Alright, I get that, but... I just don't know what to say.
You want a straight answer?
Then fine. Yes, there is a... *small* part of me that... has feelings for you.
But I can't tell if that's really *me*... or the female body making me feel that way.
Tell me this, Keith: if we had never ended up in the same bath that night we first met, and I was still a guy to you, would you even be asking me this right now?
Um... I can't say for sure, but considering you kissed me back at the tavern, I think I might question it even more.
We agreed not to look into that!

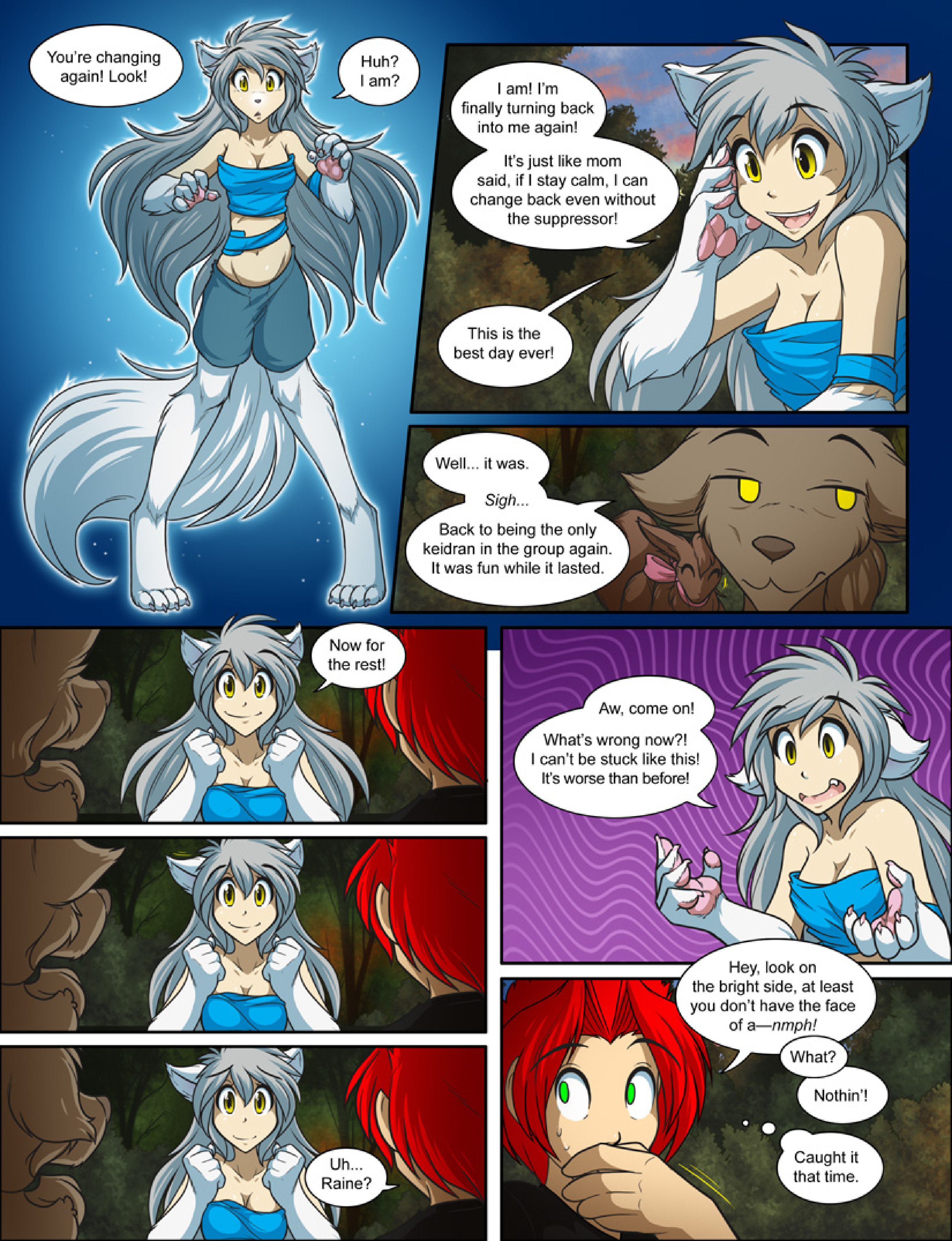

I'm just saying, it's a little weird for a guy to kiss a friend out of the blue like that.
I was under a lot of stress, okay?!
The tavern was on fire, you had just saved my life from... well, admittedly ***you***, and after all that... it was the heat of the moment!
Well if you think about it, we were in a similar situation now.
I was under a lot of stress, the ship was on fire apparently, and you ended up saving *my* life earlier from something that came from ***you***.
But I know you wouldn't like ***me*** suddenly kissing ***you*** for no reason and saying it was the "heat of the moment"!
Well maybe I would!


Keith, wait, I—!
No, no, it's okay! I know what you're going to say.
I wasn't serious either! You know me, I'd never just up and... do that to you.
You know, not unless you asked me to... which I know you never would, so it's a moot point.
Heheh...
...Natani?
Are... are you okay?
This is the part where you're supposed to deny it too.
Sigh...
In that case...
Then I'm asking you.
Asking me to what?

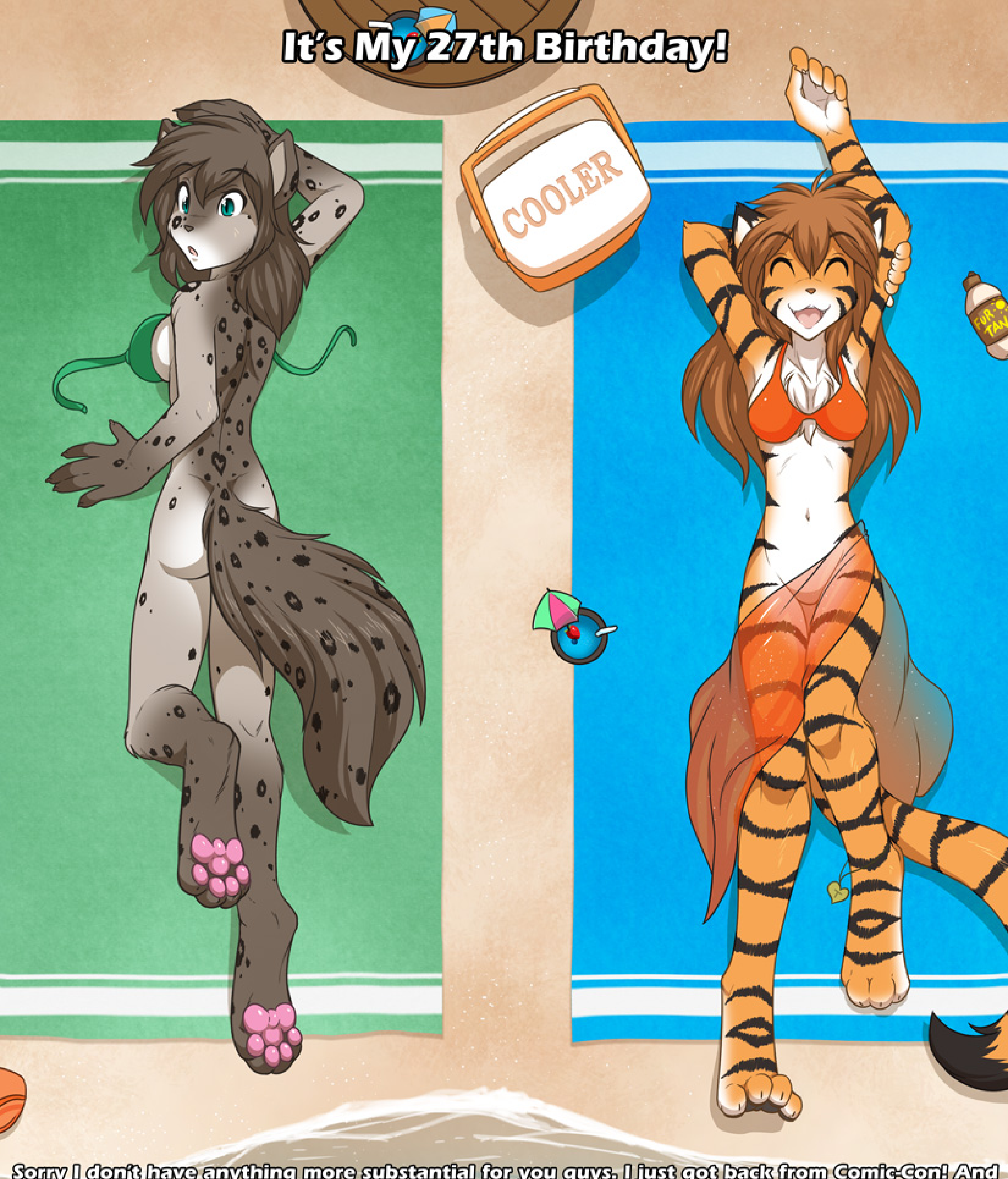

N-Natani, are you sure? This seems so fast, maybe we should wait until—
It's up to you, Keith, but it's now or never.
I know myself, and in another minute, I'll try to laugh it off as a joke.
Okay, then. If you're sure...
Then I will. Ready?
Y-yes?
THUMP! THUMP!
THUMP! THUMP!
!
THUMP! THUMP!
No!
THUMP! THUMP!
PECK!
Was... was that really it?
Uh... I guess?


Was it that bad?
No! Not bad, it's just... after all of that build up, I was expecting it to be more...
I dunno... eventful? Momentous? Just... *anything* to help me sort out my feelings once and for all, but it was just...
Brief.
Sigh, I know...
I tried, but I was probably almost as reluctant as you.
Not that I didn't want to, but...
I think deep down... even knowing your secret, I really have seen you as one of the guys!
So this change was a bit strange for me too.
"One of the guys"?
I guess I can see now how you must feel, at least a little, kissing someone you view as a guy.
It must have been really hard for you. Sorry it ended up being disappointing.
Keith...
Huh– **Mmph!**
Well it wouldn't hurt to try again!
Mmph...
CLUNK!
ROLL! ROLL!

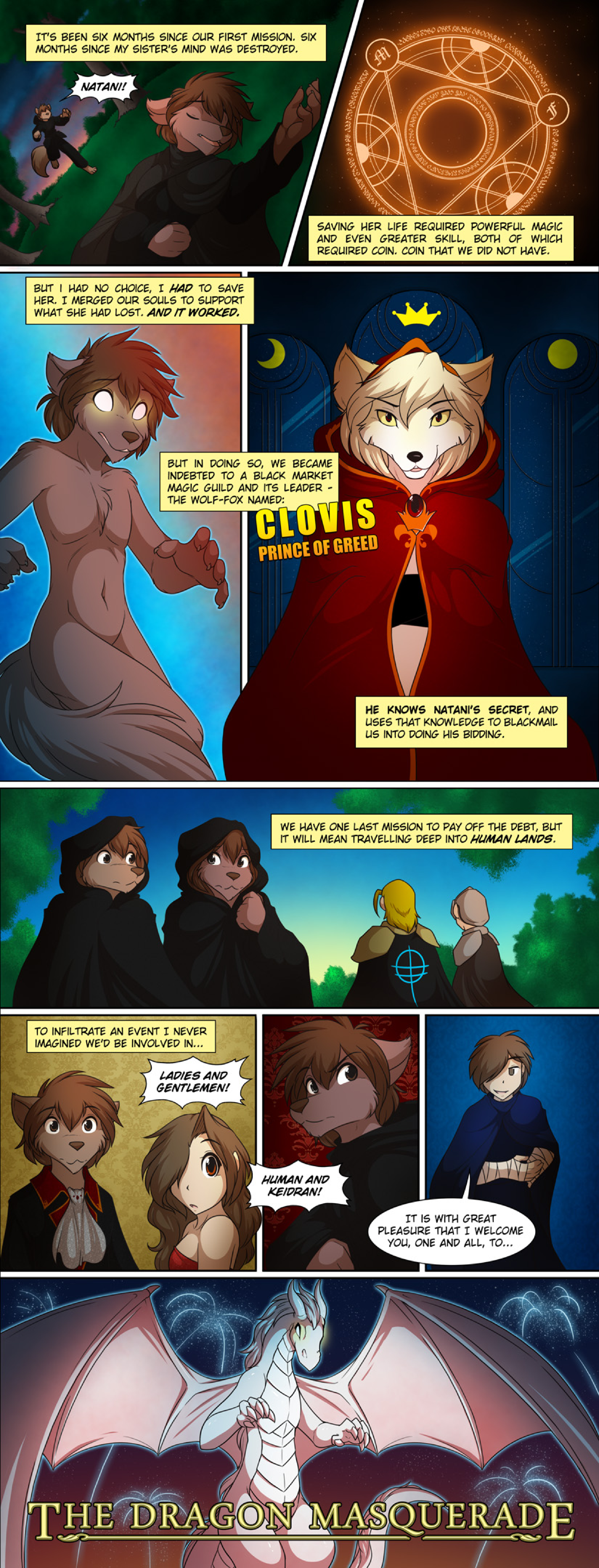

Meanwhile...
SYTHE WAS HERE
Sooooo...
How long do you think he's going to be out?
You hit him pretty hard. The rock may have given him a concussion.
Well I had to be sure he'd stay down.
Yeah, better safe than sorry.
Still, we need him to tell us what kind of poison he used on the girls, so he can't die on us yet.
You know, I expected an assassin to be a lot scarier in person, but he's actually kind of cute, for a wolf boy.
Raine! Don't go complimenting the guy trying to kill us!
I know. I'm not being serious.
It's just nice to finally feel safe again! We make a pretty good team.
Especially now that you two have put aside your differences.
We're all friends now!
WAG! WAG!
Well, we're friends with *you*, but I don't think Sythe and I wil
Friends!
Alright, alright! For now...
WAG! WAG!
Huh?
Raine, you're–!

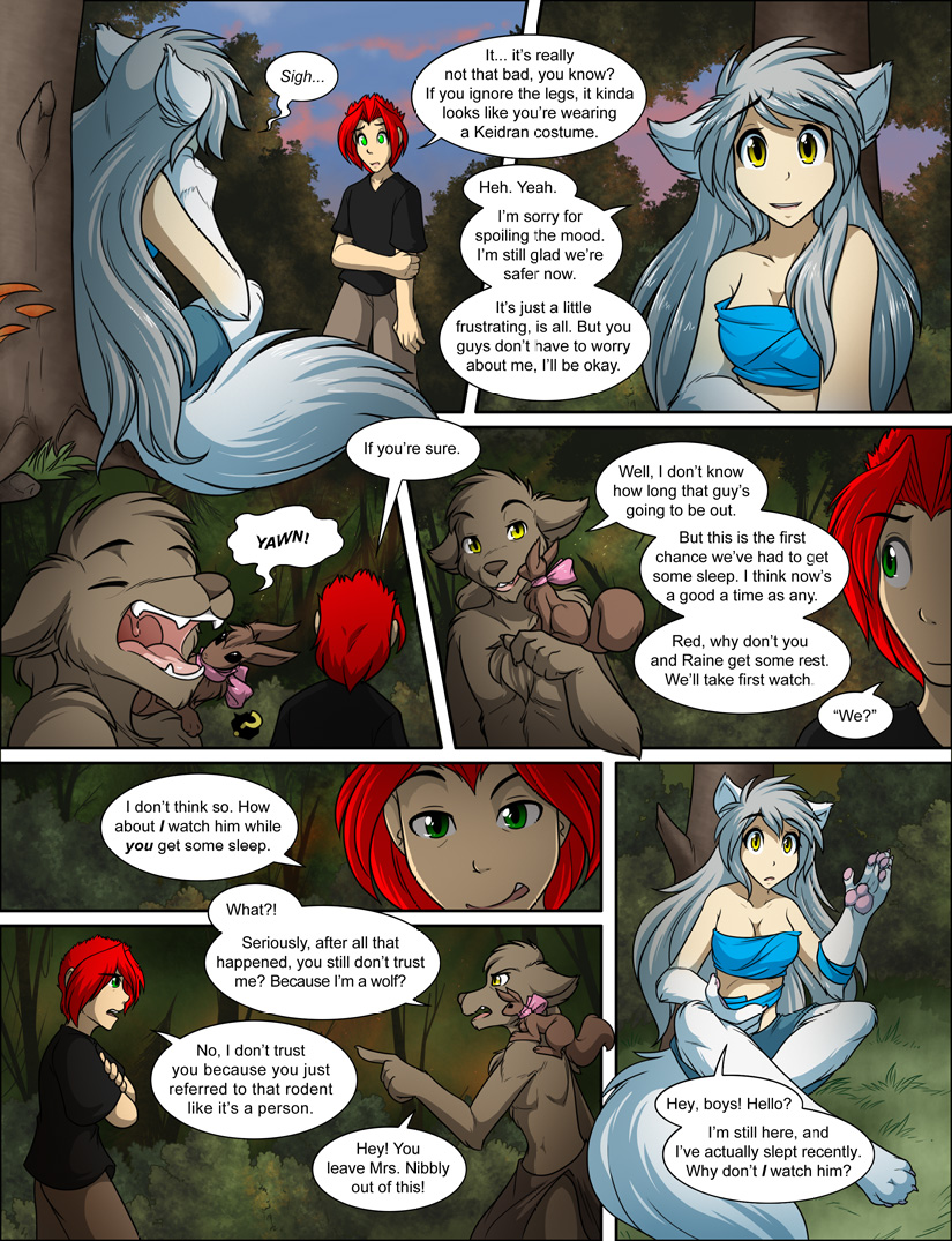

You're changing again! Look!
Huh? I am?
I am! I'm finally turning back into me again!
It's just like mom said, if I stay calm, I can change back even without the suppressor!
This is the best day ever!
Well... it was.
Sigh...
Back to being the only keidran in the group again. It was fun while it lasted.
Now for the rest!
Uh... Raine?
Aw, come on!
What's wrong now?! I can't be stuck like this! It's worse than before!
Hey, look on the bright side, at least you don't have the face of a—*nmph!*
What?
Nothin'!
Caught it that time.

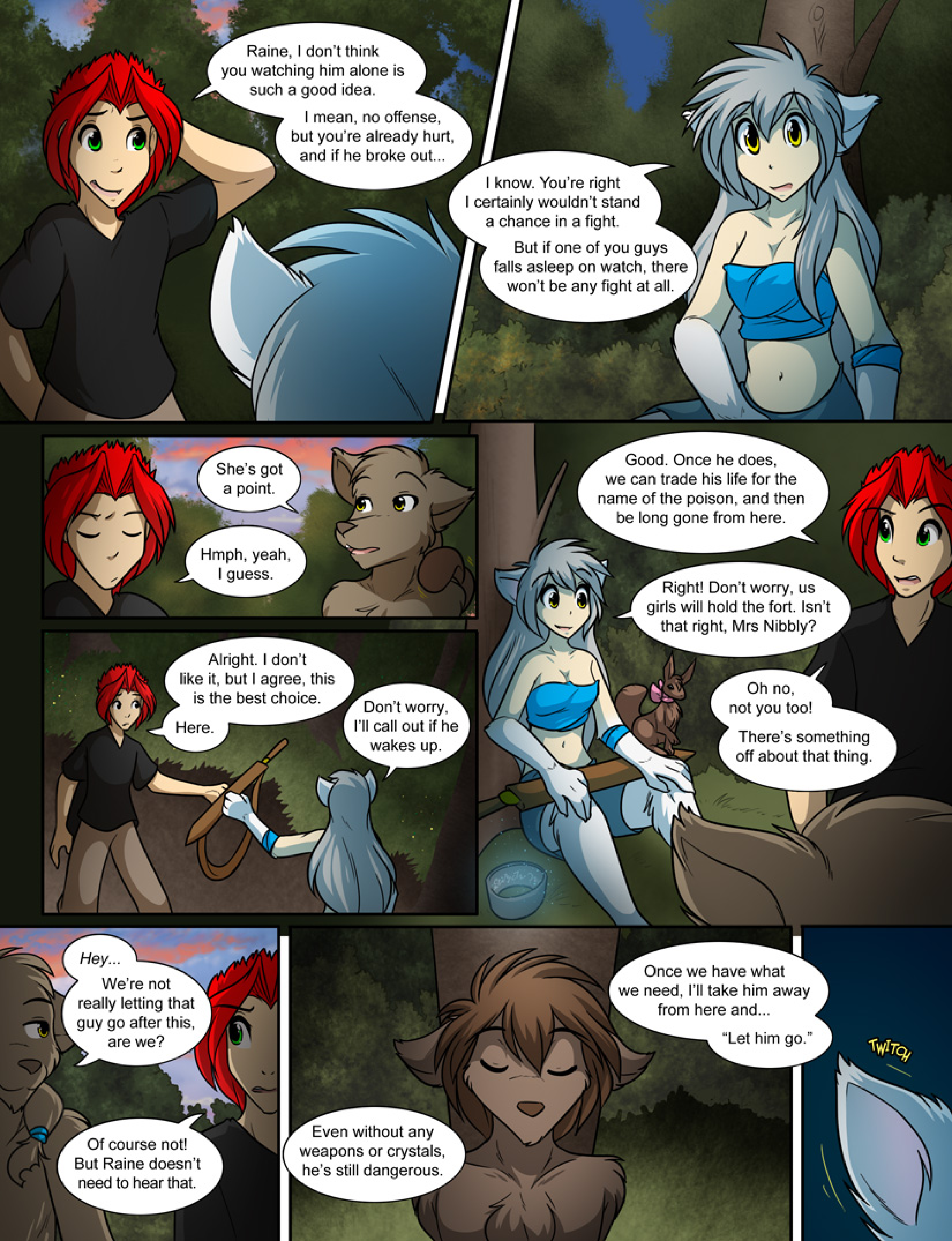
It's My 27th Birthday!

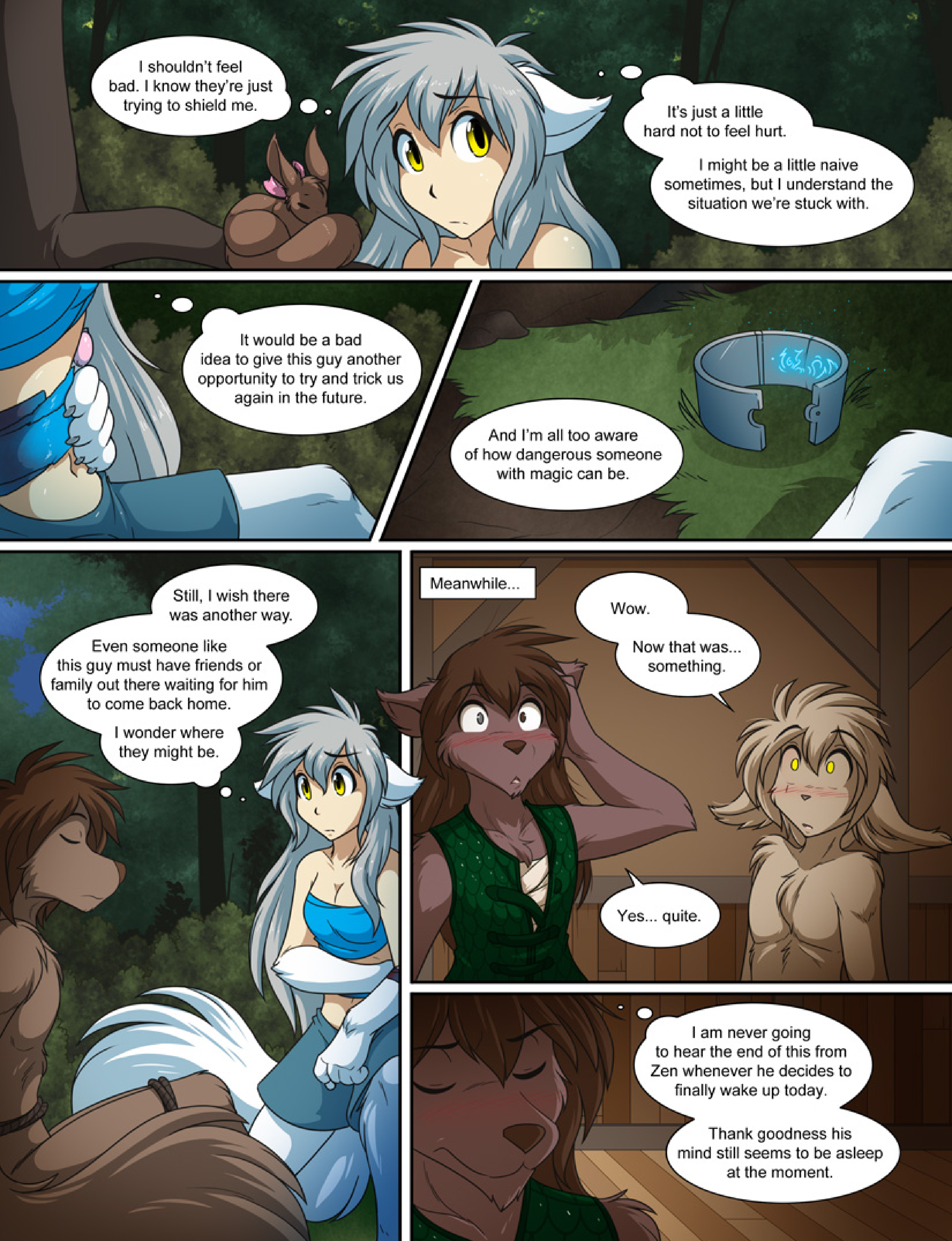


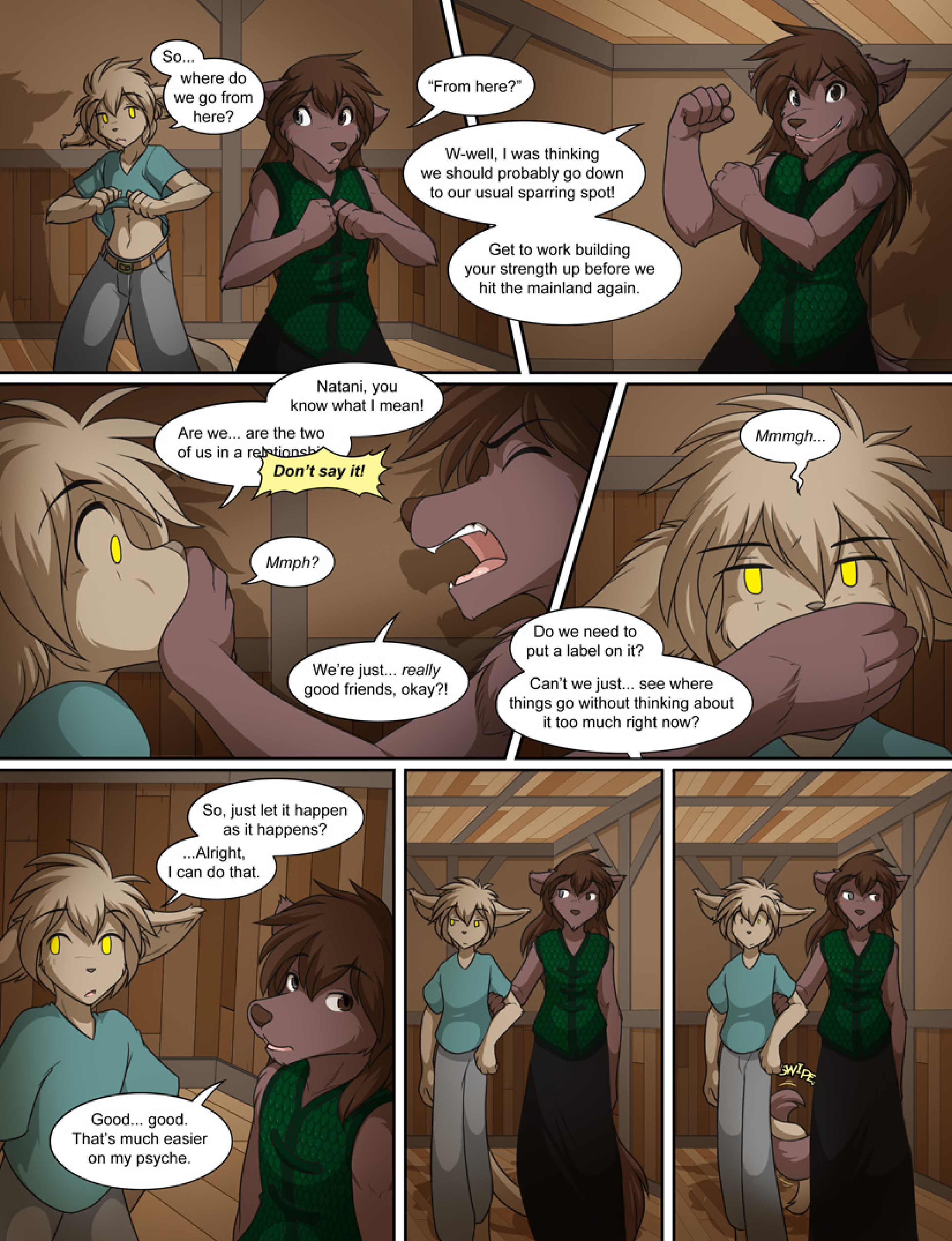
Sorry I don't have anything more substantial for you guys. I just got back from Comic-Con! And while it was a blast, I'm exhausted. Honestly, I'll probably be spending most of this birthday in bed. However, comics will resume again soon once I've recovered! In the meantime, if you'd like to get a gift for yourself, please check out the Dragon Masquerade if you haven't already! It's a big help to me and you'll get a whole book of Twokinds goodness in return! Okay, time for a nap now. –Tom

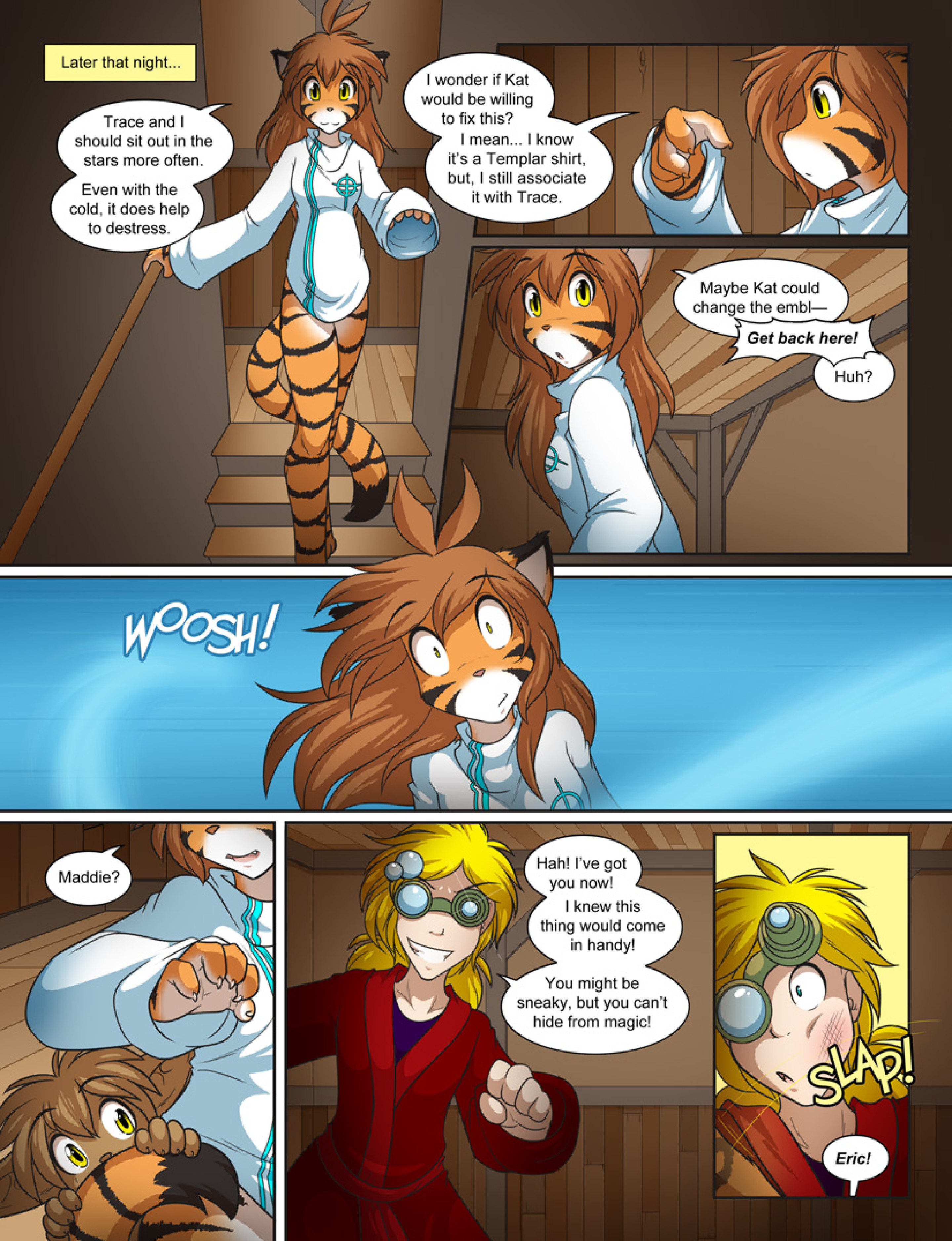

IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE OUR FIRST MISSION. SIX MONTHS SINCE MY SISTER'S MIND WAS DESTROYED.
NATANI!
M
F
SAVING HER LIFE REQUIRED POWERFUL MAGIC AND EVEN GREATER SKILL, BOTH OF WHICH REQUIRED COIN. COIN THAT WE DID NOT HAVE.
BUT I HAD NO CHOICE, I *HAD* TO SAVE HER. I MERGED OUR SOULS TO SUPPORT WHAT SHE HAD LOST. ***AND IT WORKED.***
BUT IN DOING SO, WE BECAME INDEBTED TO A BLACK MARKET MAGIC GUILD AND ITS LEADER - THE WOLF-FOX NAMED:
CLOVIS
PRINCE OF GREED
HE KNOWS NATANI'S SECRET, AND USES THAT KNOWLEDGE TO BLACKMAIL US INTO DOING HIS BIDDING.
WE HAVE ONE LAST MISSION TO PAY OFF THE DEBT, BUT IT WILL MEAN TRAVELLING DEEP INTO ***HUMAN LANDS***.
TO INFILTRATE AN EVENT I NEVER IMAGINED WE'D BE INVOLVED IN...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
HUMAN AND KEIDRAN!
IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I WELCOME YOU, ONE AND ALL, TO...
THE DRAGON MASQUERADE

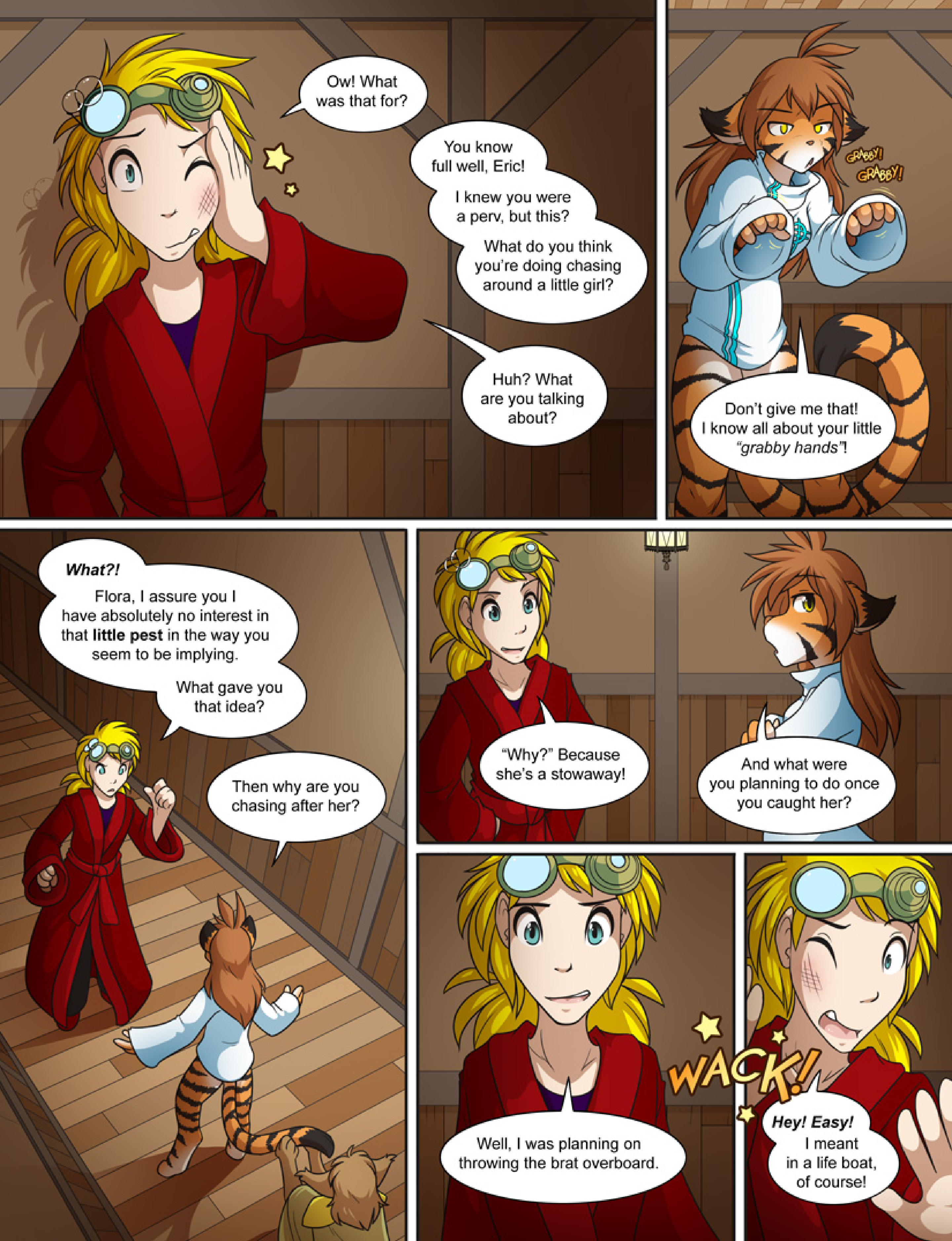

Sigh...
It... it's really not that bad, you know? If you ignore the legs, it kinda looks like you're wearing a Keidran costume.
Heh. Yeah.
I'm sorry for spoiling the mood. I'm still glad we're safer now.
It's just a little frustrating, is all. But you guys don't have to worry about me, I'll be okay.
If you're sure.
YAWN!
?
Well, I don't know how long that guy's going to be out.
But this is the first chance we've had to get some sleep. I think now's a good a time as any.
Red, why don't you and Raine get some rest. We'll take first watch.
"We?"
I don't think so. How about *I* watch him while *you* get some sleep.
What?!
Seriously, after all that happened, you still don't trust me? Because I'm a wolf?
No, I don't trust you because you just referred to that rodent like it's a person.
Hey! You leave Mrs. Nibbly out of this!
Hey, boys! Hello?
I'm still here, and I've actually slept recently. Why don't *I* watch him?

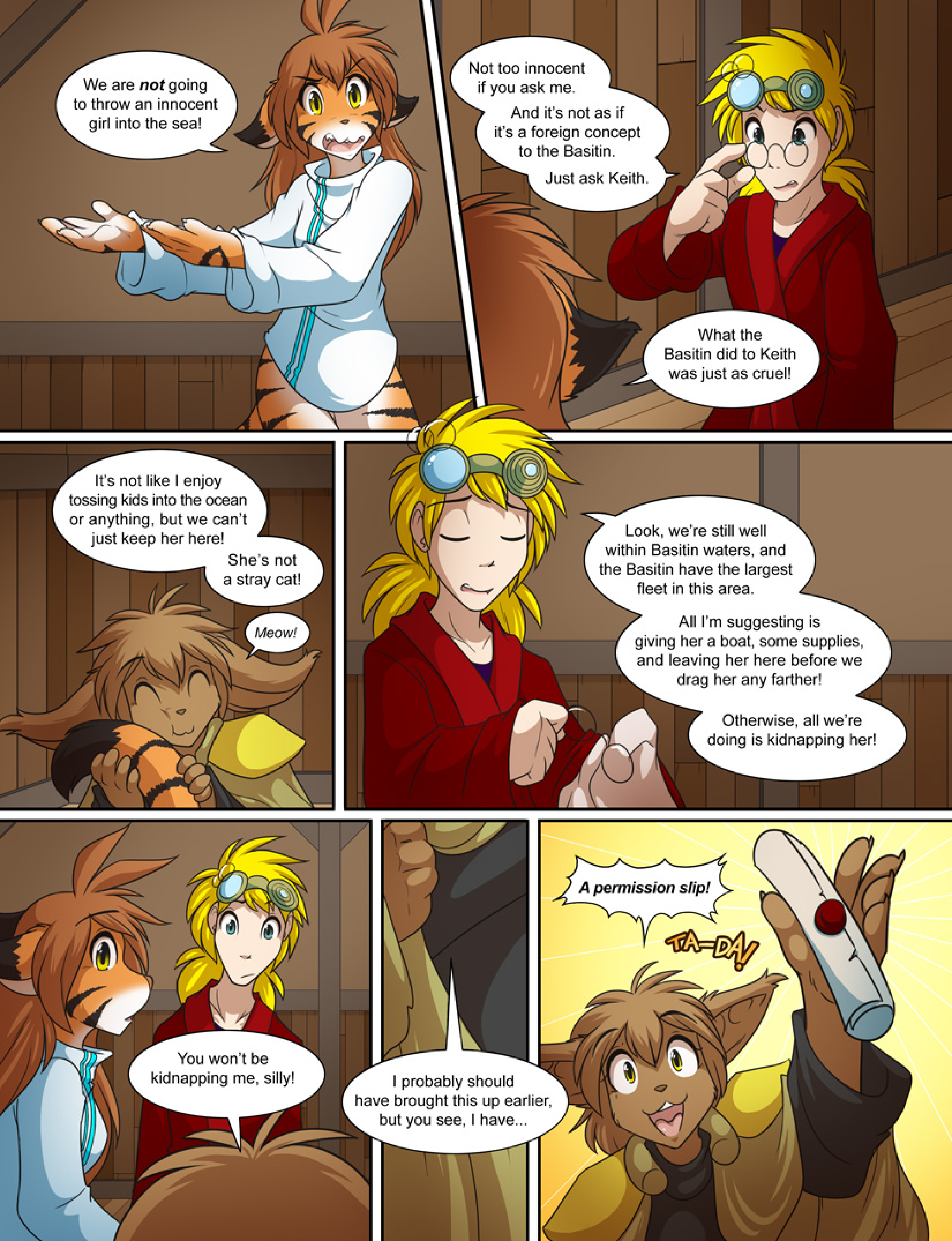

Raine, I don't think you watching him alone is such a good idea.
I mean, no offense, but you're already hurt, and if he broke out...
I know. You're right I certainly wouldn't stand a chance in a fight.
But if one of you guys falls asleep on watch, there won't be any fight at all.
She's got a point.
Hmph, yeah, I guess.
Alright. I don't like it, but I agree, this is the best choice.
Here.
Don't worry, I'll call out if he wakes up.
Good. Once he does, we can trade his life for the name of the poison, and then be long gone from here.
Right! Don't worry, us girls will hold the fort. Isn't that right, Mrs Nibbly?
Oh no, not you too!
There's something off about that thing.
Hey...
We're not really letting that guy go after this, are we?
Of course not! But Raine doesn't need to hear that.
Even without any weapons or crystals, he's still dangerous.
Once we have what we need, I'll take him away from here and...
"Let him go."
TWITCH


I shouldn't feel bad. I know they're just trying to shield me.
It's just a little hard not to feel hurt.
I might be a little naive sometimes, but I understand the situation we're stuck with.
It would be a bad idea to give this guy another opportunity to try and trick us again in the future.
And I'm all too aware of how dangerous someone with magic can be.
Still, I wish there was another way.
Even someone like this guy must have friends or family out there waiting for him to come back home.
I wonder where they might be.
Meanwhile...
Wow.
Now that was... something.
Yes... quite.
I am never going to hear the end of this from Zen whenever he decides to finally wake up today.
Thank goodness his mind still seems to be asleep at the moment.

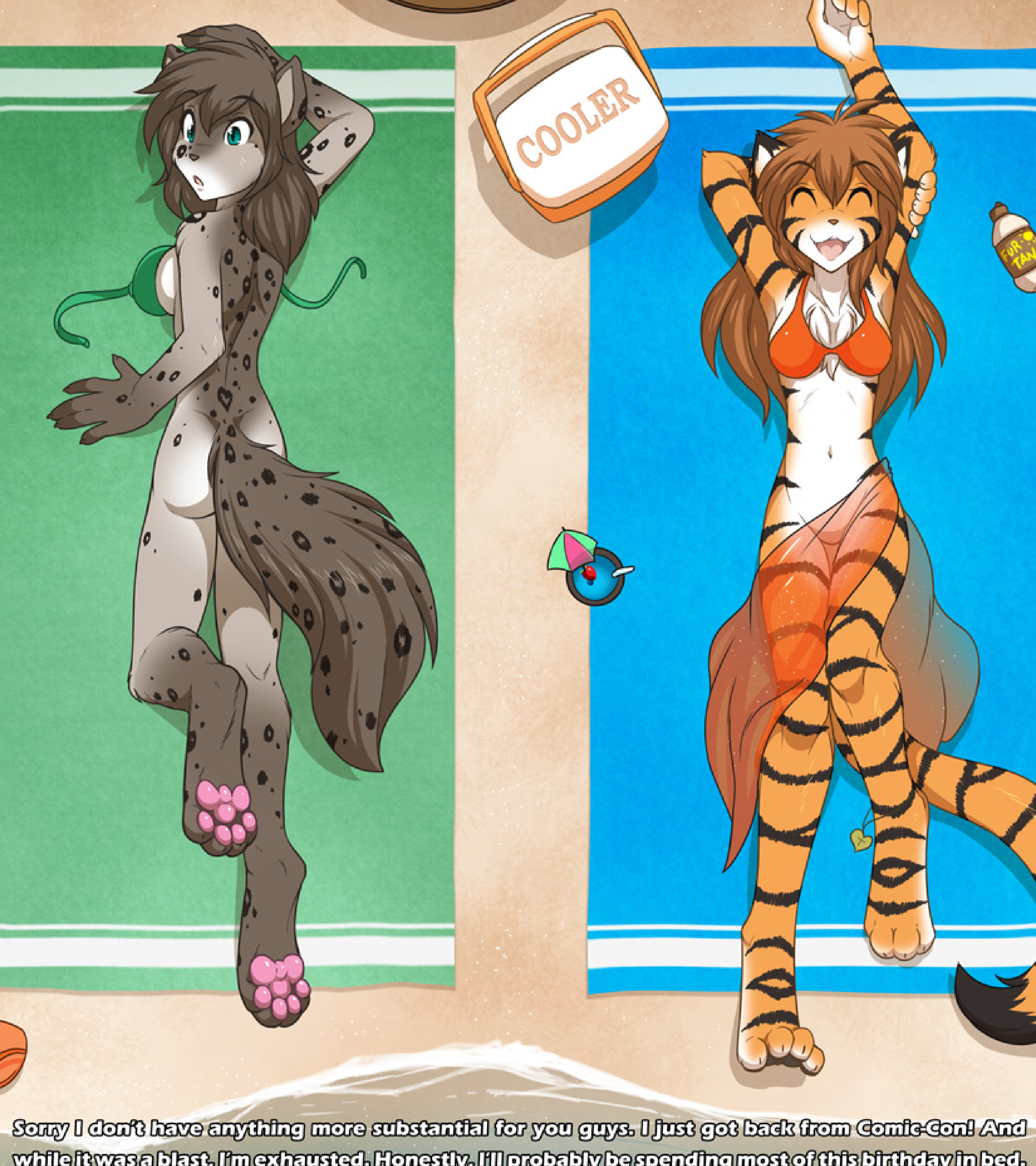

So... where do we go from here?
"From here?"
W-well, I was thinking we should probably go down to our usual sparring spot!
Get to work building your strength up before we hit the mainland again.
Natani, you know what I mean!
Are we... are the two of us in a relationsh
Don't say it!
Mmph?
We're just... *really* good friends, okay?!
Mmmgh...
Do we need to put a label on it?
Can't we just... see where things go without thinking about it too much right now?
So, just let it happen as it happens?
...Alright, I can do that.
Good... good. That's much easier on my psyche.
SWIPE


Later that night...
Trace and I should sit out in the stars more often.
Even with the cold, it does help to destress.
I wonder if Kat would be willing to fix this?
I mean... I know it's a Templar shirt, but, I still associate it with Trace.
Maybe Kat could change the embl—
Get back here!
Huh?
WOOSH!
Maddie?
Hah! I've got you now!
I knew this thing would come in handy!
You might be sneaky, but you can't hide from magic!
SLAP!
Eric!

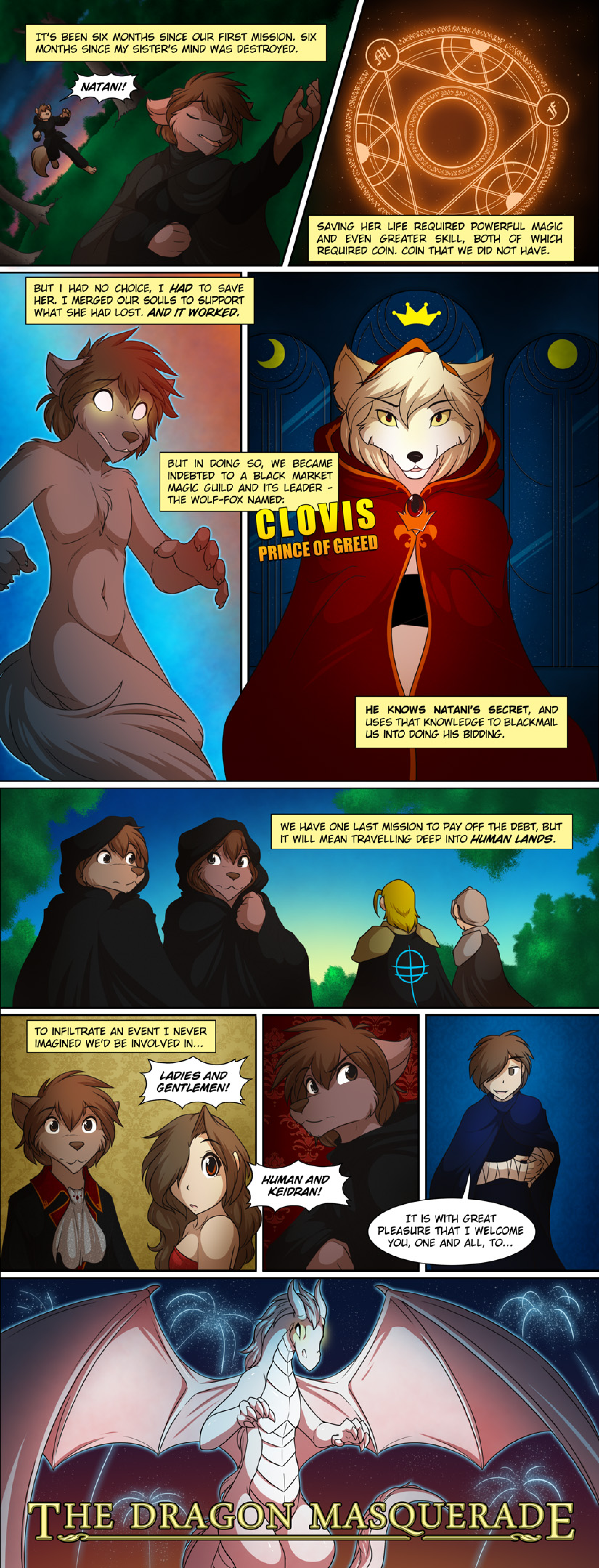

Ow! What was that for?
You know full well, Eric!
I knew you were a perv, but this?
What do you think you're doing chasing around a little girl?
Huh? What are you talking about?
GRABBY! GRABBY!
Don't give me that! I know all about your little *"grabby hands"*!
What?!
Flora, I assure you I have absolutely no interest in that **little pest** in the way you seem to be implying.
What gave you that idea?
Then why are you chasing after her?
"Why?" Because she's a stowaway!
And what were you planning to do once you caught her?
Well, I was planning on throwing the brat overboard.
WACK!
Hey! Easy! I meant in a life boat, of course!

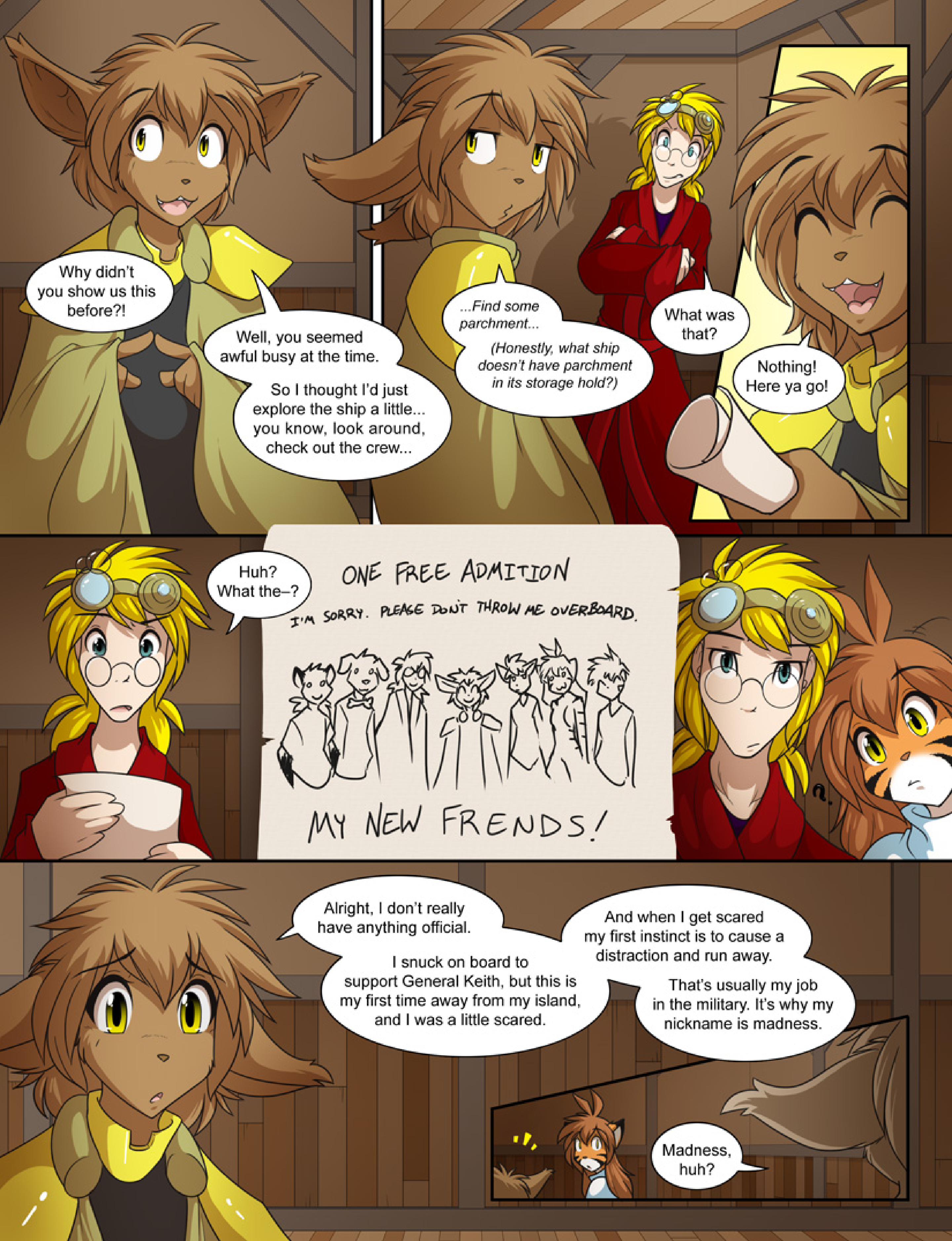

We are *not* going to throw an innocent girl into the sea!
Not too innocent if you ask me.
And it's not as if it's a foreign concept to the Basitin.
Just ask Keith.
What the Basitin did to Keith was just as cruel!
It's not like I enjoy tossing kids into the ocean or anything, but we can't just keep her here!
She's not a stray cat!
Meow!
Look, we're still well within Basitin waters, and the Basitin have the largest fleet in this area.
All I'm suggesting is giving her a boat, some supplies, and leaving her here before we drag her any farther!
Otherwise, all we're doing is kidnapping her!
You won't be kidnapping me, silly!
I probably should have brought this up earlier, but you see, I have...
A permission slip!
TA-DA!

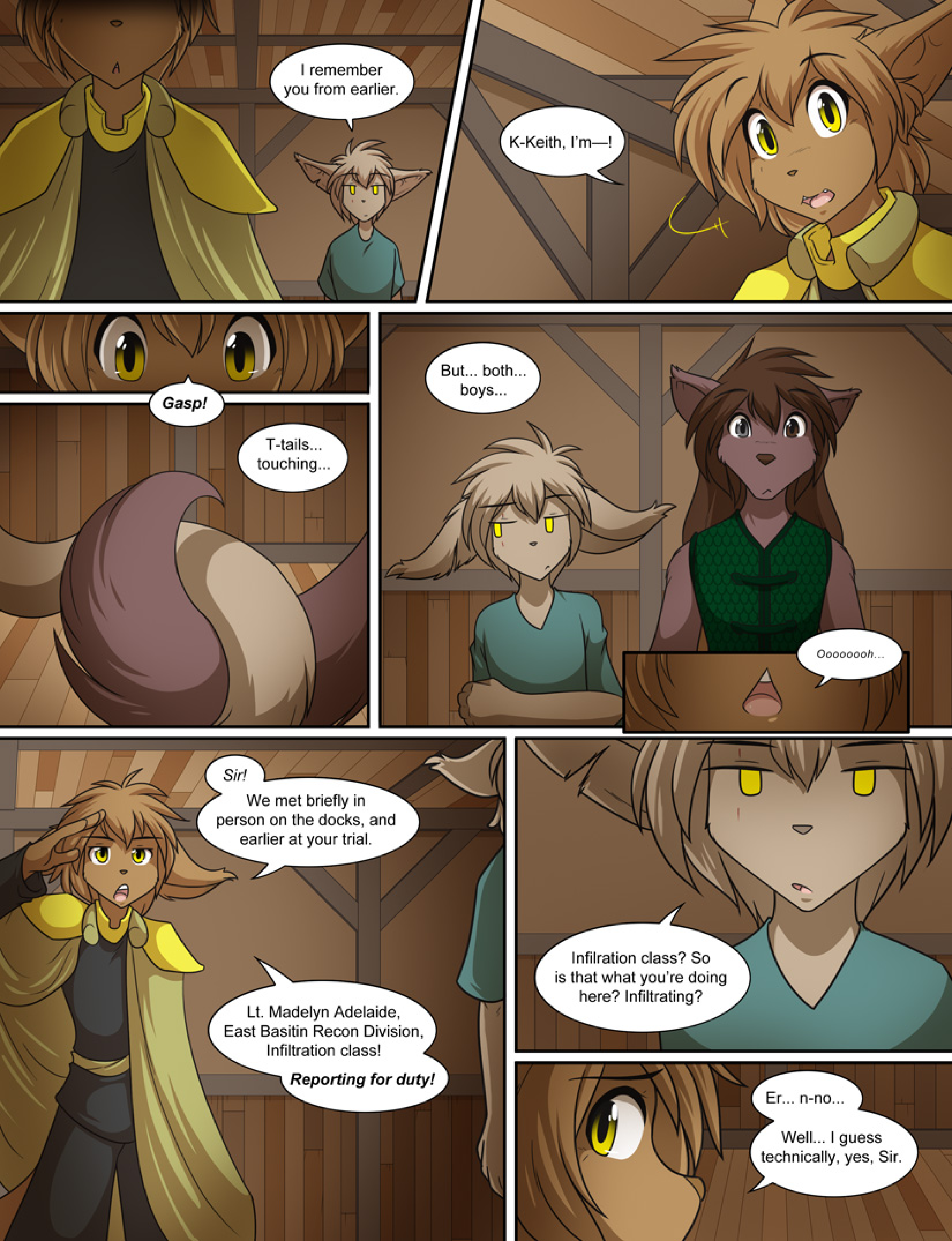
It's My 27th Birthday!

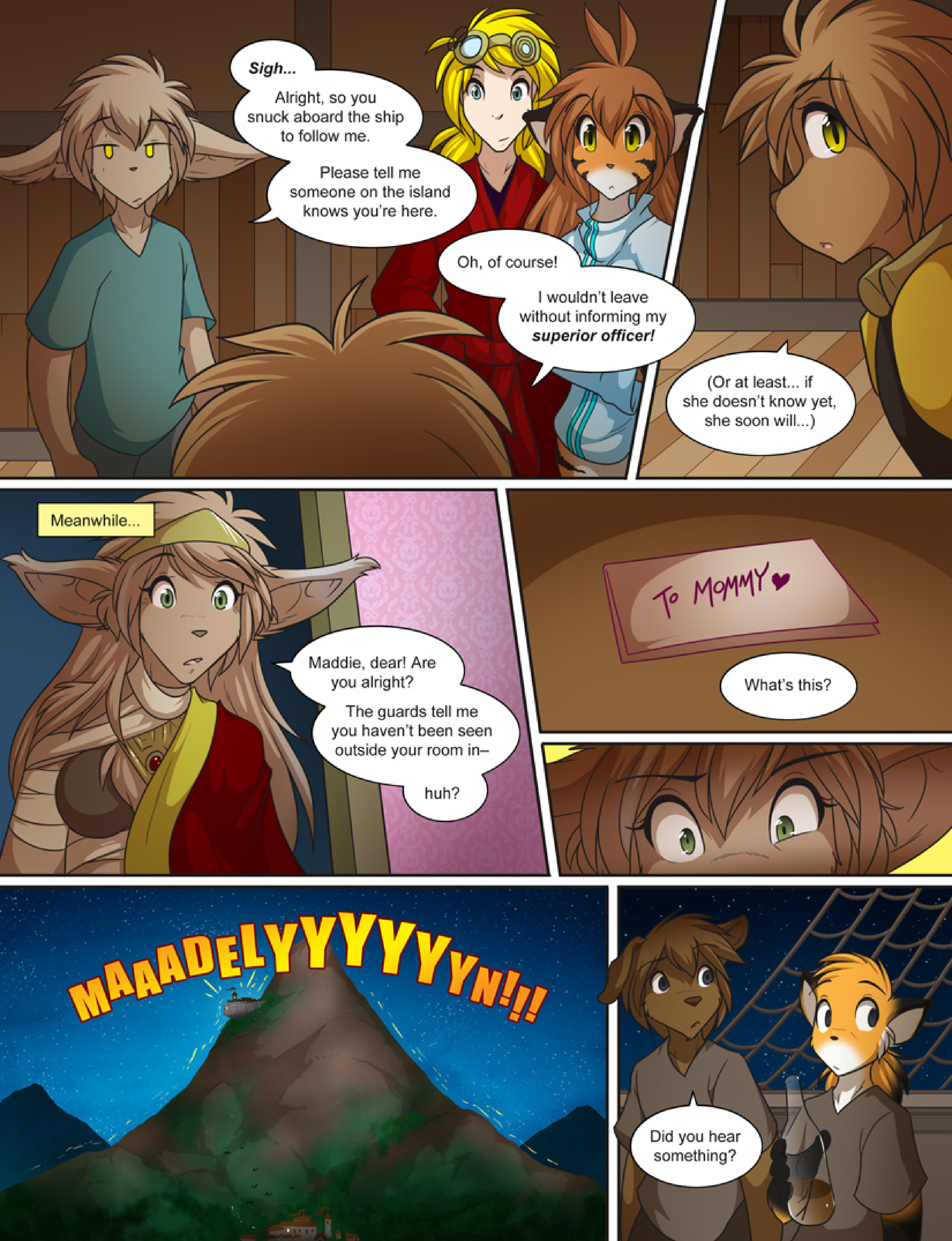


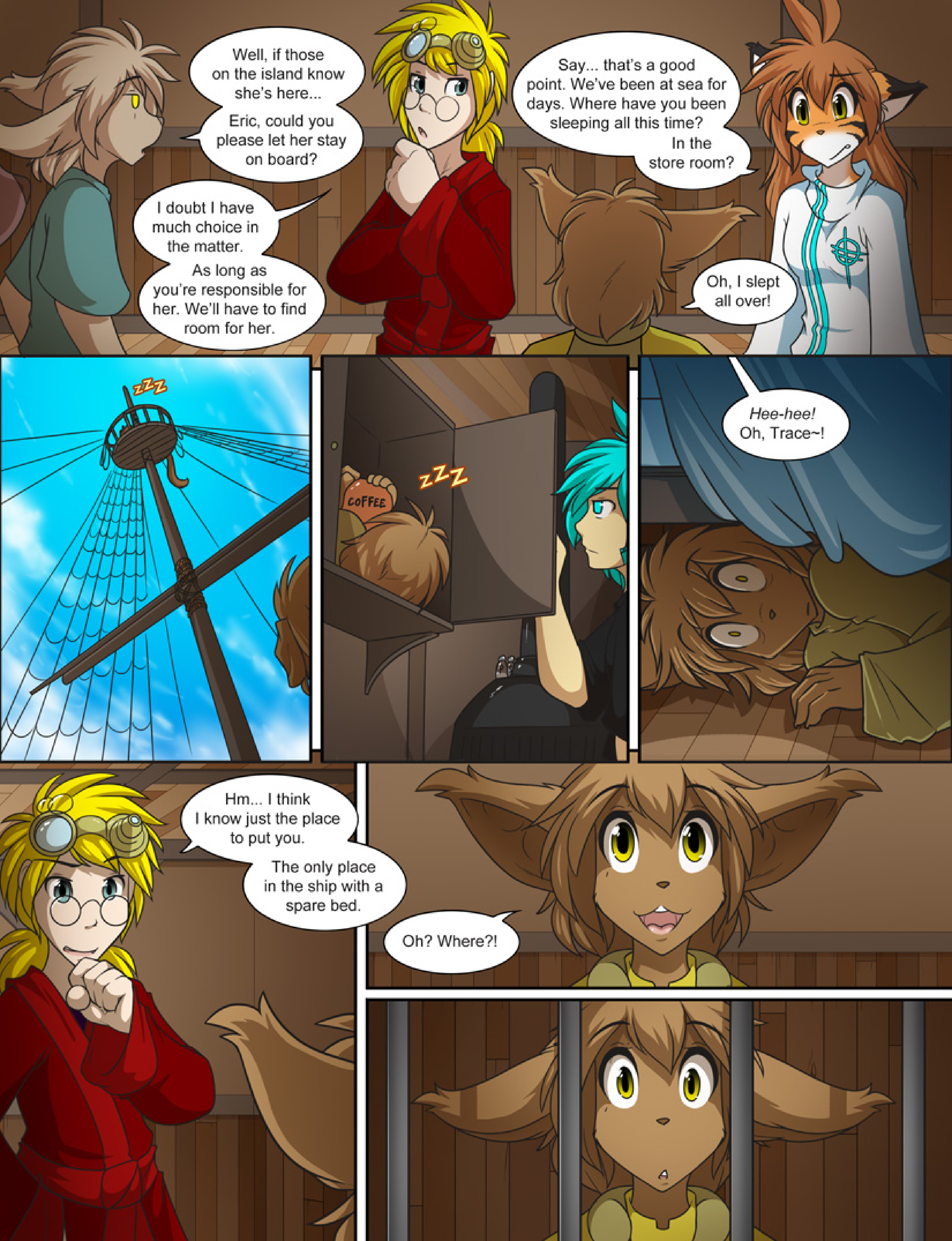
Sorry I don't have anything more substantial for you guys. I just got back from Comic-Con! And while it was a blast, I'm exhausted. Honestly, I'll probably be spending most of this birthday in bed. However, comics will resume again soon once I've recovered! In the meantime, if you'd like to get a gift for yourself, please check out the Dragon Masquerade if you haven't already! It's a big help to me and you'll get a whole book of Twokinds goodness in return! Okay, time for a nap now. –Tom

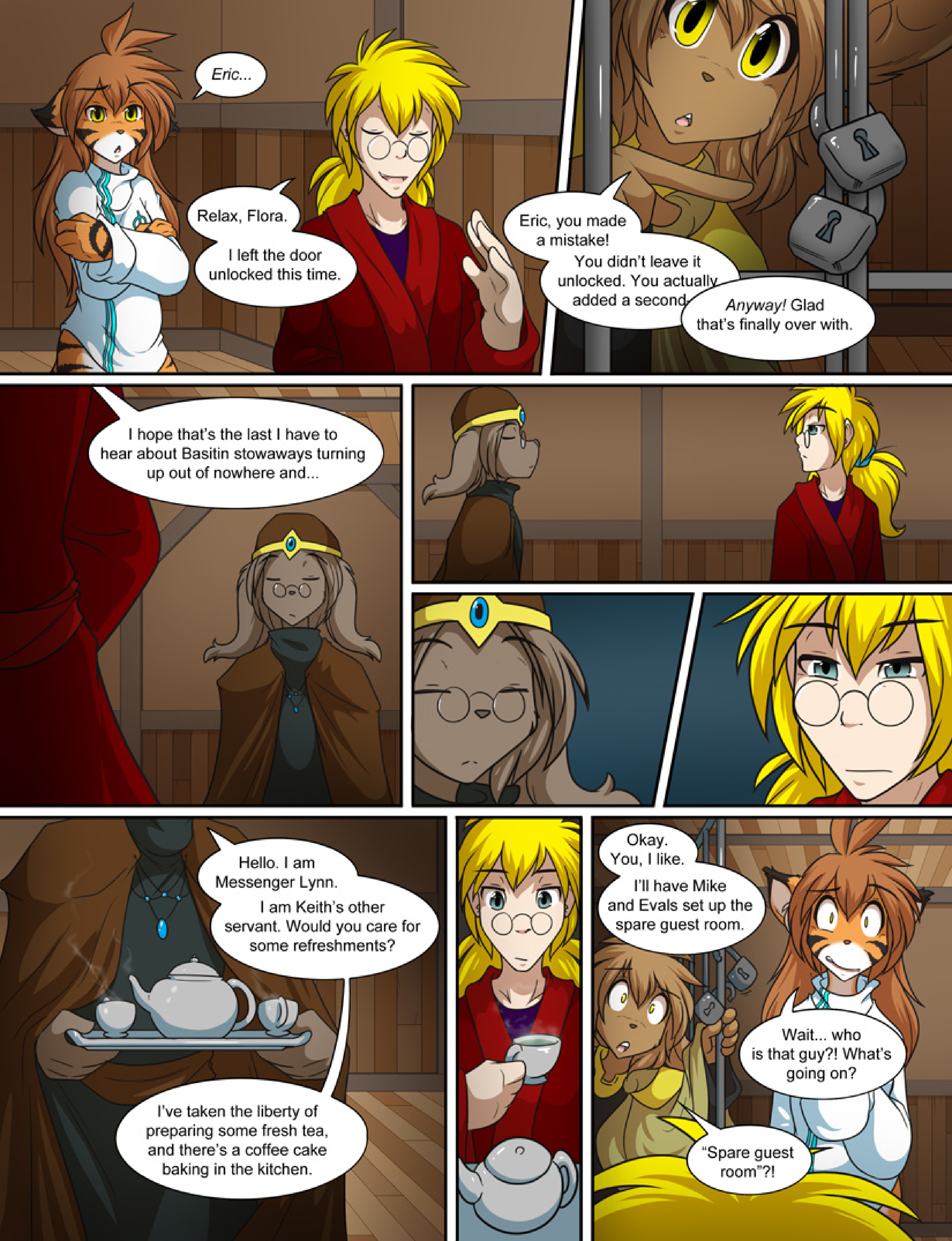

IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE OUR FIRST MISSION. SIX MONTHS SINCE MY SISTER'S MIND WAS DESTROYED.
NATANI!
M
F
SAVING HER LIFE REQUIRED POWERFUL MAGIC AND EVEN GREATER SKILL, BOTH OF WHICH REQUIRED COIN. COIN THAT WE DID NOT HAVE.
BUT I HAD NO CHOICE, I *HAD* TO SAVE HER. I MERGED OUR SOULS TO SUPPORT WHAT SHE HAD LOST. ***AND IT WORKED.***
BUT IN DOING SO, WE BECAME INDEBTED TO A BLACK MARKET MAGIC GUILD AND ITS LEADER - THE WOLF-FOX NAMED:
CLOVIS
PRINCE OF GREED
HE KNOWS NATANI'S SECRET, AND USES THAT KNOWLEDGE TO BLACKMAIL US INTO DOING HIS BIDDING.
WE HAVE ONE LAST MISSION TO PAY OFF THE DEBT, BUT IT WILL MEAN TRAVELLING DEEP INTO ***HUMAN LANDS***.
TO INFILTRATE AN EVENT I NEVER IMAGINED WE'D BE INVOLVED IN...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
HUMAN AND KEIDRAN!
IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I WELCOME YOU, ONE AND ALL, TO...
THE DRAGON MASQUERADE

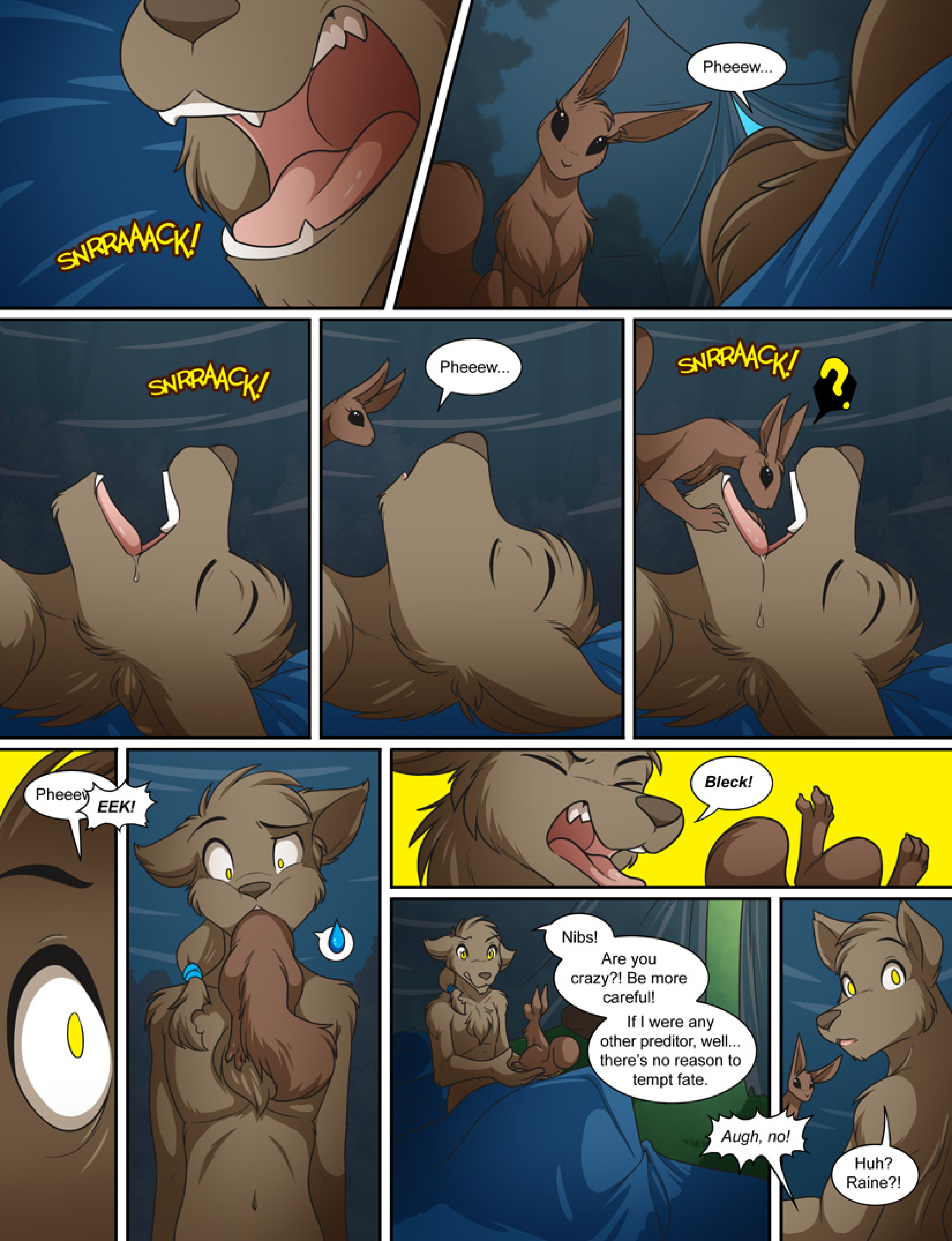

Why didn't you show us this before?!
Well, you seemed awful busy at the time.
So I thought I'd just explore the ship a little... you know, look around, check out the crew...
...Find some parchment...
(Honestly, what ship doesn't have parchment in its storage hold?)
What was that?
Nothing! Here ya go!
Huh? What the–?
ONE FREE ADMITION
I'M SORRY. PLEASE DON'T THROW ME OVERBOARD.
MY NEW FRENDS!
Alright, I don't really have anything official.
I snuck on board to support General Keith, but this is my first time away from my island, and I was a little scared.
And when I get scared my first instinct is to cause a distraction and run away.
That's usually my job in the military. It's why my nickname is madness.
Madness, huh?

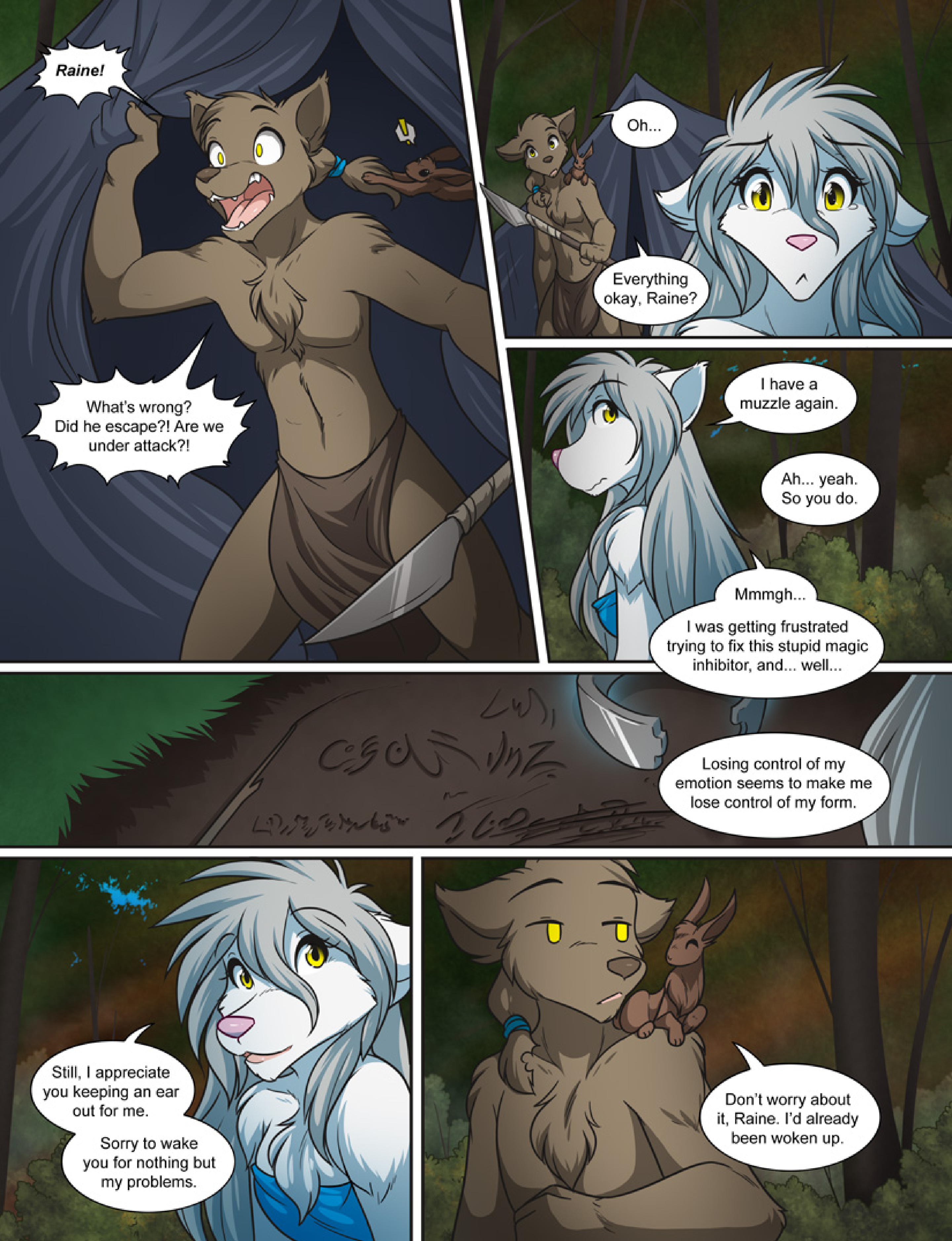

I remember you from earlier.
K-Keith, I'm—!
Gasp!
T-tails... touching...
But... both... boys...
Ooooooooh...
Sir!
We met briefly in person on the docks, and earlier at your trial.
Lt. Madelyn Adelaide, East Basitin Recon Division, Infiltration class!
Reporting for duty!
Infilration class? So is that what you're doing here? Infiltrating?
Er... n-no...
Well... I guess technically, yes, Sir.

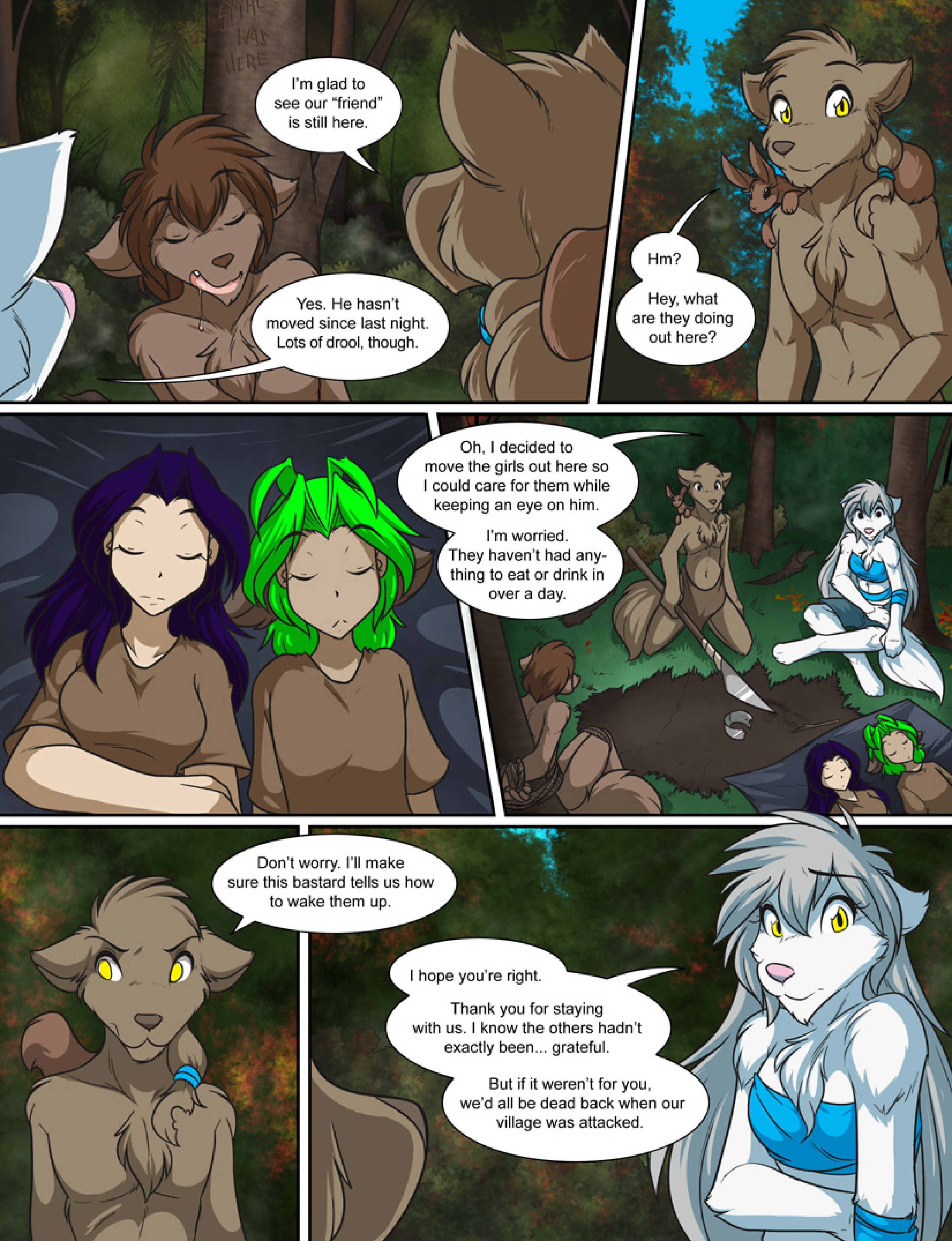

Sigh...
Alright, so you snuck aboard the ship to follow me.
Please tell me someone on the island knows you're here.
Oh, of course!
I wouldn't leave without informing my ***superior officer!***
(Or at least... if she doesn't know yet, she soon will...)
Meanwhile...
Maddie, dear! Are you alright?
The guards tell me you haven't been seen outside your room in–
huh?
TO MOMMY ♥
What's this?
MAAADELYYYYYYN!!!
Did you hear something?

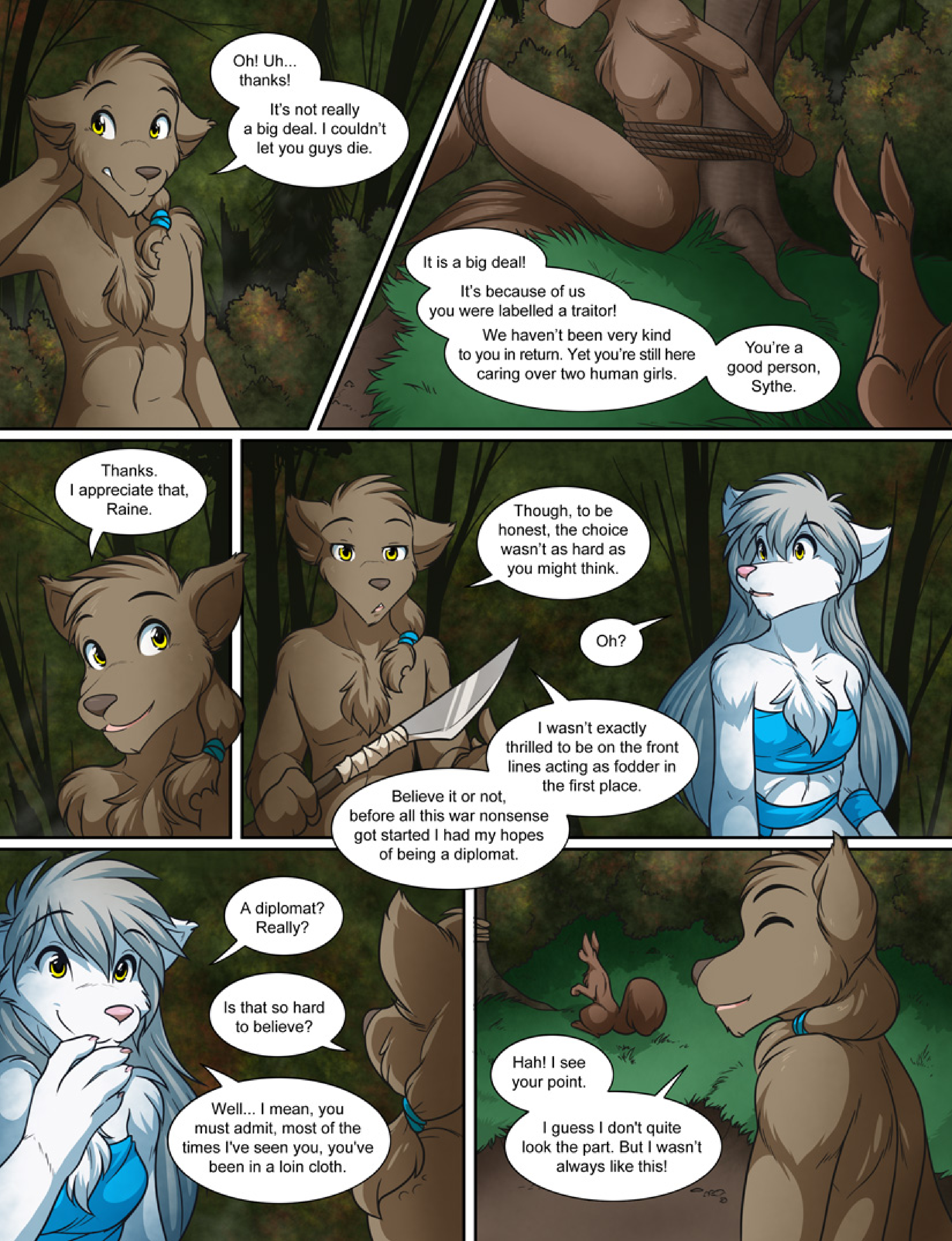

Well, if those on the island know she's here...
Eric, could you please let her stay on board?
I doubt I have much choice in the matter.
As long as you're responsible for her. We'll have to find room for her.
Say... that's a good point. We've been at sea for days. Where have you been sleeping all this time?
In the store room?
Oh, I slept all over!
zzz
COFFEE
zzz
Hee-hee! Oh, Trace~!
Hm... I think I know just the place to put you.
The only place in the ship with a spare bed.
Oh? Where?!

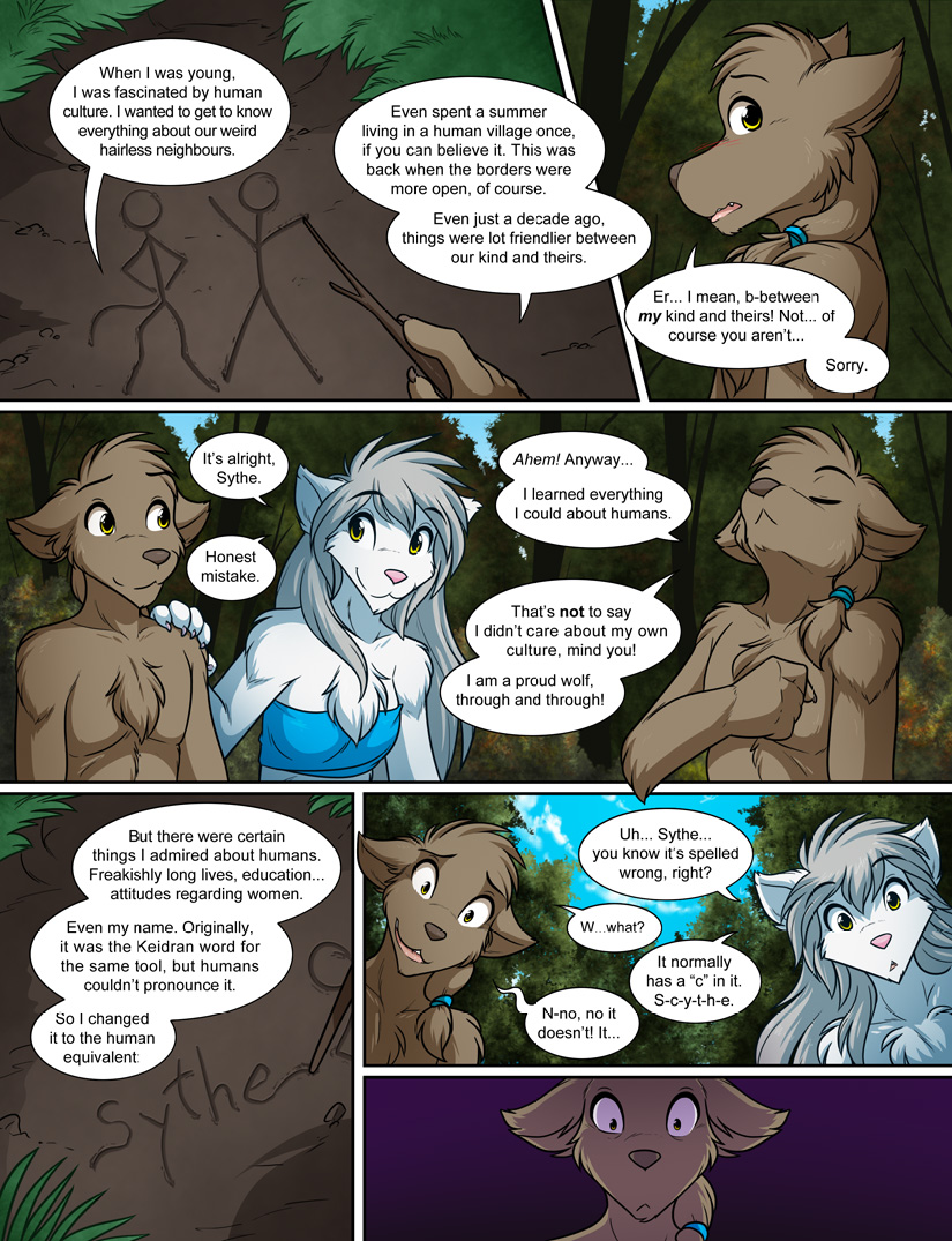

Eric...
Relax, Flora.
I left the door unlocked this time.
Eric, you made a mistake!
You didn't leave it unlocked. You actually added a second.
Anyway! Glad that's finally over with.
I hope that's the last I have to hear about Basitin stowaways turning up out of nowhere and...
Hello. I am Messenger Lynn.
I am Keith's other servant. Would you care for some refreshments?
I've taken the liberty of preparing some fresh tea, and there's a coffee cake baking in the kitchen.
Okay. You, I like.
I'll have Mike and Evals set up the spare guest room.
Wait... who is that guy?! What's going on?
"Spare guest room"?!

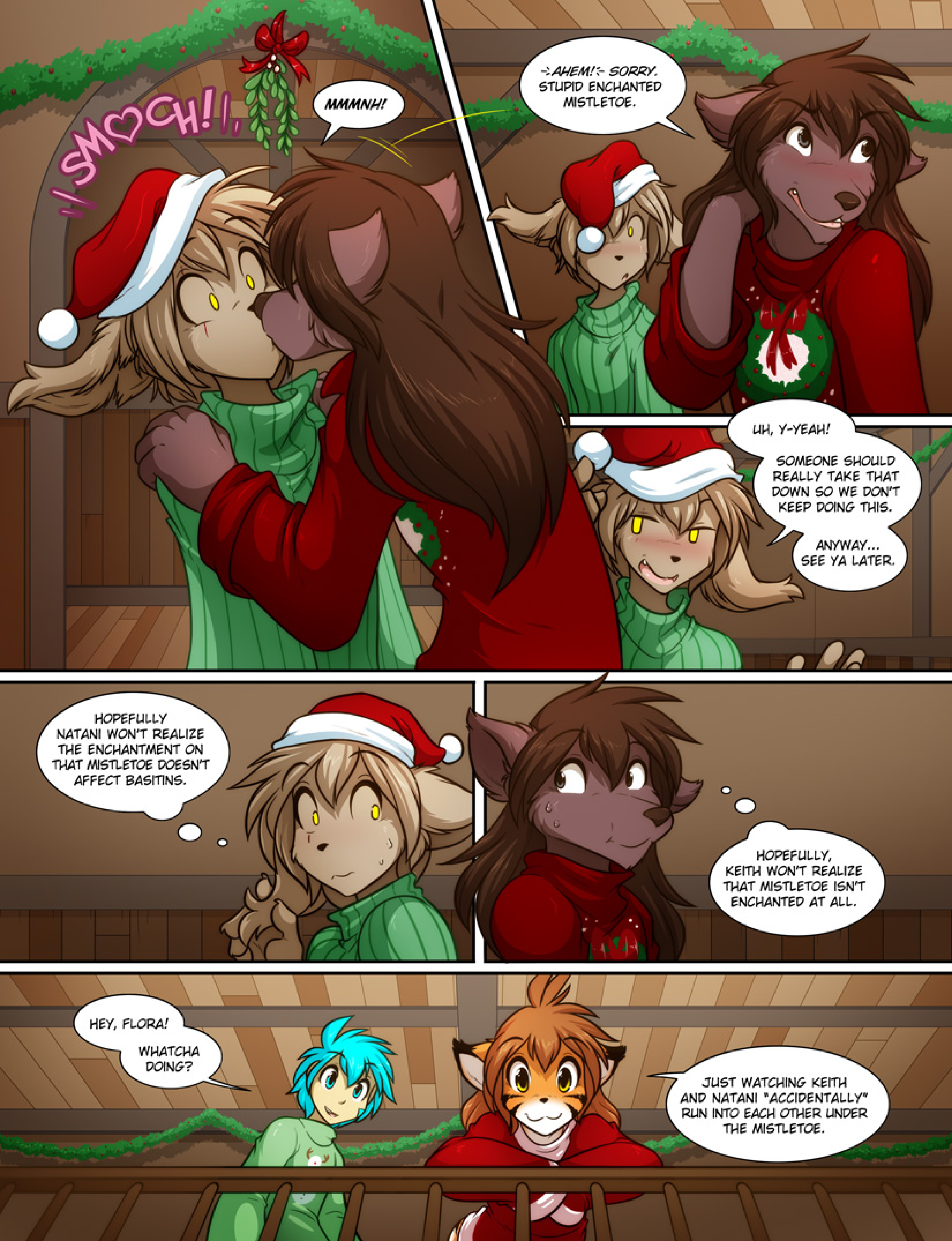

SNRRAAACK!
Pheeew...
SNRRAACK!
Pheeew...
SNRRAACK!
?
Pheeew
EEK!
Bleck!
Nibs!
Are you crazy?! Be more careful!
If I were any other preditor, well... there's no reason to tempt fate.
Augh, no!
Huh? Raine?!

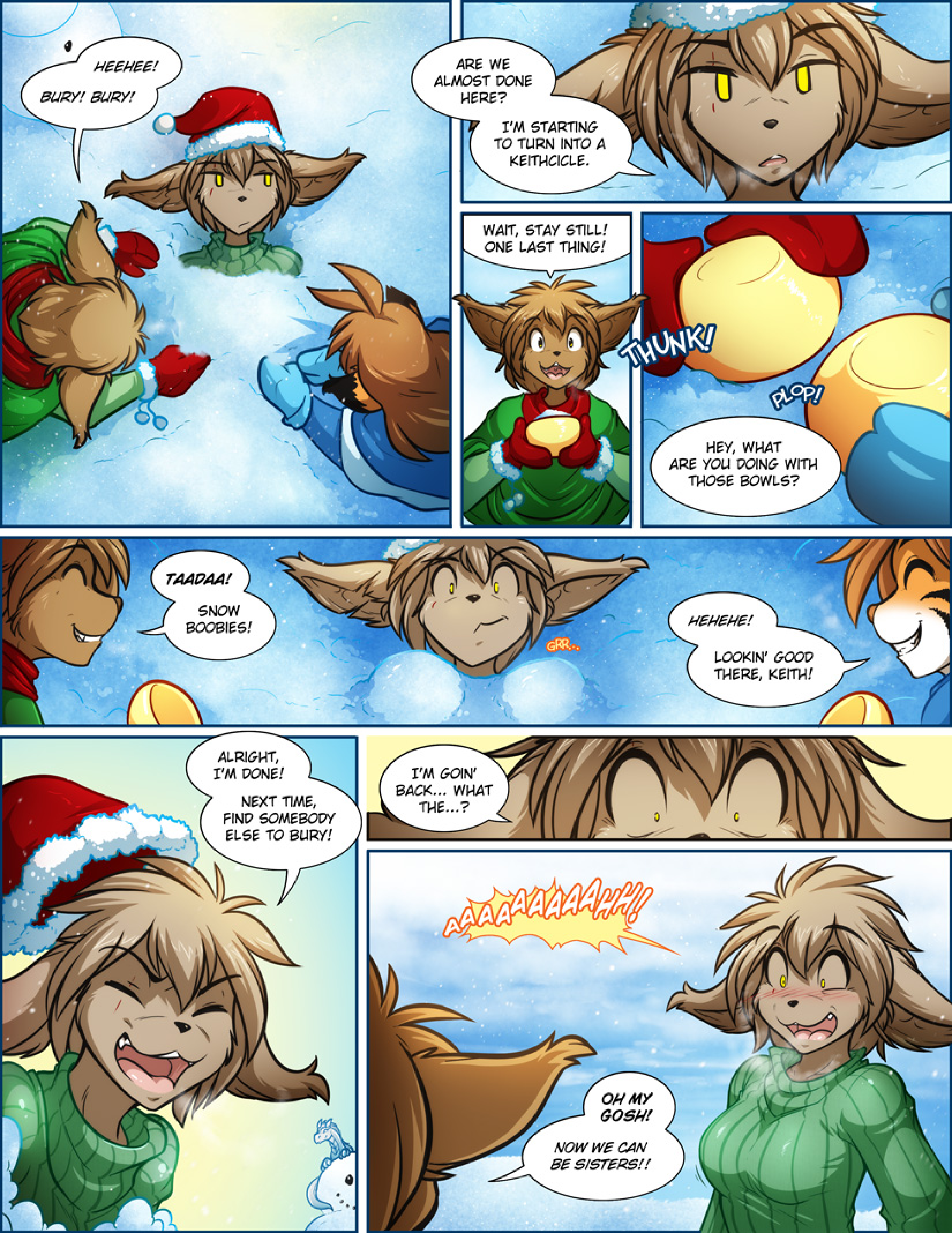

Raine!
What's wrong? Did he escape?! Are we under attack?!
Oh...
Everything okay, Raine?
I have a muzzle again.
Ah... yeah. So you do.
Mmmgh... I was getting frustrated trying to fix this stupid magic inhibitor, and... well...
Losing control of my emotion seems to make me lose control of my form.
Still, I appreciate you keeping an ear out for me.
Sorry to wake you for nothing but my problems.
Don't worry about it, Raine. I'd already been woken up.

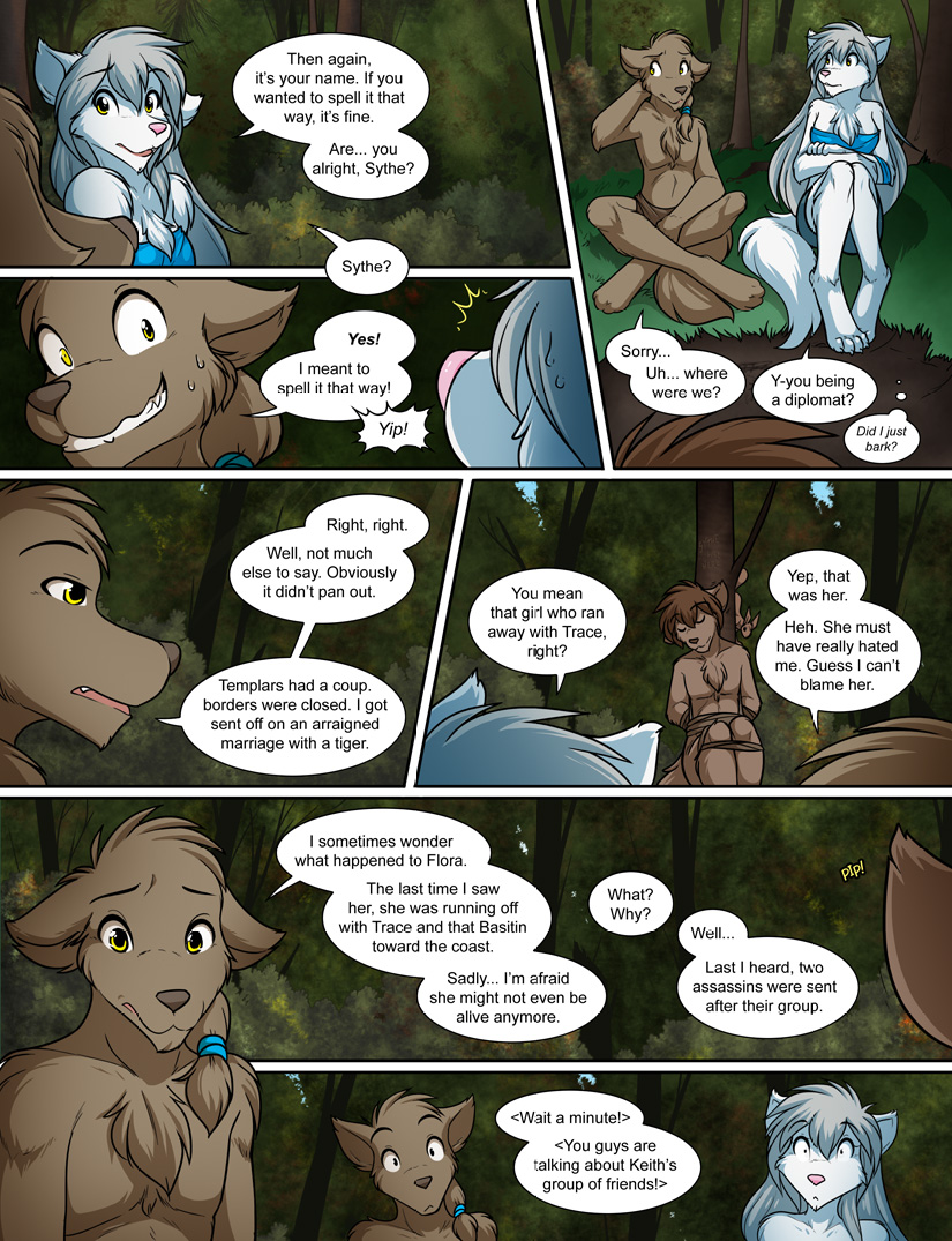

WAS HERE
I'm glad to see our "friend" is still here.
Yes. He hasn't moved since last night. Lots of drool, though.
Hm?
Hey, what are they doing out here?
Oh, I decided to move the girls out here so I could care for them while keeping an eye on him.
I'm worried. They haven't had anything to eat or drink in over a day.
Don't worry. I'll make sure this bastard tells us how to wake them up.
I hope you're right.
Thank you for staying with us. I know the others hadn't exactly been... grateful.
But if it weren't for you, we'd all be dead back when our village was attacked.

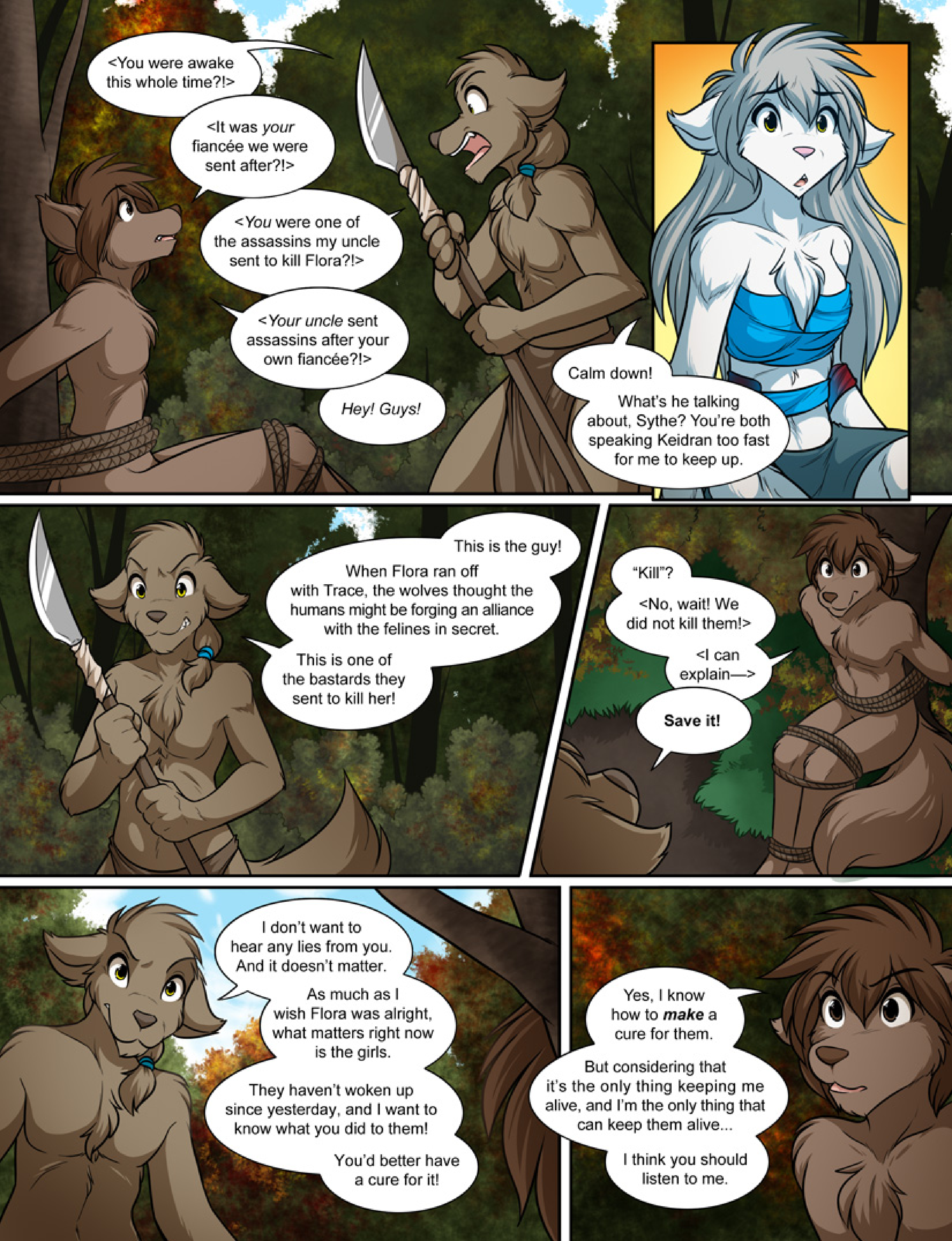

Oh! Uh... thanks!
It's not really a big deal. I couldn't let you guys die.
It is a big deal!
It's because of us you were labelled a traitor!
We haven't been very kind to you in return. Yet you're still here caring over two human girls.
You're a good person, Sythe.
Thanks. I appreciate that, Raine.
Though, to be honest, the choice wasn't as hard as you might think.
Oh?
I wasn't exactly thrilled to be on the front lines acting as fodder in the first place.
Believe it or not, before all this war nonsense got started I had my hopes of being a diplomat.
A diplomat? Really?
Is that so hard to believe?
Well... I mean, you must admit, most of the times I've seen you, you've been in a loin cloth.
Hah! I see your point.
I guess I don't quite look the part. But I wasn't always like this!

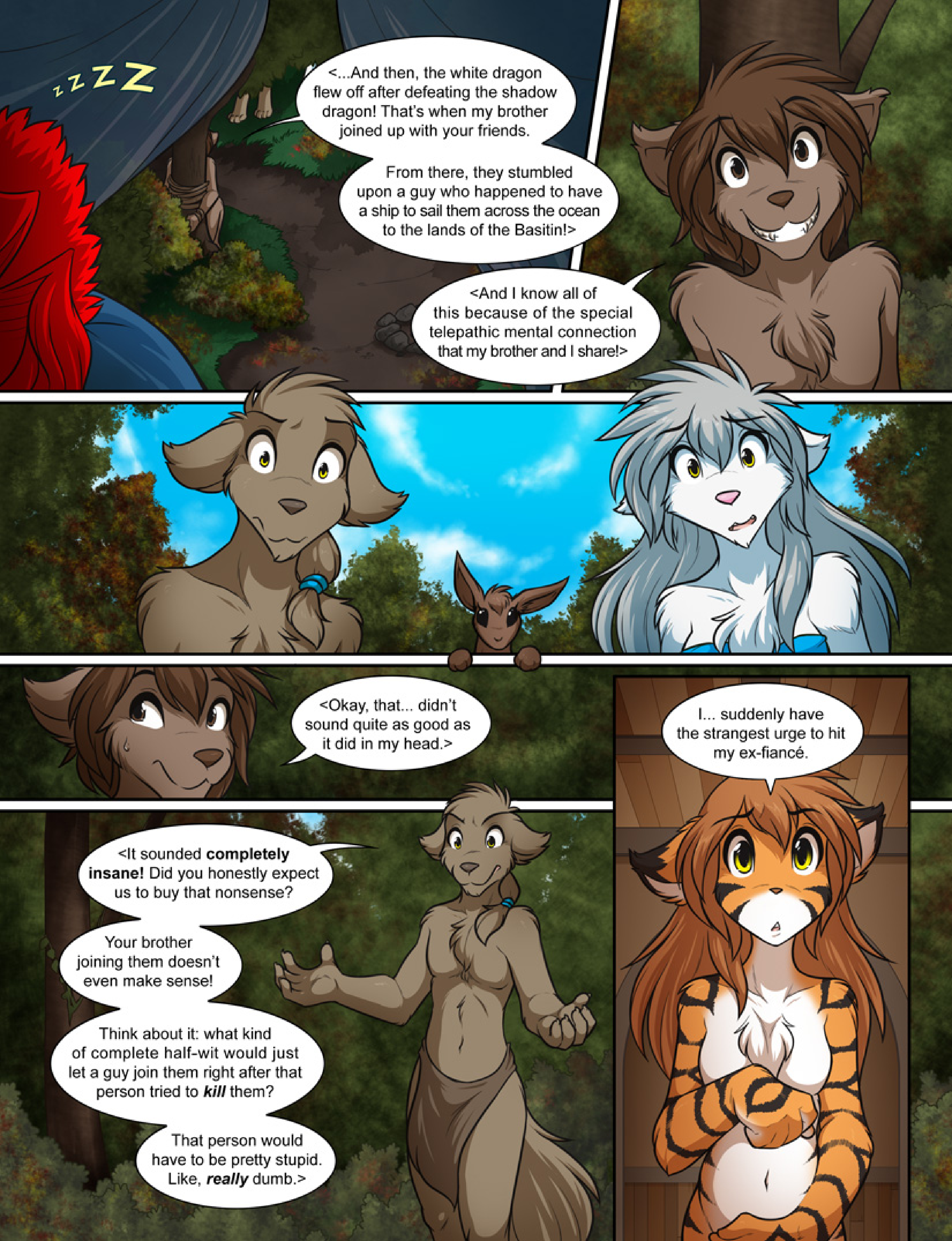

When I was young, I was fascinated by human culture. I wanted to get to know everything about our weird hairless neighbours.
Even spent a summer living in a human village once, if you can believe it. This was back when the borders were more open, of course.
Even just a decade ago, things were lot friendlier between our kind and theirs.
Er... I mean, b-between *my* kind and theirs! Not... of course you aren't...
Sorry.
It's alright, Sythe.
Honest mistake.
Ahem! Anyway...
I learned everything I could about humans.
That's **not** to say I didn't care about my own culture, mind you!
I am a proud wolf, through and through!
But there were certain things I admired about humans. Freakishly long lives, education... attitudes regarding women.
Even my name. Originally, it was the Keidran word for the same tool, but humans couldn't pronounce it.
So I changed it to the human equivalent:
Sythe
Uh... Sythe... you know it's spelled wrong, right?
W...what?
It normally has a "c" in it. S-c-y-t-h-e.
N-no, no it doesn't! It...

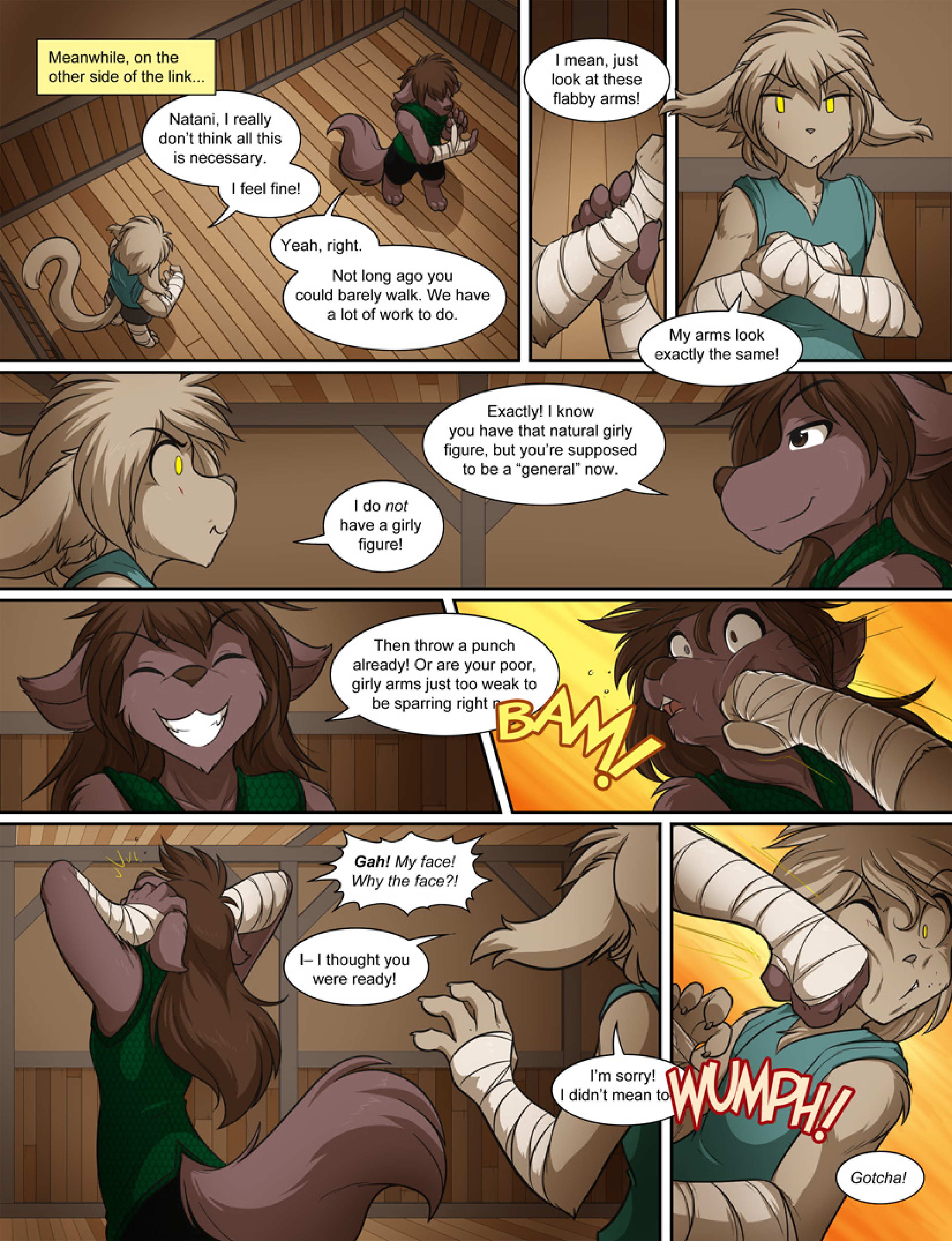

SMOOCH!
MMMNH!
-AHEM!- SORRY. STUPID ENCHANTED MISTLETOE.
UH, Y-YEAH!
SOMEONE SHOULD REALLY TAKE THAT DOWN SO WE DON'T KEEP DOING THIS.
ANYWAY... SEE YA LATER.
HOPEFULLY NATANI WON'T REALIZE THE ENCHANTMENT ON THAT MISTLETOE DOESN'T AFFECT BASITINS.
HOPEFULLY, KEITH WON'T REALIZE THAT MISTLETOE ISN'T ENCHANTED AT ALL.
HEY, FLORA!
WHATCHA DOING?
JUST WATCHING KEITH AND NATANI "ACCIDENTALLY" RUN INTO EACH OTHER UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

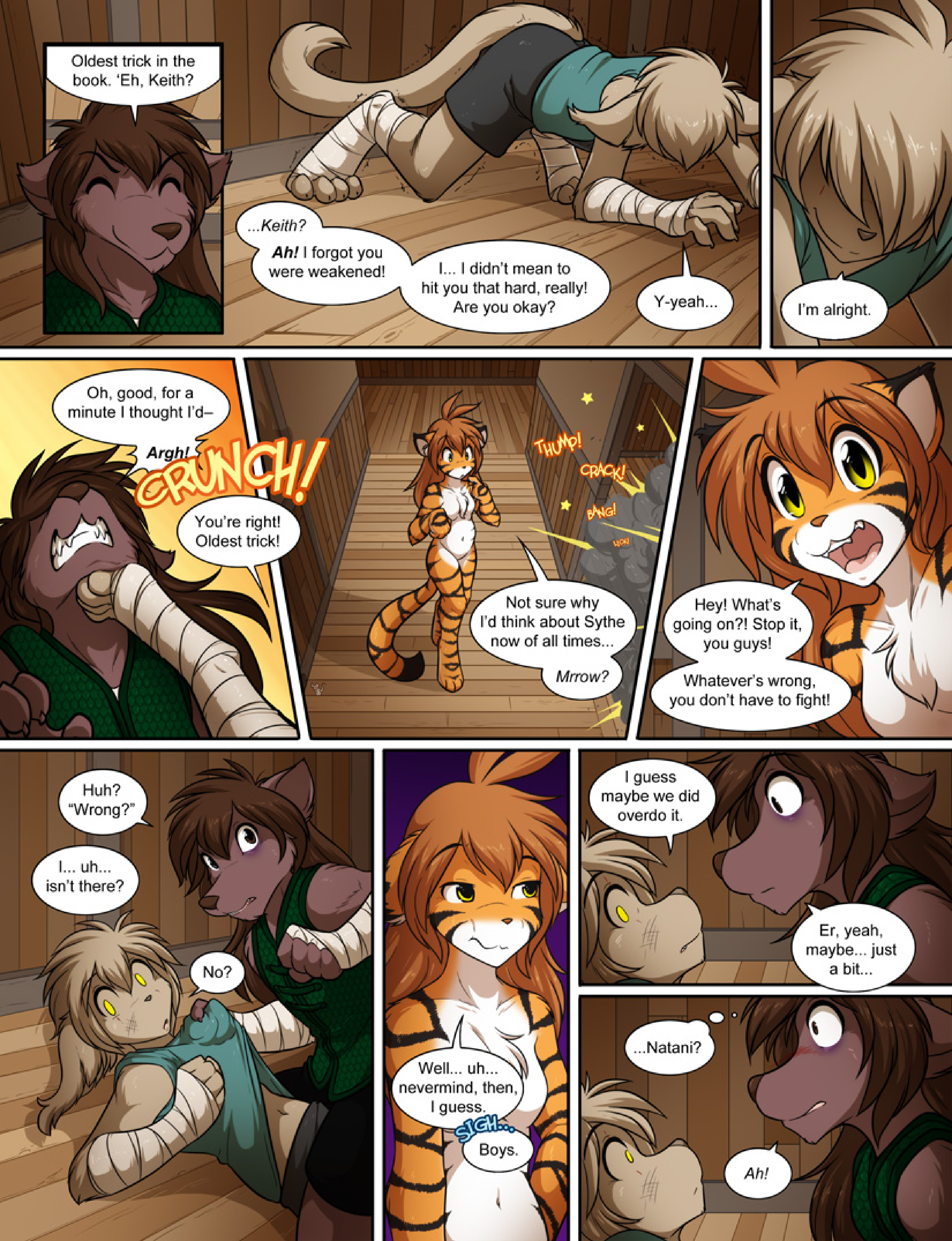

HEEHEE!
BURY! BURY!
ARE WE ALMOST DONE HERE?
I'M STARTING TO TURN INTO A KEITHCICLE.
WAIT, STAY STILL! ONE LAST THING!
THUNK!
PLOP!
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE BOWLS?
TAADAA!
SNOW BOOBIES!
GRR..
HEHEHE!
LOOKIN' GOOD THERE, KEITH!
ALRIGHT, I'M DONE!
NEXT TIME, FIND SOMEBODY ELSE TO BURY!
I'M GOIN' BACK... WHAT THE...?
AAAAAAAAAHH!!
OH MY GOSH!
NOW WE CAN BE SISTERS!!

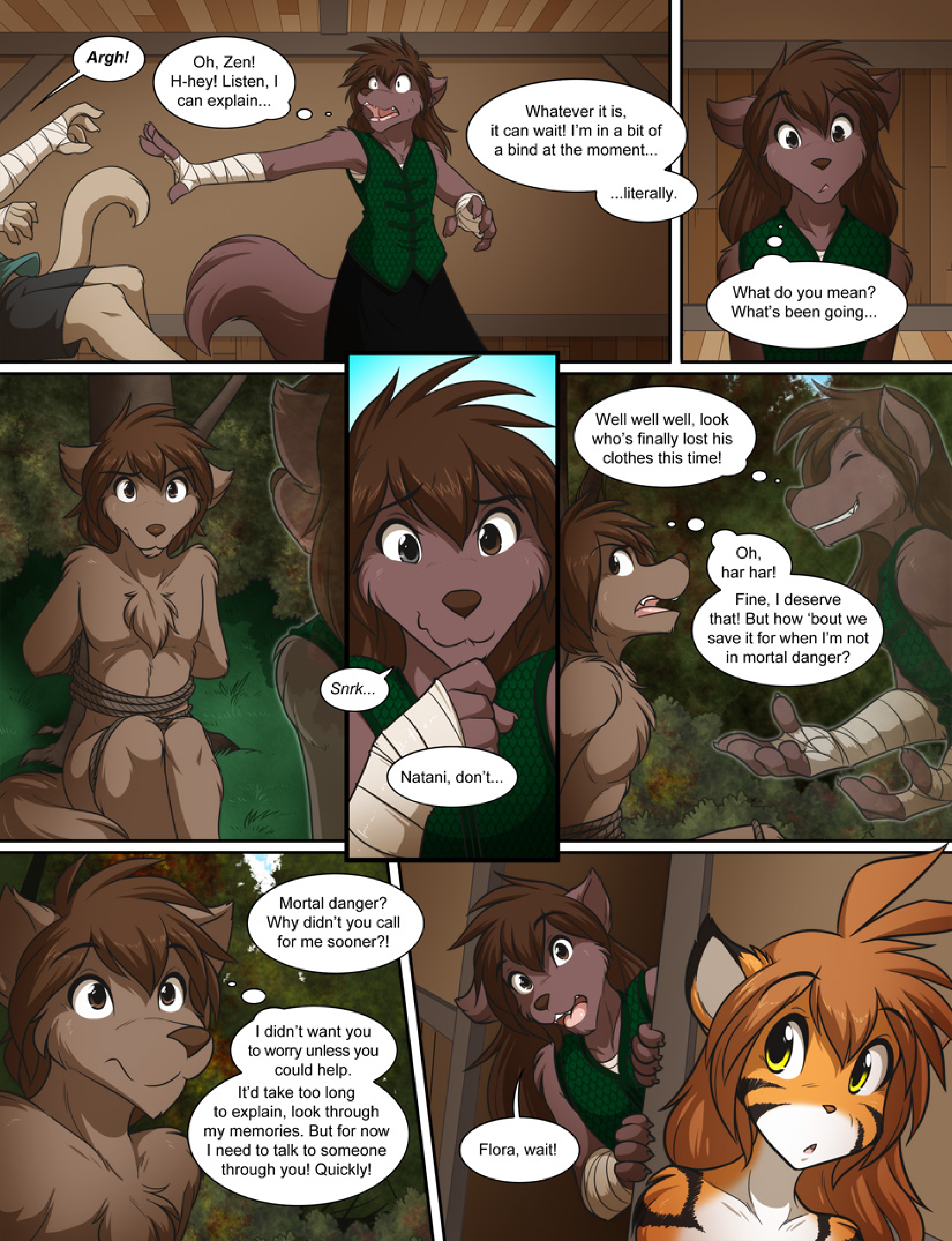

Then again, it's your name. If you wanted to spell it that way, it's fine.
Are... you alright, Sythe?
Sythe?
Yes!
I meant to spell it that way!
Yip!
Sorry...
Uh... where were we?
Y-you being a diplomat?
Did I just bark?
Right, right.
Well, not much else to say. Obviously it didn't pan out.
Templars had a coup. borders were closed. I got sent off on an arraigned marriage with a tiger.
You mean that girl who ran away with Trace, right?
Yep, that was her.
Heh. She must have really hated me. Guess I can't blame her.
I sometimes wonder what happened to Flora.
The last time I saw her, she was running off with Trace and that Basitin toward the coast.
Sadly... I'm afraid she might not even be alive anymore.
What? Why?
PIP!
Well...
Last I heard, two assassins were sent after their group.
<Wait a minute!>
<You guys are talking about Keith's group of friends!>

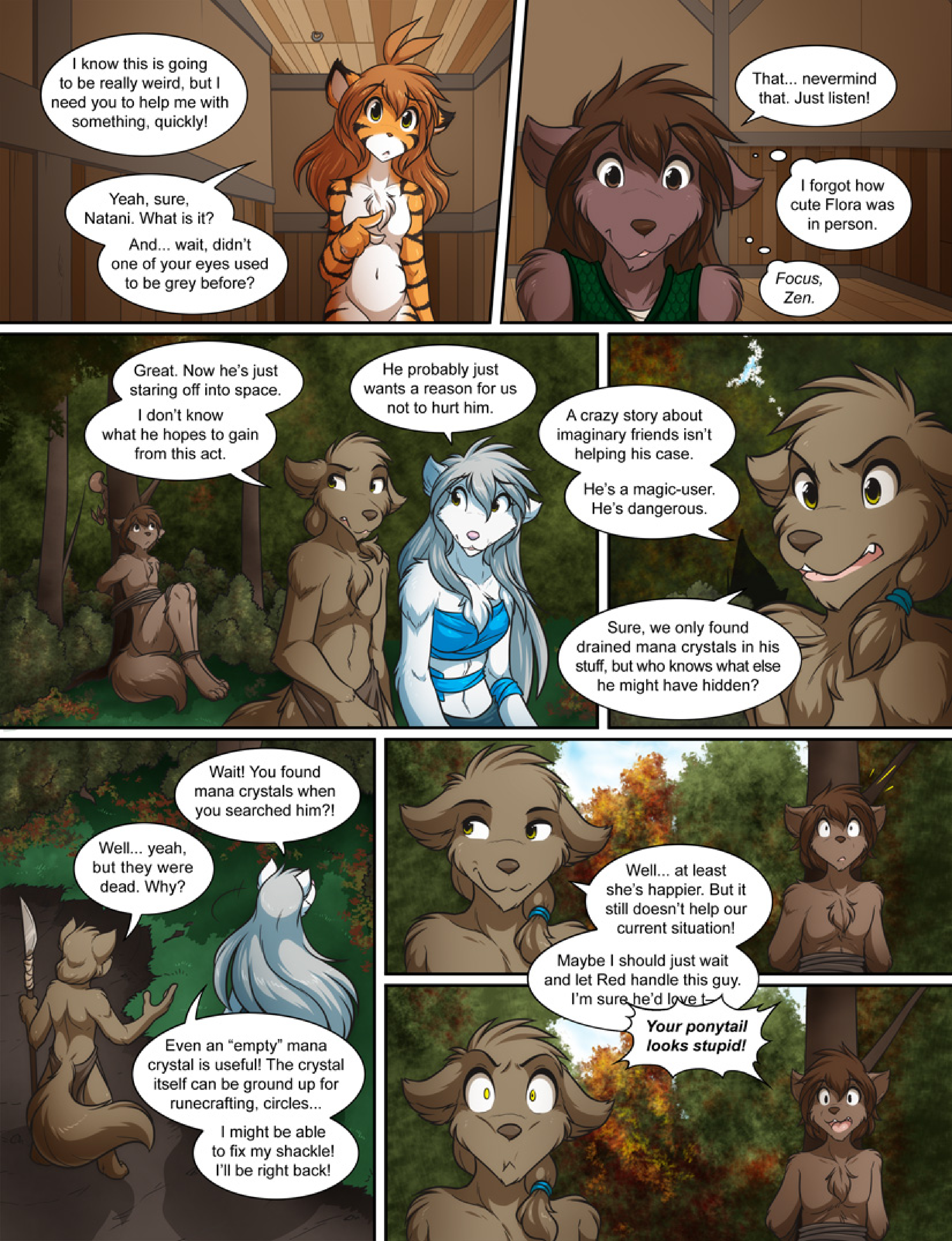

<You were awake this whole time?!>
<It was *your* fiancée we were sent after?!>
<*You* were one of the assassins my uncle sent to kill Flora?!>
<*Your uncle* sent assassins after your own fiancée?!>
Hey! Guys!
Calm down!
What's he talking about, Sythe? You're both speaking Keidran too fast for me to keep up.
This is the guy!
When Flora ran off with Trace, the wolves thought the humans might be forging an alliance with the felines in secret.
This is one of the bastards they sent to kill her!
"Kill"?
<No, wait! We did not kill them!>
<I can explain—>
Save it!
I don't want to hear any lies from you. And it doesn't matter.
As much as I wish Flora was alright, what matters right now is the girls.
They haven't woken up since yesterday, and I want to know what you did to them!
You'd better have a cure for it!
Yes, I know how to ***make*** a cure for them.
But considering that it's the only thing keeping me alive, and I'm the only thing that can keep them alive...
I think you should listen to me.

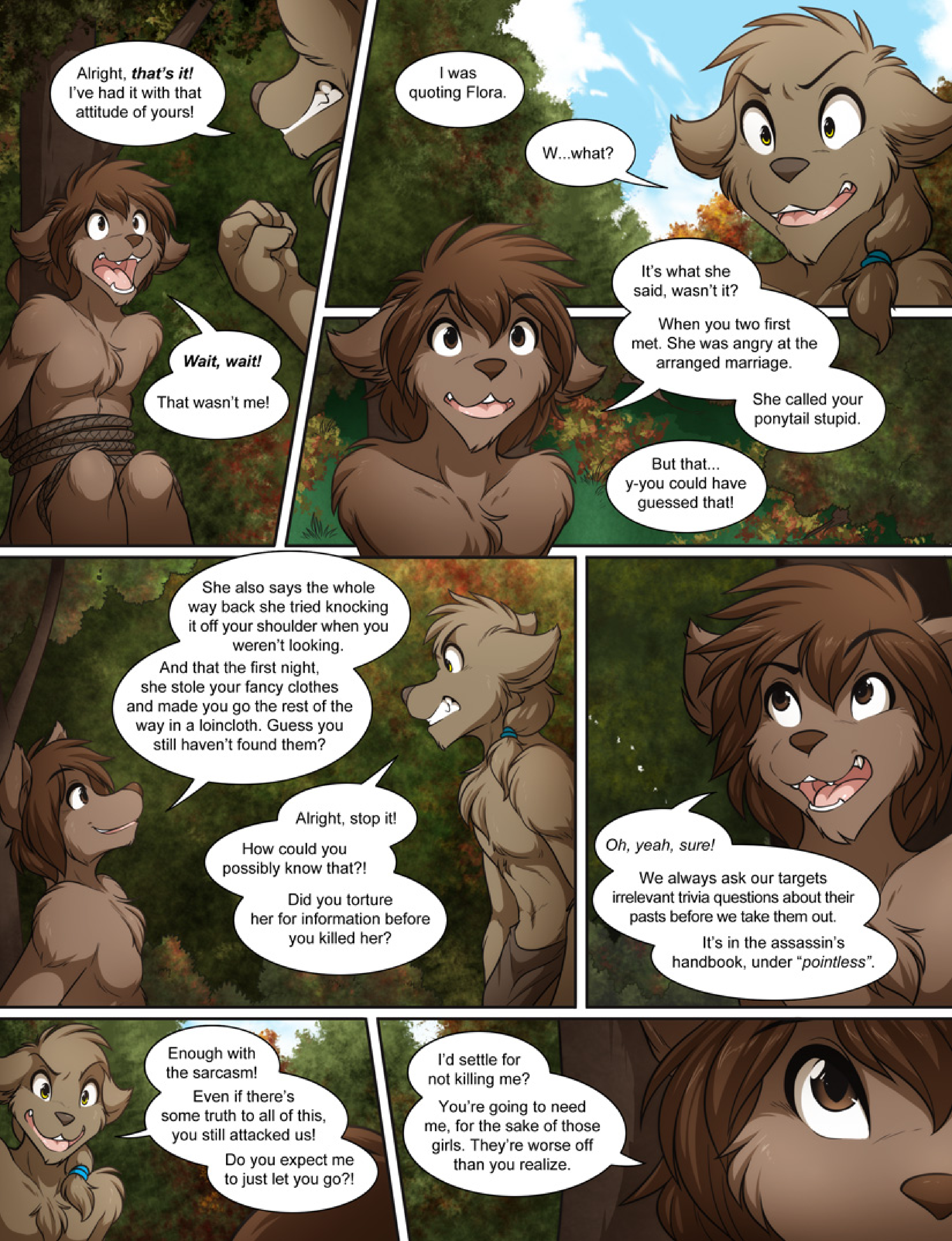

z z Z Z
<...And then, the white dragon flew off after defeating the shadow dragon! That's when my brother joined up with your friends.
From there, they stumbled upon a guy who happened to have a ship to sail them across the ocean to the lands of the Basitin!>
<And I know all of this because of the special telepathic mental connection that my brother and I share!>
<Okay, that... didn't sound quite as good as it did in my head.>
I... suddenly have the strangest urge to hit my ex-fiancé.
<It sounded **completely insane!** Did you honestly expect us to buy that nonsense?
Your brother joining them doesn't even make sense!
Think about it: what kind of complete half-wit would just let a guy join them right after that person tried to ***kill*** them?
That person would have to be pretty stupid. Like, ***really*** dumb.>

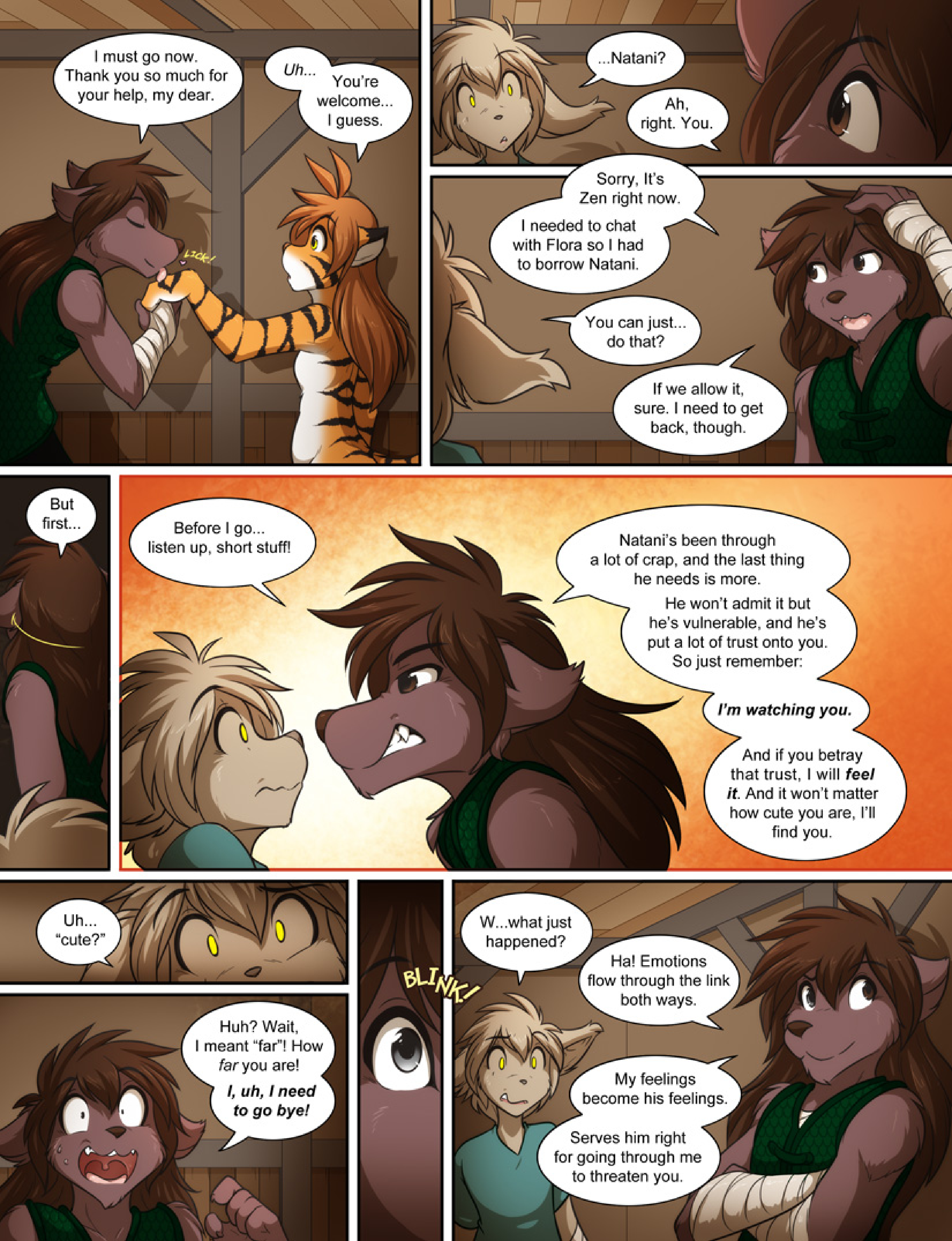

Meanwhile, on the other side of the link...
Natani, I really don't think all this is necessary.
I feel fine!
Yeah, right.
Not long ago you could barely walk. We have a lot of work to do.
I mean, just look at these flabby arms!
My arms look exactly the same!
Exactly! I know you have that natural girly figure, but you're supposed to be a "general" now.
I do *not* have a girly figure!
Then throw a punch already! Or are your poor, girly arms just too weak to be sparring right n
BAM!
Gah! *My face! Why the face?!*
I– I thought you were ready!
I'm sorry! I didn't mean to
WUMPH!
Gotcha!

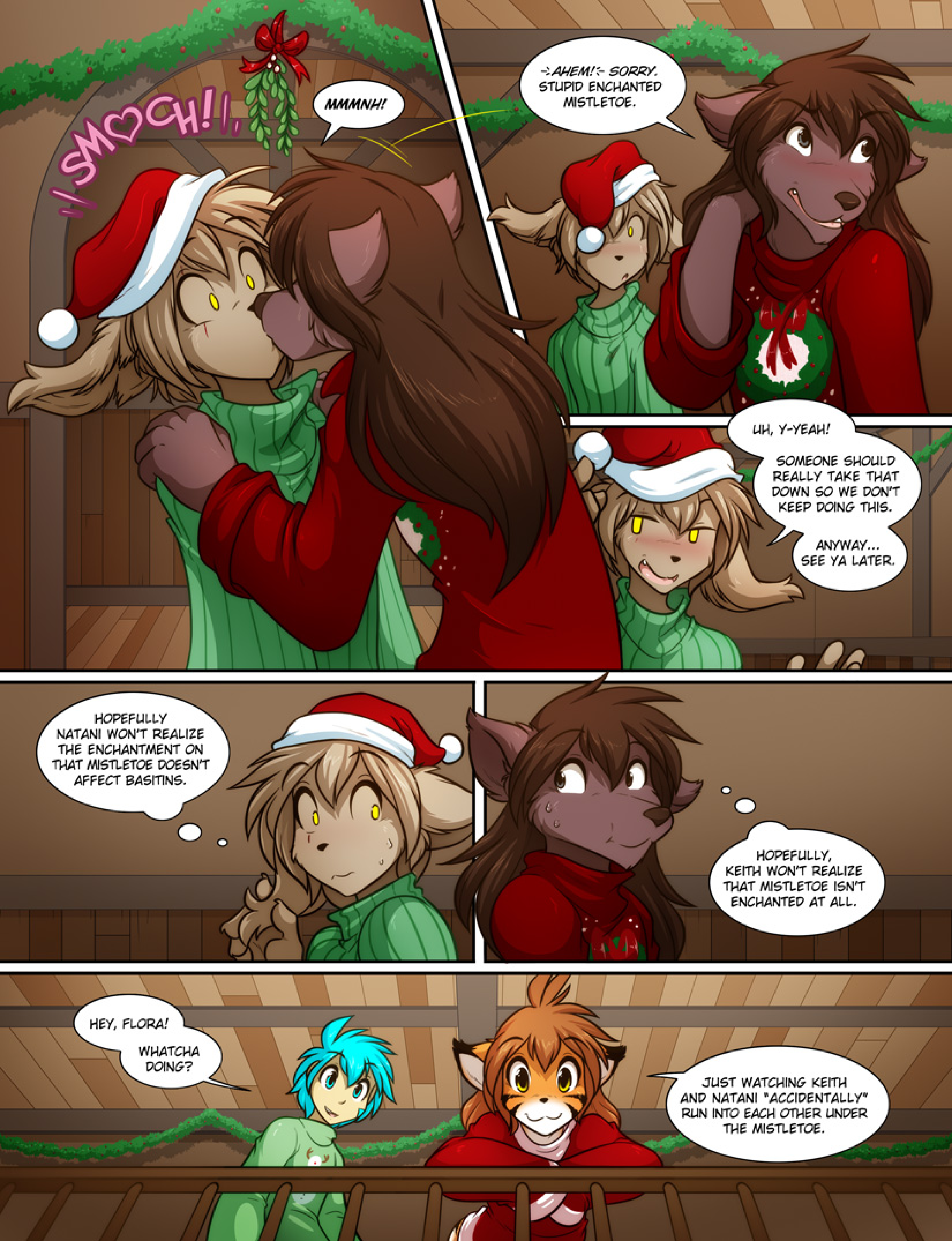

Oldest trick in the book. 'Eh, Keith?
...*Keith?*
Ah! I forgot you were weakened!
I... I didn't mean to hit you that hard, really! Are you okay?
Y-yeah...
I'm alright.
Oh, good, for a minute I thought I'd–
Argh!
CRUNCH!
You're right! Oldest trick!
THUMP!
CRACK!
BANG!
Not sure why I'd think about Sythe now of all times...
Mrrow?
Hey! What's going on?! Stop it, you guys!
Whatever's wrong, you don't have to fight!
Huh? "Wrong?"
I... uh... isn't there?
No?
Well... uh... nevermind, then, I guess.
SIGH...
Boys.
I guess maybe we did overdo it.
Er, yeah, maybe... just a bit...
...Natani?
Ah!

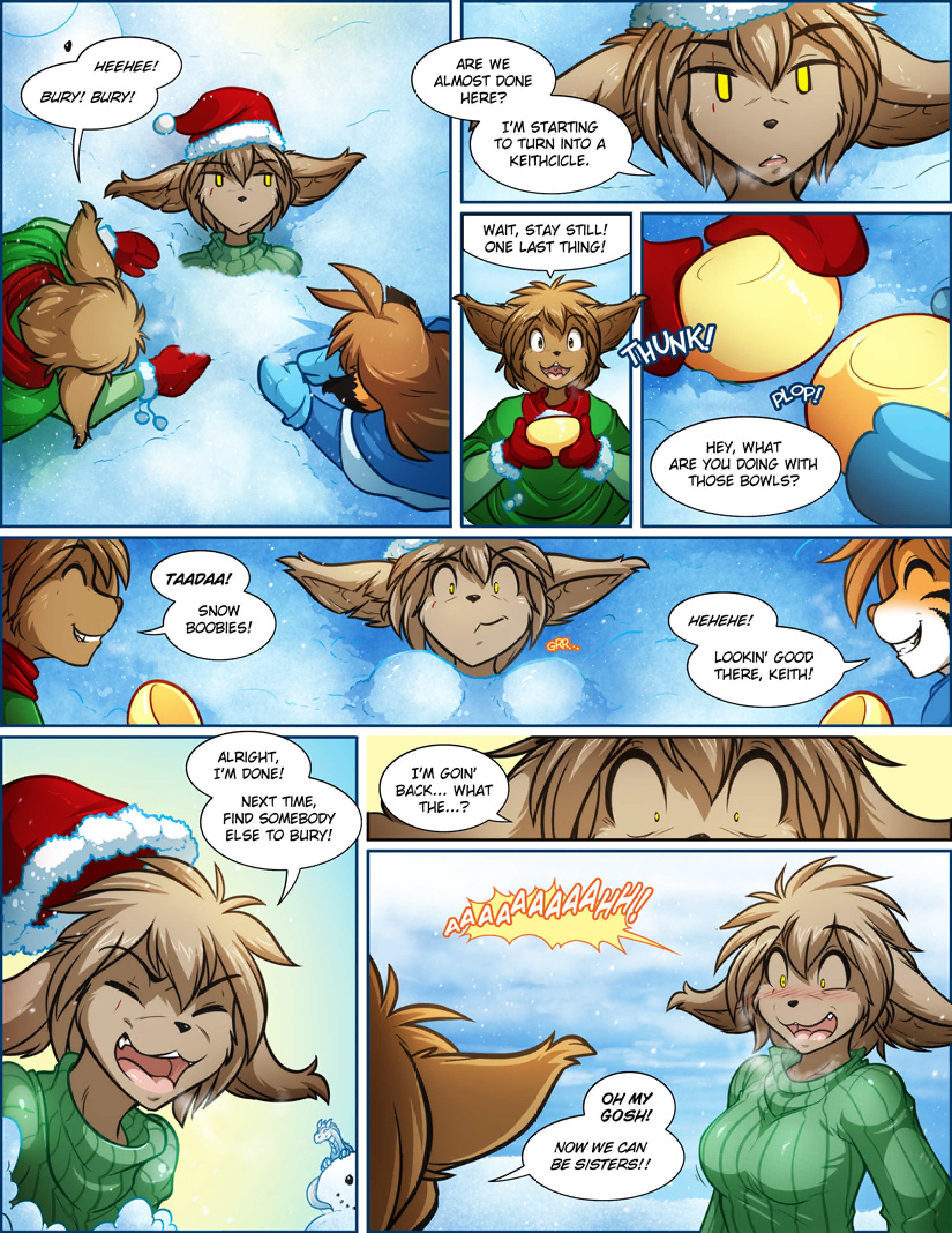

Argh!
Oh, Zen! H-hey! Listen, I can explain...
Whatever it is, it can wait! I'm in a bit of a bind at the moment...
...literally.
What do you mean? What's been going...
Snrk...
Natani, don't...
Well well well, look who's finally lost his clothes this time!
Oh, har har!
Fine, I deserve that! But how 'bout we save it for when I'm not in mortal danger?
Mortal danger? Why didn't you call for me sooner?!
I didn't want you to worry unless you could help.
It'd take too long to explain, look through my memories. But for now I need to talk to someone through you! Quickly!
Flora, wait!

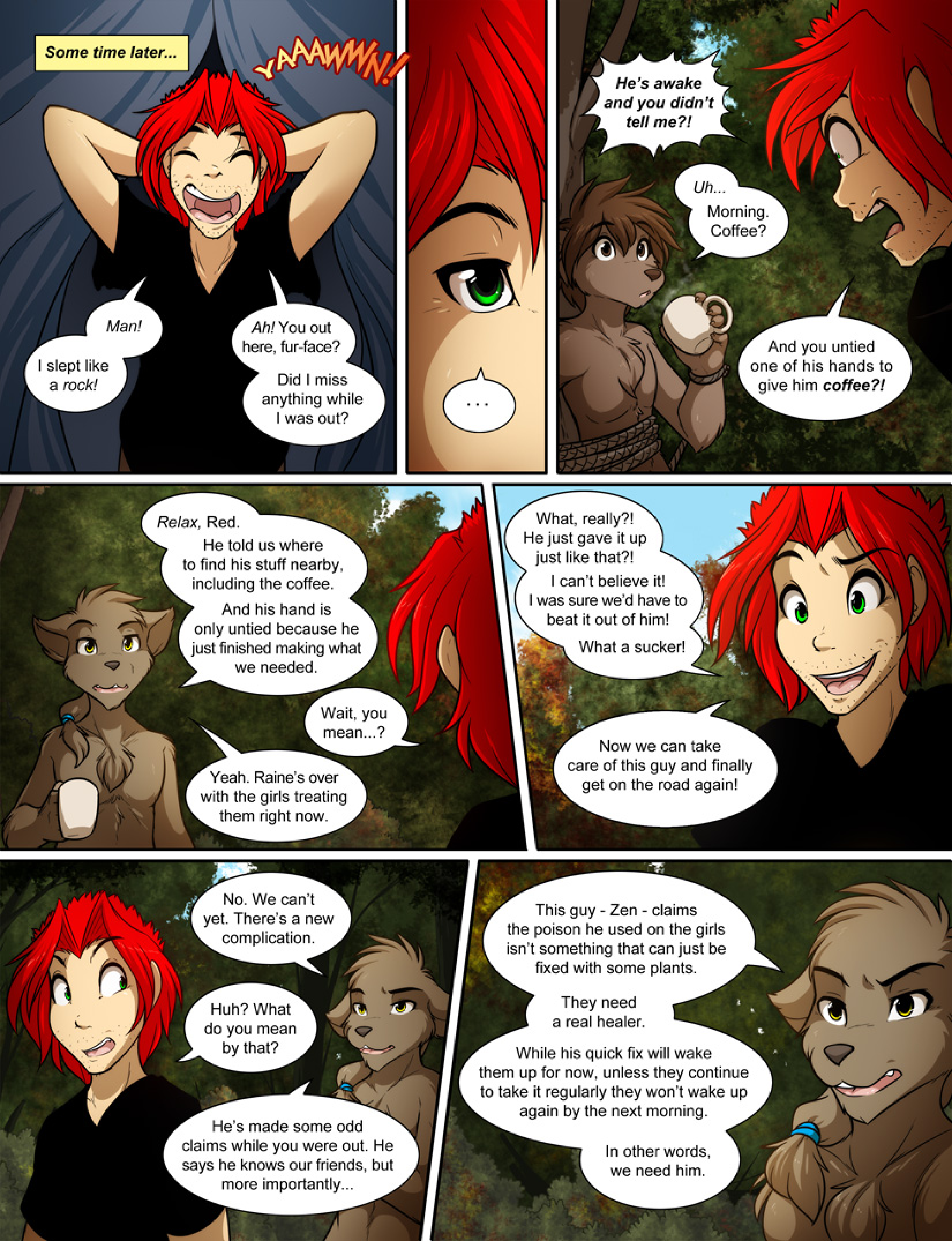

I know this is going to be really weird, but I need you to help me with something, quickly!
Yeah, sure, Natani. What is it?
And... wait, didn't one of your eyes used to be grey before?
That... nevermind that. Just listen!
I forgot how cute Flora was in person.
Focus, Zen.
Great. Now he's just staring off into space.
I don't know what he hopes to gain from this act.
He probably just wants a reason for us not to hurt him.
A crazy story about imaginary friends isn't helping his case.
He's a magic-user. He's dangerous.
Sure, we only found drained mana crystals in his stuff, but who knows what else he might have hidden?
Wait! You found mana crystals when you searched him?!
Well... yeah, but they were dead. Why?
Even an "empty" mana crystal is useful! The crystal itself can be ground up for runecrafting, circles...
I might be able to fix my shackle! I'll be right back!
Well... at least she's happier. But it still doesn't help our current situation!
Maybe I should just wait and let Red handle this guy. I'm sure he'd love t–
Your ponytail looks stupid!

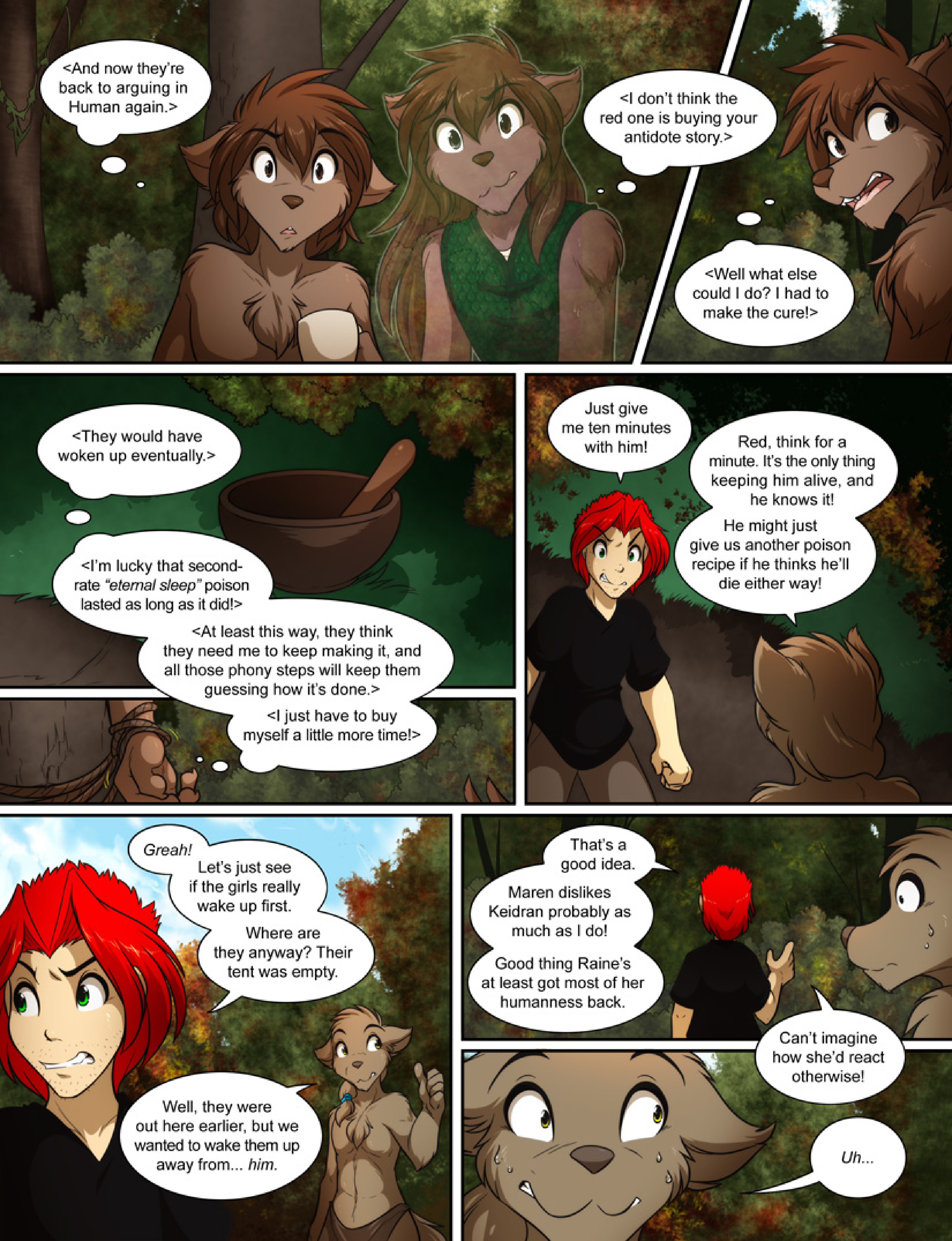

Alright, ***that's it!*** I've had it with that attitude of yours!
Wait, wait!
That wasn't me!
I was quoting Flora.
W...what?
It's what she said, wasn't it?
When you two first met. She was angry at the arranged marriage.
She called your ponytail stupid.
But that... y-you could have guessed that!
She also says the whole way back she tried knocking it off your shoulder when you weren't looking.
And that the first night, she stole your fancy clothes and made you go the rest of the way in a loincloth. Guess you still haven't found them?
Alright, stop it!
How could you possibly know that?!
Did you torture her for information before you killed her?
Oh, yeah, sure!
We always ask our targets irrelevant trivia questions about their pasts before we take them out.
It's in the assassin's handbook, under "*pointless*".
Enough with the sarcasm!
Even if there's some truth to all of this, you still attacked us!
Do you expect me to just let you go?!
I'd settle for not killing me?
You're going to need me, for the sake of those girls. They're worse off than you realize.

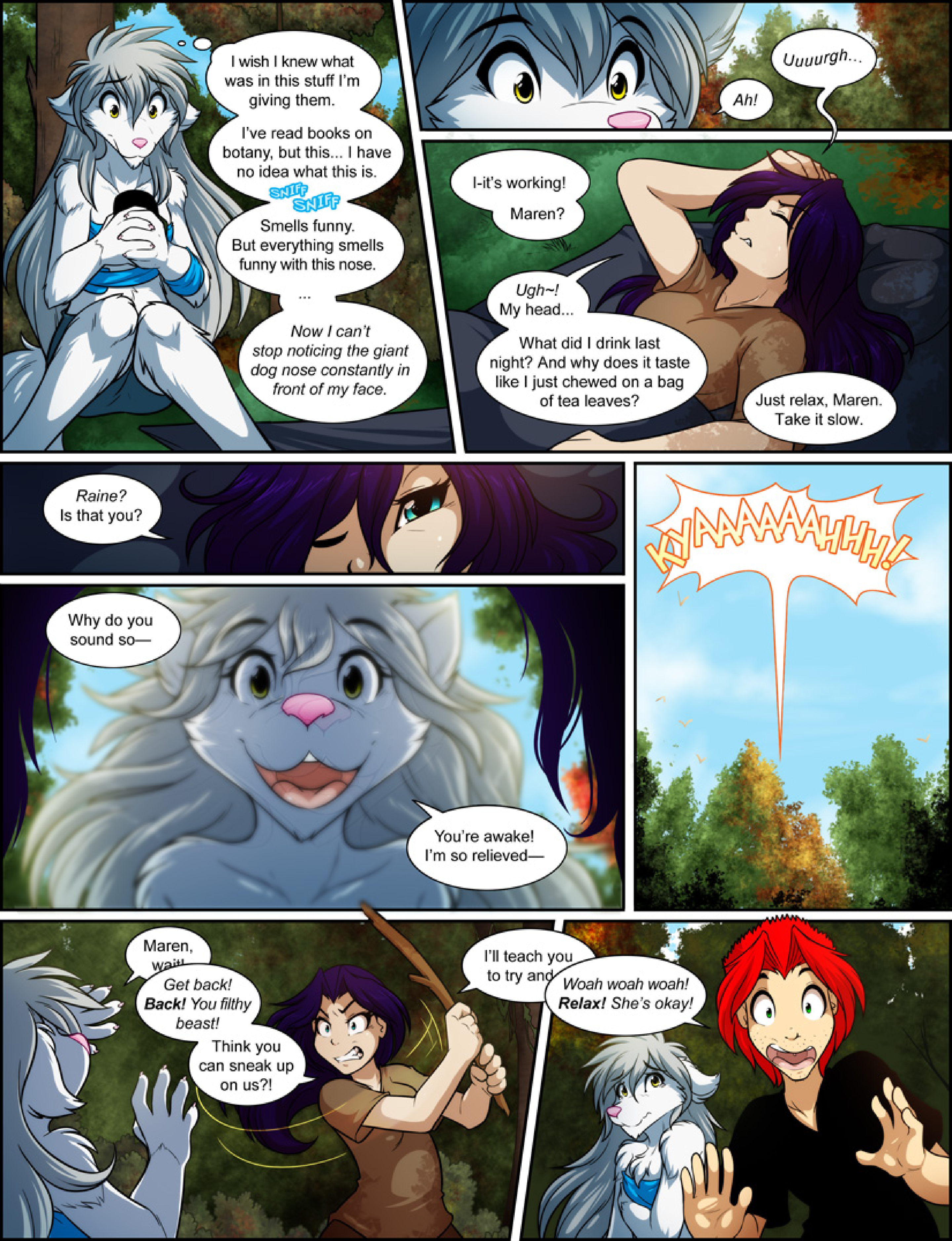

I must go now. Thank you so much for your help, my dear.
LICK!
Uh... You're welcome... I guess.
...Natani?
Ah, right. You.
Sorry, It's Zen right now.
I needed to chat with Flora so I had to borrow Natani.
You can just... do that?
If we allow it, sure. I need to get back, though.
But first...
Before I go... listen up, short stuff!
Natani's been through a lot of crap, and the last thing he needs is more.
He won't admit it but he's vulnerable, and he's put a lot of trust onto you. So just remember:
I'm watching you.
And if you betray that trust, I will ***feel it***. And it won't matter how cute you are, I'll find you.
Uh... "cute?"
Huh? Wait, I meant "far"! How *far* you are!
I, uh, I need to go bye!
BLINK!
W...what just happened?
Ha! Emotions flow through the link both ways.
My feelings become his feelings.
Serves him right for going through me to threaten you.

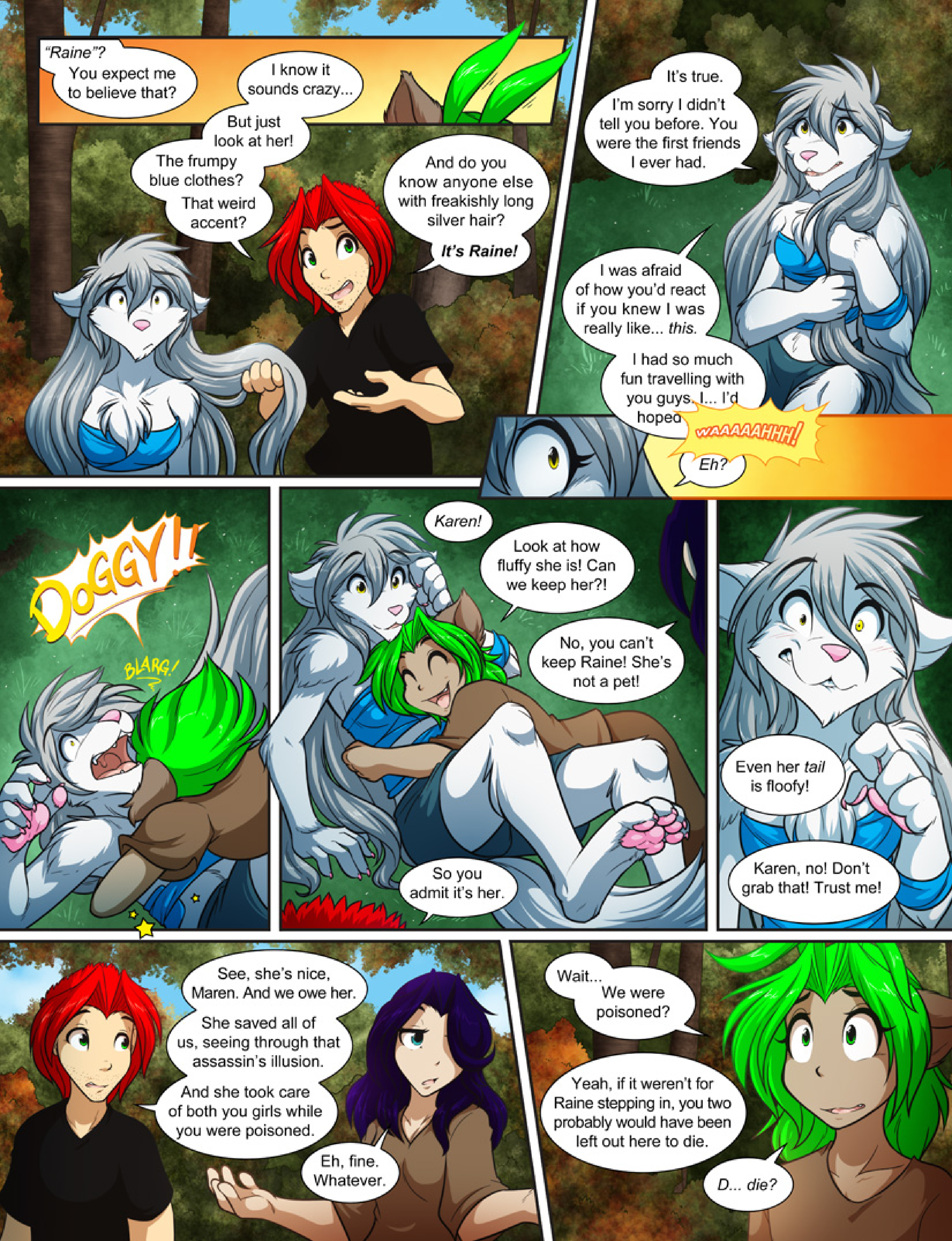

SMOOCH!
MMMNH!
-AHEM!- SORRY. STUPID ENCHANTED MISTLETOE.
UH, Y-YEAH!
SOMEONE SHOULD REALLY TAKE THAT DOWN SO WE DON'T KEEP DOING THIS.
ANYWAY... SEE YA LATER.
HOPEFULLY NATANI WON'T REALIZE THE ENCHANTMENT ON THAT MISTLETOE DOESN'T AFFECT BASITINS.
HOPEFULLY, KEITH WON'T REALIZE THAT MISTLETOE ISN'T ENCHANTED AT ALL.
HEY, FLORA!
WHATCHA DOING?
JUST WATCHING KEITH AND NATANI "ACCIDENTALLY" RUN INTO EACH OTHER UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

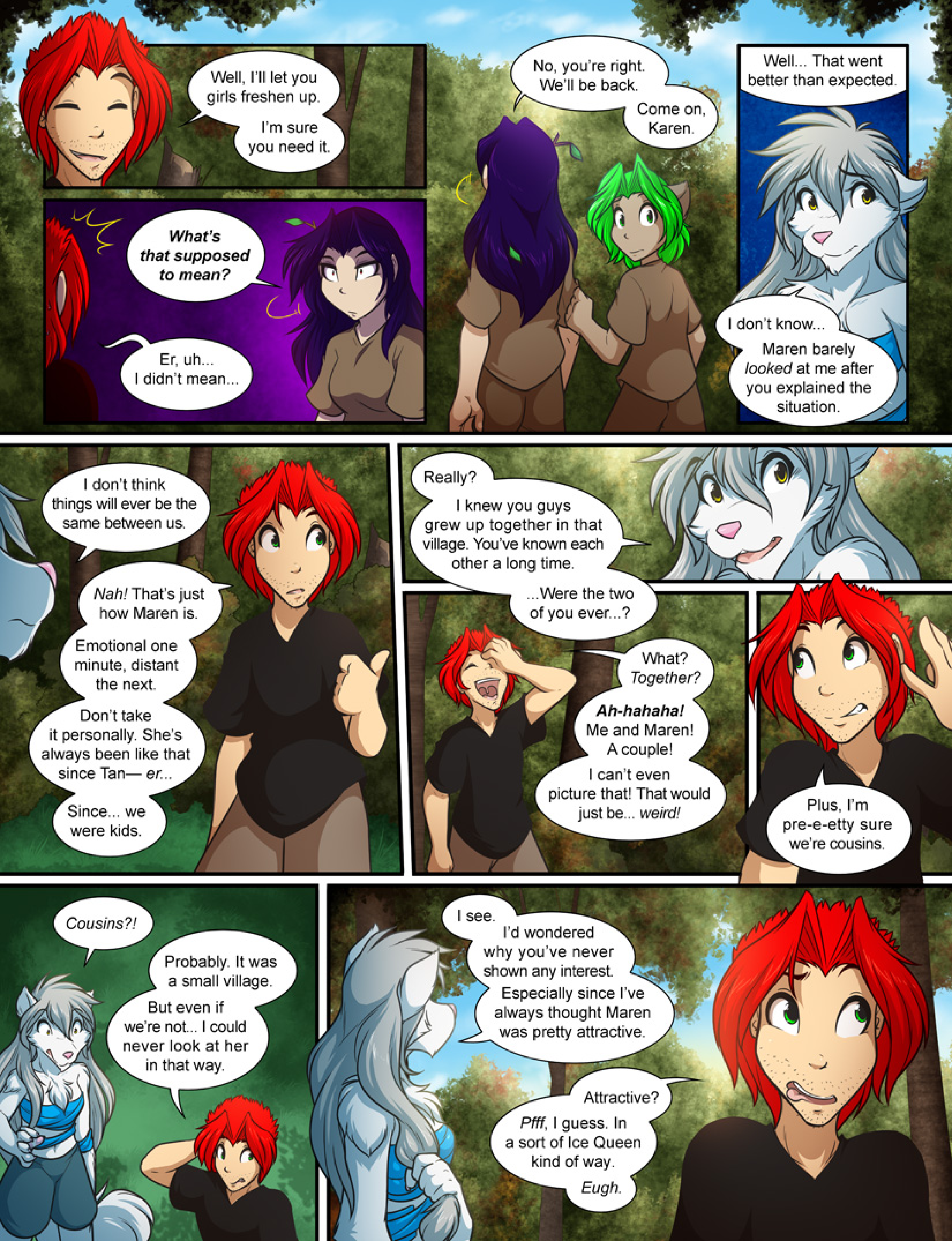

HEEHEE!
BURY! BURY!
ARE WE ALMOST DONE HERE?
I'M STARTING TO TURN INTO A KEITHCICLE.
WAIT, STAY STILL! ONE LAST THING!
THUNK!
PLOP!
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THOSE BOWLS?
TAADAA!
SNOW BOOBIES!
GRR..
HEHEHE!
LOOKIN' GOOD THERE, KEITH!
ALRIGHT, I'M DONE!
NEXT TIME, FIND SOMEBODY ELSE TO BURY!
I'M GOIN' BACK... WHAT THE...?
AAAAAAAAHH!!
OH MY GOSH!
NOW WE CAN BE SISTERS!!

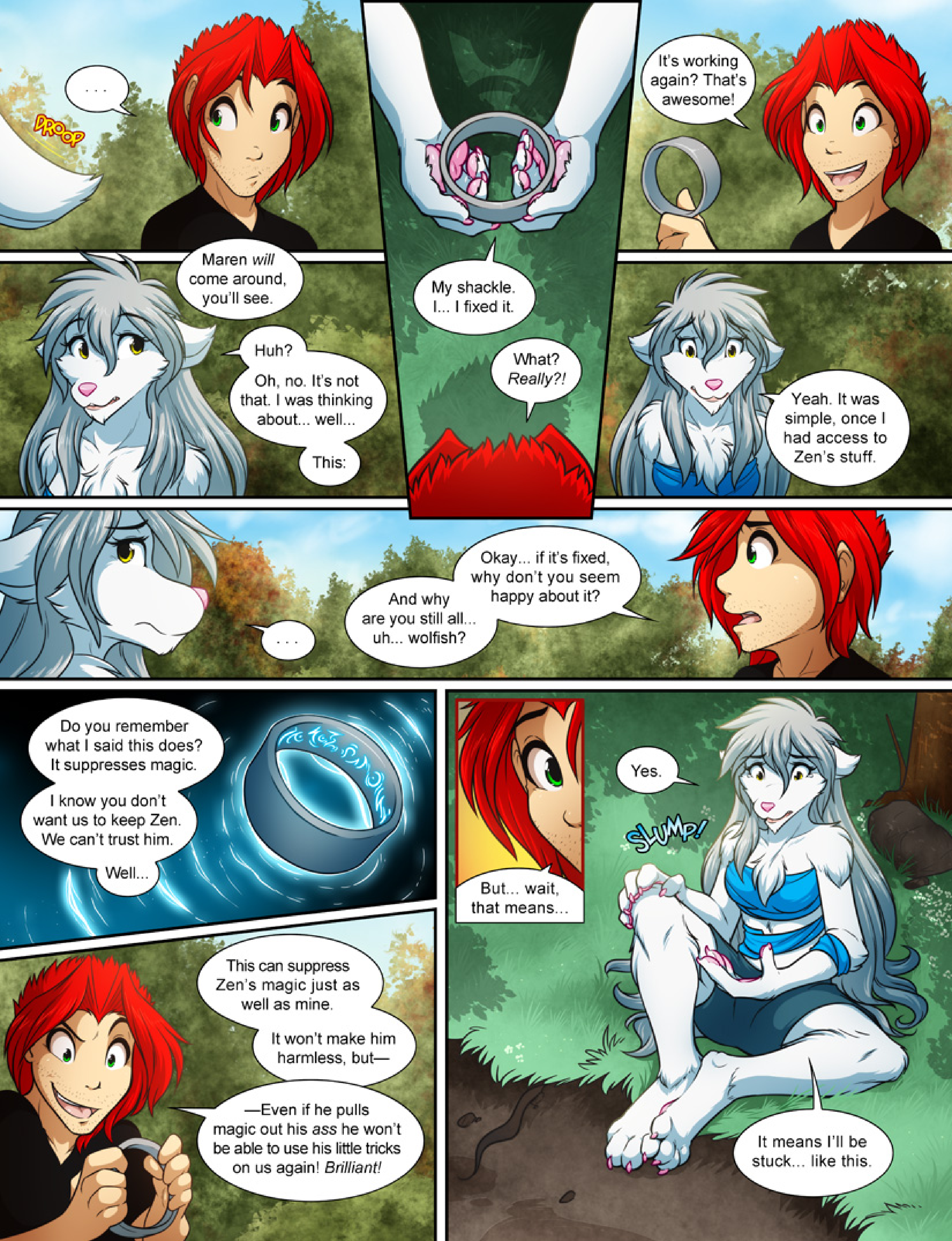

Some time later...
YAAAWWN!
Man!
I slept like a *rock!*
Ah! You out here, fur-face?
Did I miss anything while I was out?
...
He's awake and you didn't tell me?!
Uh... Morning. Coffee?
And you untied one of his hands to give him ***coffee?!***
Relax, Red.
He told us where to find his stuff nearby, including the coffee.
And his hand is only untied because he just finished making what we needed.
Wait, you mean...?
Yeah. Raine's over with the girls treating them right now.
What, really?! He just gave it up just like that?!
I can't believe it! I was sure we'd have to beat it out of him!
What a sucker!
Now we can take care of this guy and finally get on the road again!
No. We can't yet. There's a new complication.
Huh? What do you mean by that?
He's made some odd claims while you were out. He says he knows our friends, but more importantly...
This guy - Zen - claims the poison he used on the girls isn't something that can just be fixed with some plants.
They need a real healer.
While his quick fix will wake them up for now, unless they continue to take it regularly they won't wake up again by the next morning.
In other words, we need him.

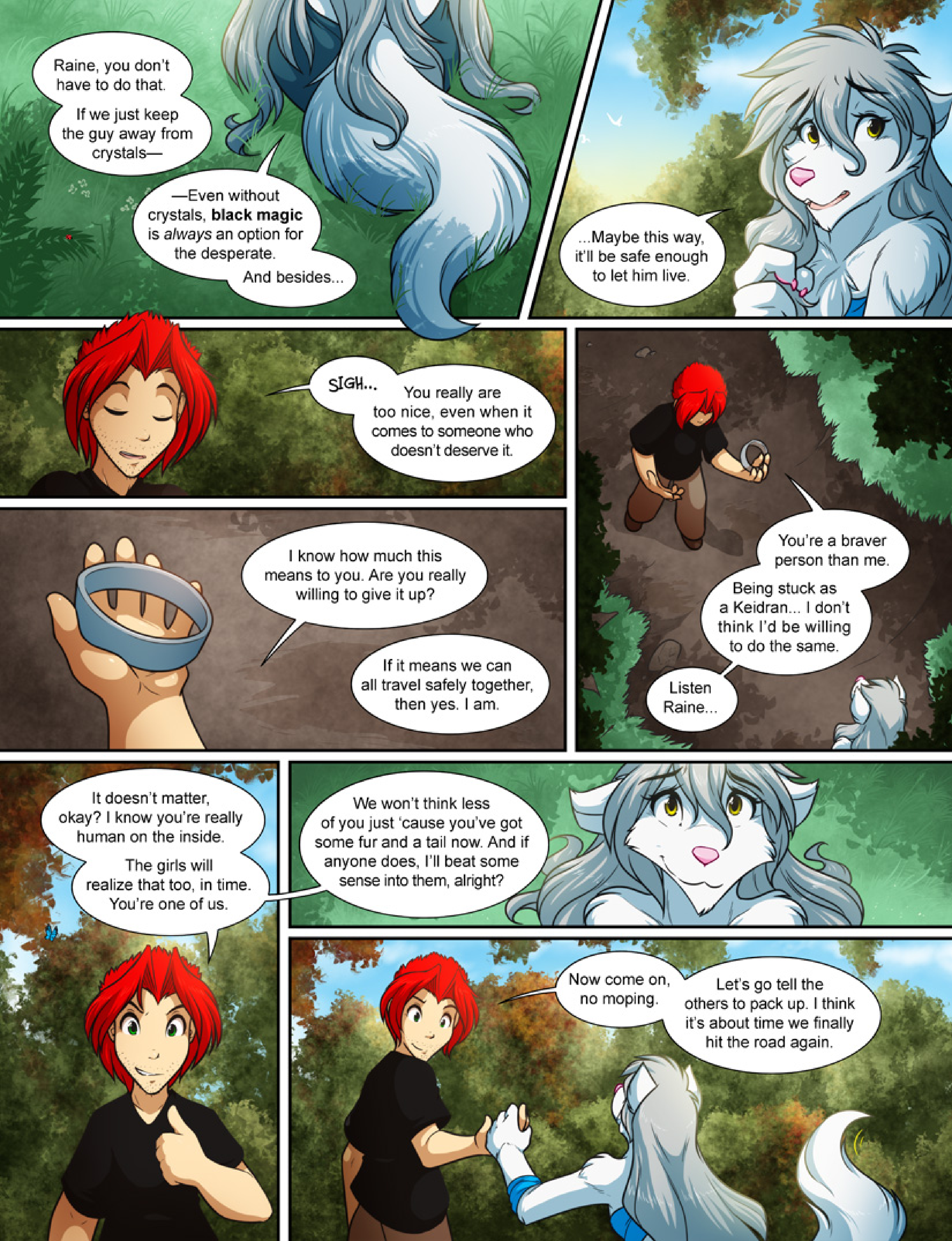

<And now they're back to arguing in Human again.>
<I don't think the red one is buying your antidote story.>
<Well what else could I do? I had to make the cure!>
<They would have woken up eventually.>
<I'm lucky that second-rate *"eternal sleep"* poison lasted as long as it did!>
<At least this way, they think they need me to keep making it, and all those phony steps will keep them guessing how it's done.>
<I just have to buy myself a little more time!>
Just give me ten minutes with him!
Red, think for a minute. It's the only thing keeping him alive, and he knows it!
He might just give us another poison recipe if he thinks he'll die either way!
Greah!
Let's just see if the girls really wake up first.
Where are they anyway? Their tent was empty.
Well, they were out here earlier, but we wanted to wake them up away from... *him.*
That's a good idea.
Maren dislikes Keidran probably as much as I do!
Good thing Raine's at least got most of her humanness back.
Can't imagine how she'd react otherwise!
Uh...

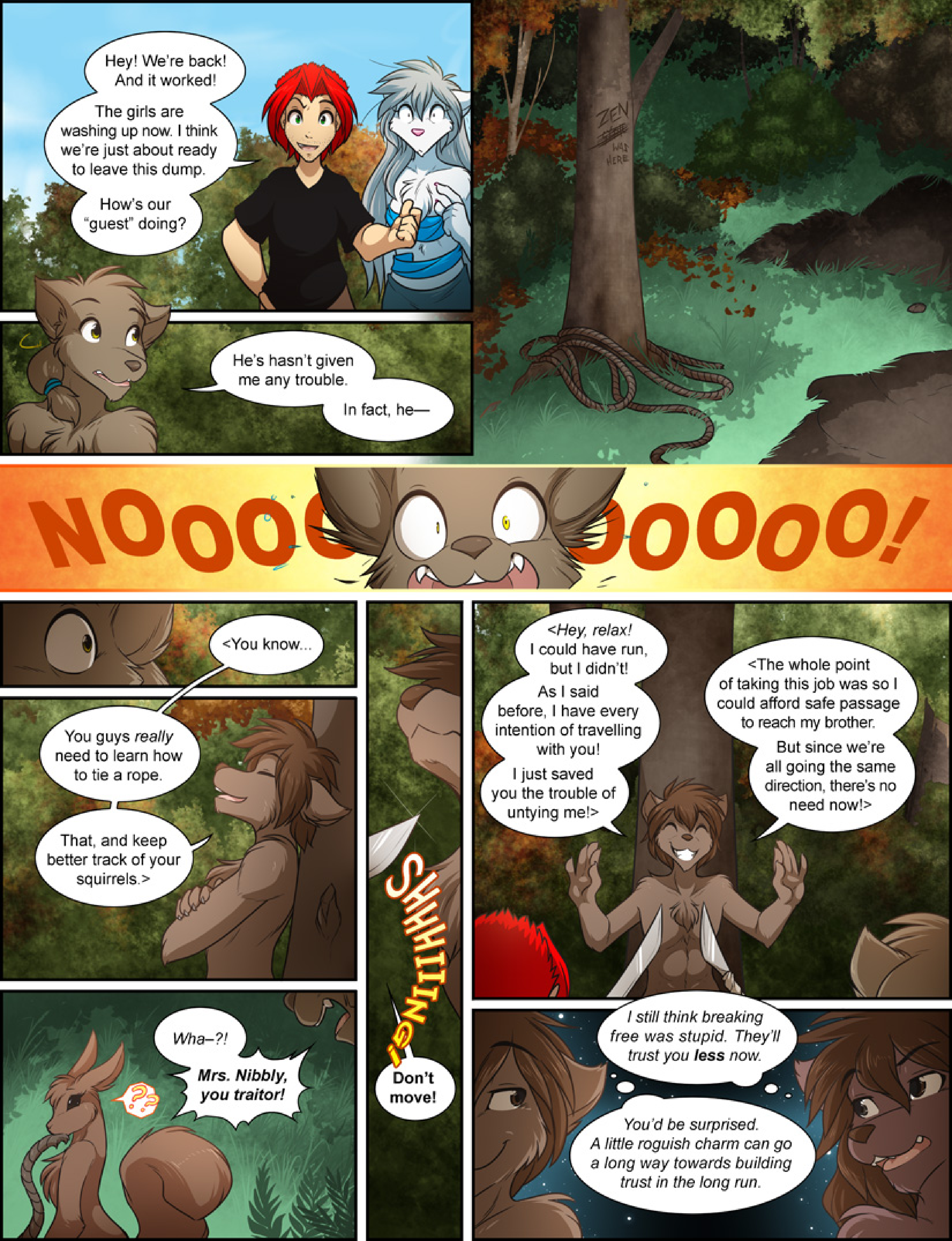

I wish I knew what was in this stuff I'm giving them.
I've read books on botany, but this... I have no idea what this is.
SNIFF SNIFF
Smells funny. But everything smells funny with this nose.
...
Now I can't stop noticing the giant dog nose constantly in front of my face.
Uuuurgh...
Ah!
I-it's working!
Maren?
Ugh~! My head...
What did I drink last night? And why does it taste like I just chewed on a bag of tea leaves?
Just relax, Maren. Take it slow.
Raine? Is that you?
Why do you sound so—
You're awake! I'm so relieved—
KYAAAAAAHHH!
Maren, wait!
*Get back! **Back!** You filthy beast!*
Think you can sneak up on us?!
I'll teach you to try and
*Woah woah woah! **Relax!** She's okay!*

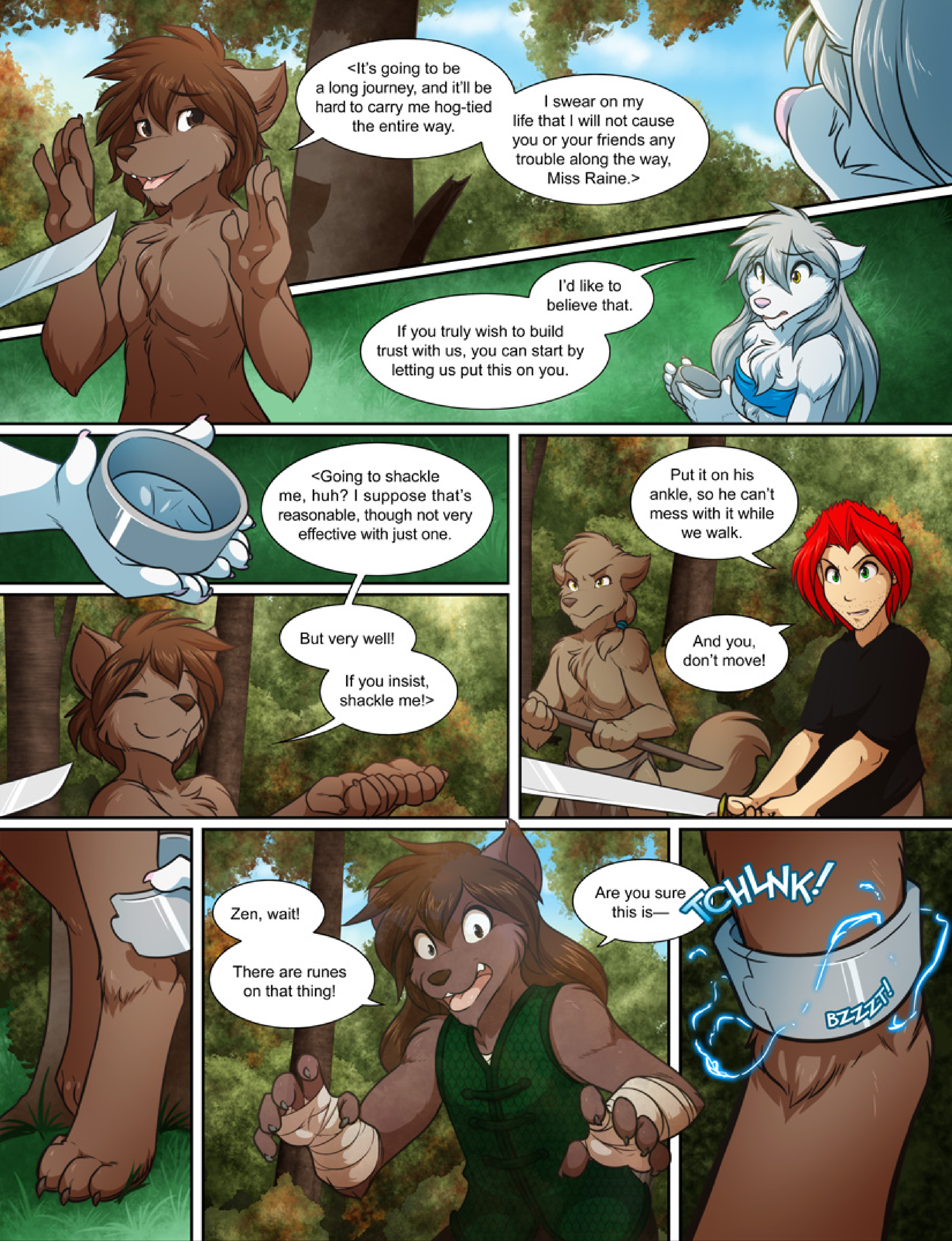

"Raine"? You expect me to believe that?
I know it sounds crazy...
But just look at her!
The frumpy blue clothes?
That weird accent?
And do you know anyone else with freakishly long silver hair?
It's Raine!
It's true.
I'm sorry I didn't tell you before. You were the first friends I ever had.
I was afraid of how you'd react if you knew I was really like... *this.*
I had so much fun travelling with you guys. I... I'd hoped
WAAAAAHHH!
Eh?
DOGGY!!
BLARG!
Karen!
Look at how fluffy she is! Can we keep her?!
No, you can't keep Raine! She's not a pet!
So you admit it's her.
Even her *tail* is floofy!
Karen, no! Don't grab that! Trust me!
See, she's nice, Maren. And we owe her.
She saved all of us, seeing through that assassin's illusion.
And she took care of both you girls while you were poisoned.
Eh, fine. Whatever.
Wait... We were poisoned?
Yeah, if it weren't for Raine stepping in, you two probably would have been left out here to die.
D... die?

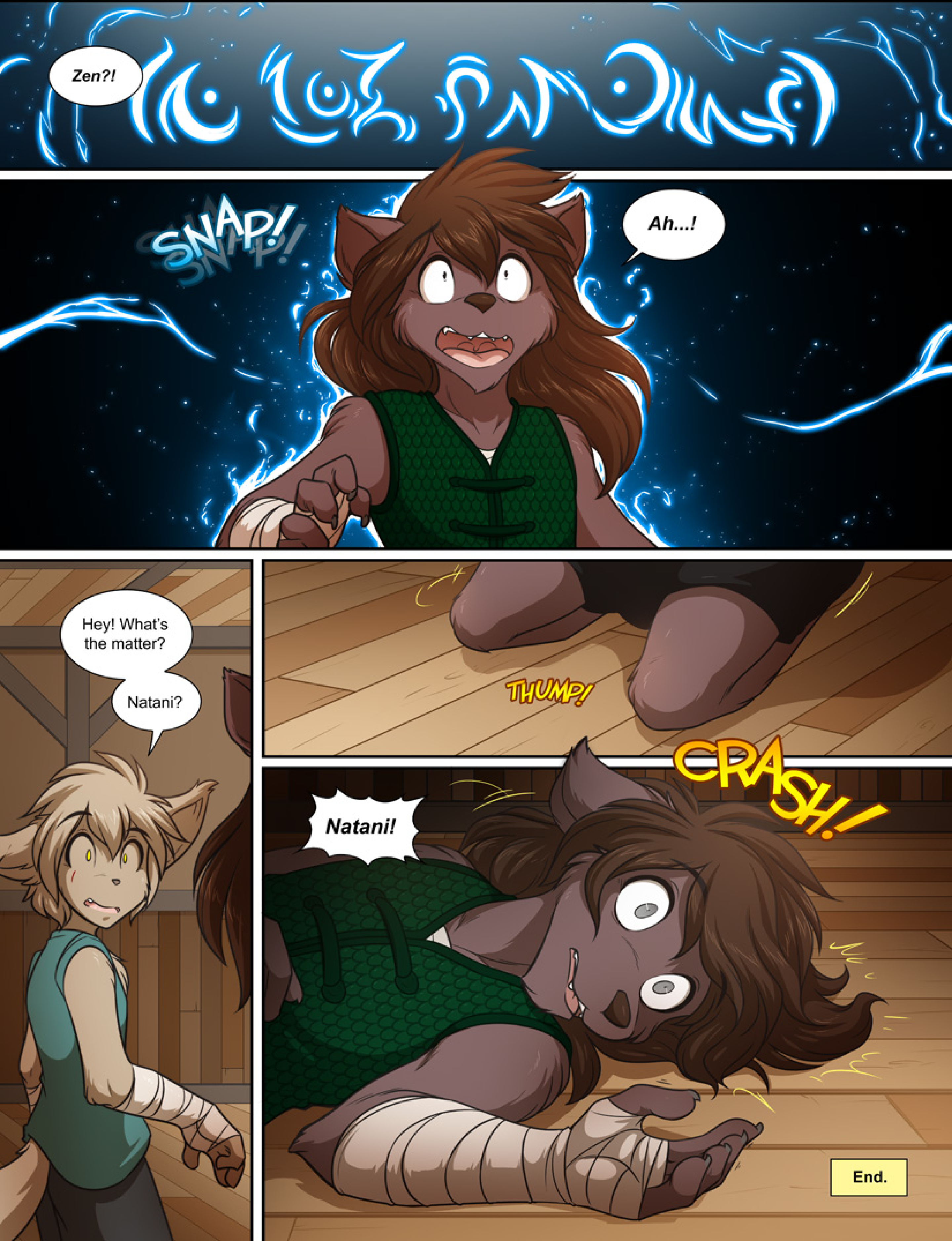

Well, I'll let you girls freshen up.
I'm sure you need it.
What's that supposed to mean?
Er, uh... I didn't mean...
No, you're right. We'll be back.
Come on, Karen.
Well... That went better than expected.
I don't know...
Maren barely *looked* at me after you explained the situation.
I don't think things will ever be the same between us.
Nah! That's just how Maren is.
Emotional one minute, distant the next.
Don't take it personally. She's always been like that since Tan— *er...*
Since... we were kids.
Really?
I knew you guys grew up together in that village. You've known each other a long time.
...Were the two of you ever...?
What? *Together?*
Ah-hahaha! Me and Maren! A couple!
I can't even picture that! That would just be... *weird!*
Plus, I'm pre-e-etty sure we're cousins.
Cousins?!
Probably. It was a small village.
But even if we're not... I could never look at her in that way.
I see.
I'd wondered why you've never shown any interest.
Especially since I've always thought Maren was pretty attractive.
Attractive?
Pfff, I guess. In a sort of Ice Queen kind of way.
Eugh.


DROOP
. . .
My shackle. I... I fixed it.
What? *Really?!*
It's working again? That's awesome!
Maren *will* come around, you'll see.
Huh?
Oh, no. It's not that. I was thinking about... well...
This:
Yeah. It was simple, once I had access to Zen's stuff.
Okay... if it's fixed, why don't you seem happy about it?
And why are you still all... uh... wolfish?
. . .
Do you remember what I said this does? It suppresses magic.
I know you don't want us to keep Zen. We can't trust him.
Well...
This can suppress Zen's magic just as well as mine.
It won't make him harmless, but—
—Even if he pulls magic out his *ass* he won't be able to use his little tricks on us again! *Brilliant!*
But... wait, that means...
Yes.
SLUMP!
It means I'll be stuck... like this.

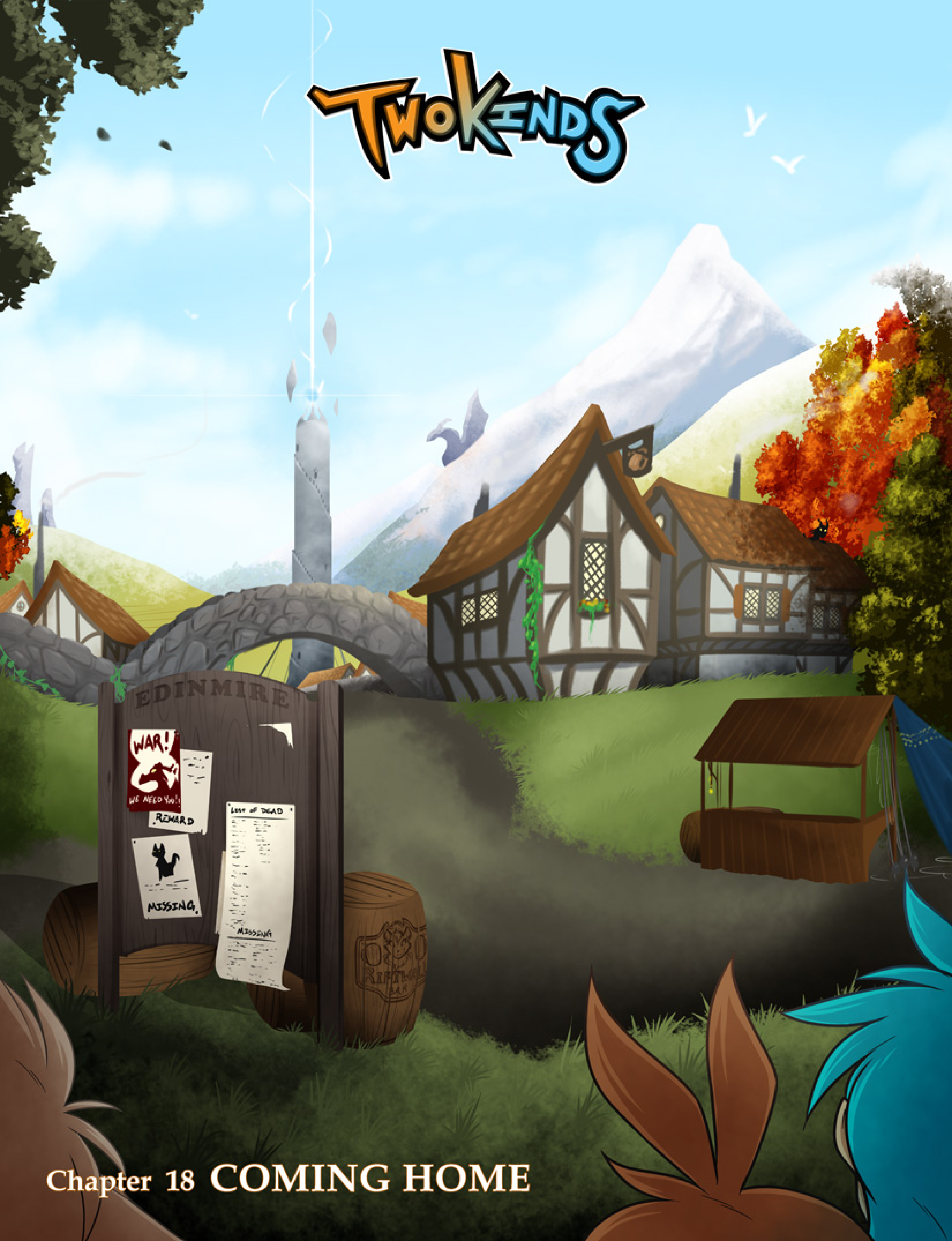

Raine, you don't have to do that.
If we just keep the guy away from crystals—
—Even without crystals, **black magic** is *always* an option for the desperate.
And besides...
...Maybe this way, it'll be safe enough to let him live.
SIGH...
You really are too nice, even when it comes to someone who doesn't deserve it.
I know how much this means to you. Are you really willing to give it up?
If it means we can all travel safely together, then yes. I am.
You're a braver person than me.
Being stuck as a Keidran... I don't think I'd be willing to do the same.
Listen Raine...
It doesn't matter, okay? I know you're really human on the inside.
The girls will realize that too, in time. You're one of us.
We won't think less of you just 'cause you've got some fur and a tail now. And if anyone does, I'll beat some sense into them, alright?
Now come on, no moping.
Let's go tell the others to pack up. I think it's about time we finally hit the road again.


Hey! We're back! And it worked!
The girls are washing up now. I think we're just about ready to leave this dump.
How's our "guest" doing?
He's hasn't given me any trouble.
In fact, he—
ZEN
WAS HERE
NOOOOOOOOOO!
<You know...
You guys *really* need to learn how to tie a rope.
That, and keep better track of your squirrels.>
Wha–?!
Mrs. Nibbly, you traitor!
SHHHIIING!
Don't move!
<*Hey, relax!* I could have run, but I didn't!
As I said before, I have every intention of travelling with you!
I just saved you the trouble of untying me!>
<The whole point of taking this job was so I could afford safe passage to reach my brother.
But since we're all going the same direction, there's no need now!>
*I still think breaking free was stupid. They'll trust you **less** now.*
You'd be surprised. A little roguish charm can go a long way towards building trust in the long run.

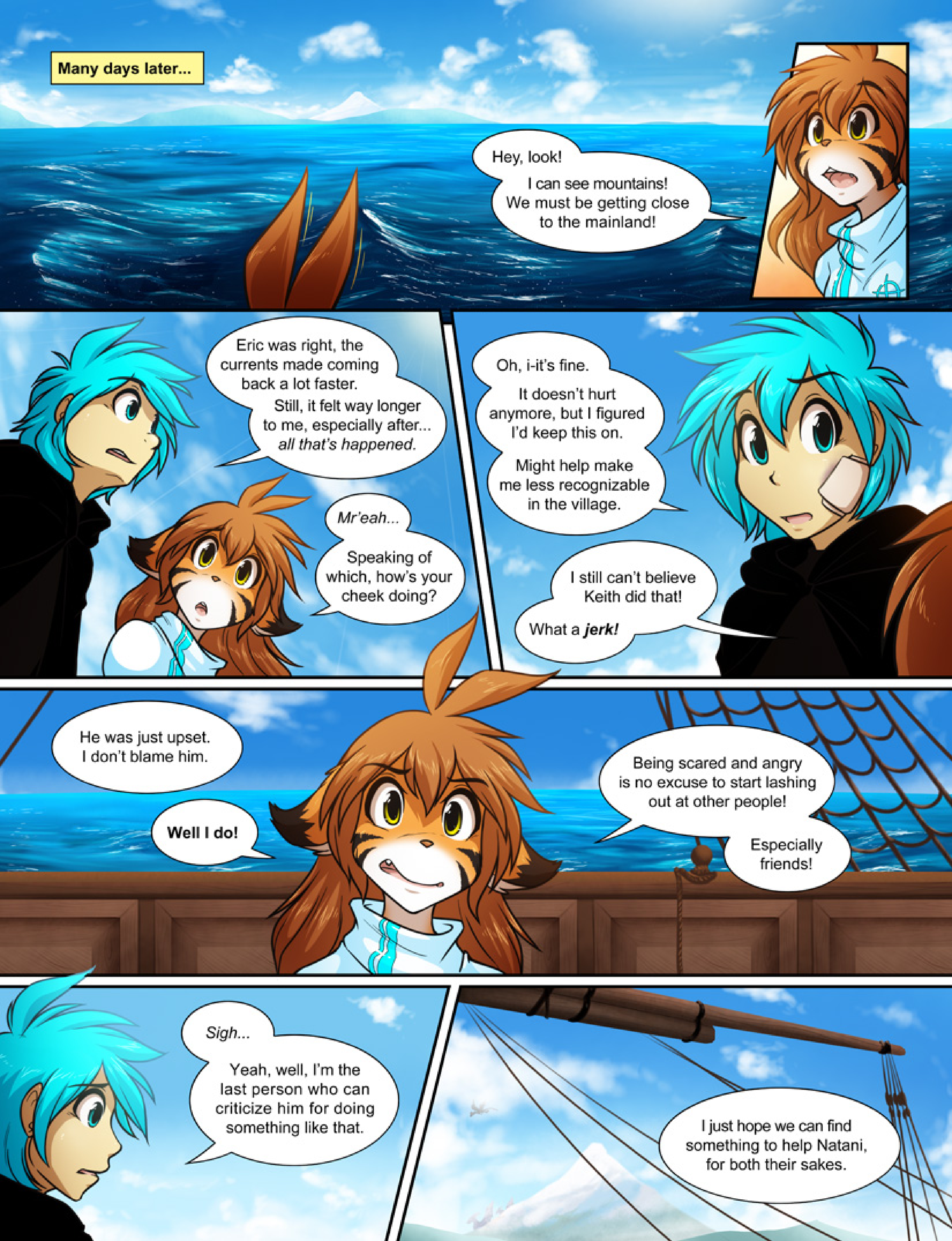

<It's going to be a long journey, and it'll be hard to carry me hog-tied the entire way.
I swear on my life that I will not cause you or your friends any trouble along the way, Miss Raine.>
I'd like to believe that.
If you truly wish to build trust with us, you can start by letting us put this on you.
<Going to shackle me, huh? I suppose that's reasonable, though not very effective with just one.
But very well!
If you insist, shackle me!>
Put it on his ankle, so he can't mess with it while we walk.
And you, don't move!
Zen, wait!
There are runes on that thing!
Are you sure this is—
TCHLNK!
BZZZT!

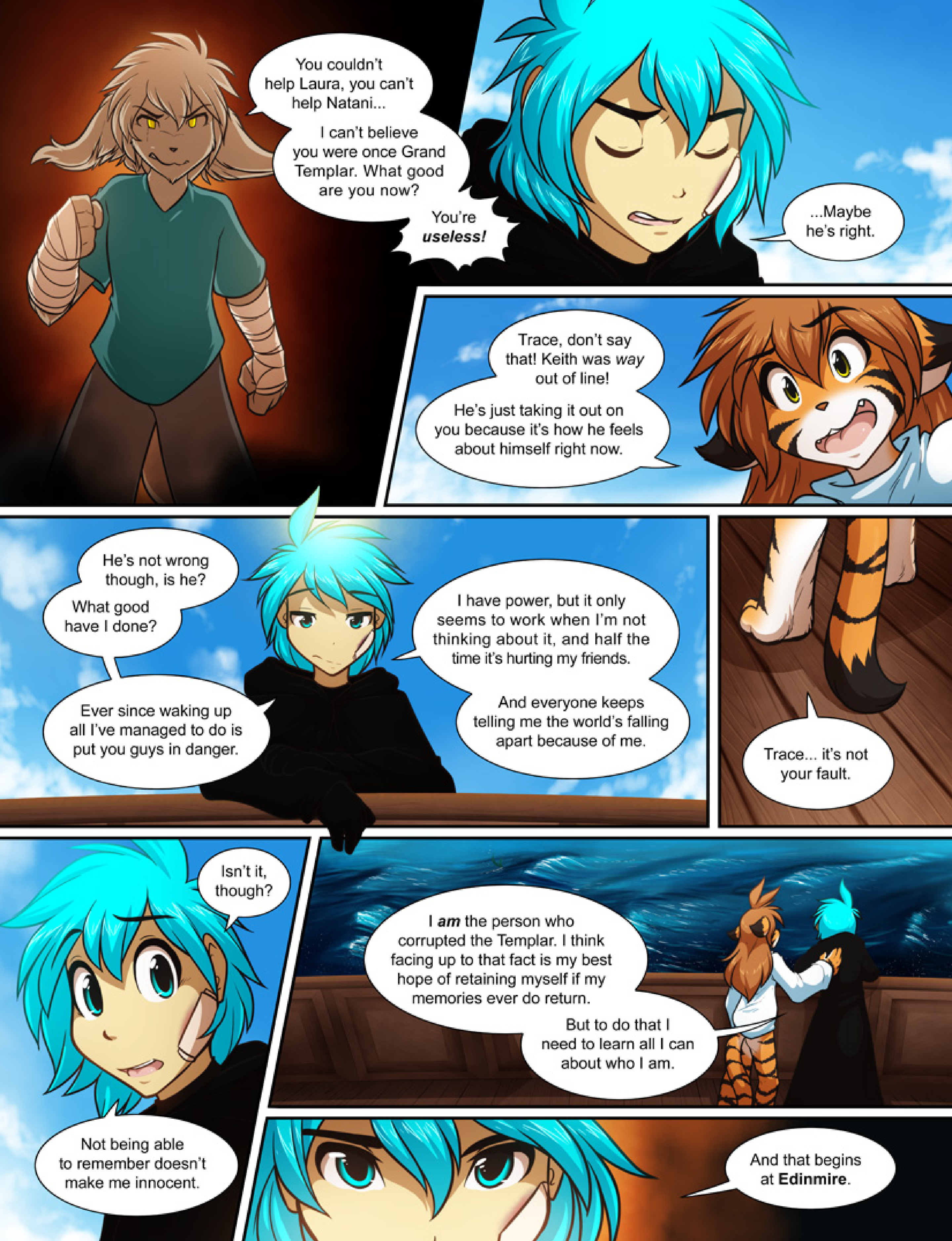

Zen?!
SNAP!
Ah...!
Hey! What's the matter?
Natani?
THUMP!
CRASH!!
Natani!
End.

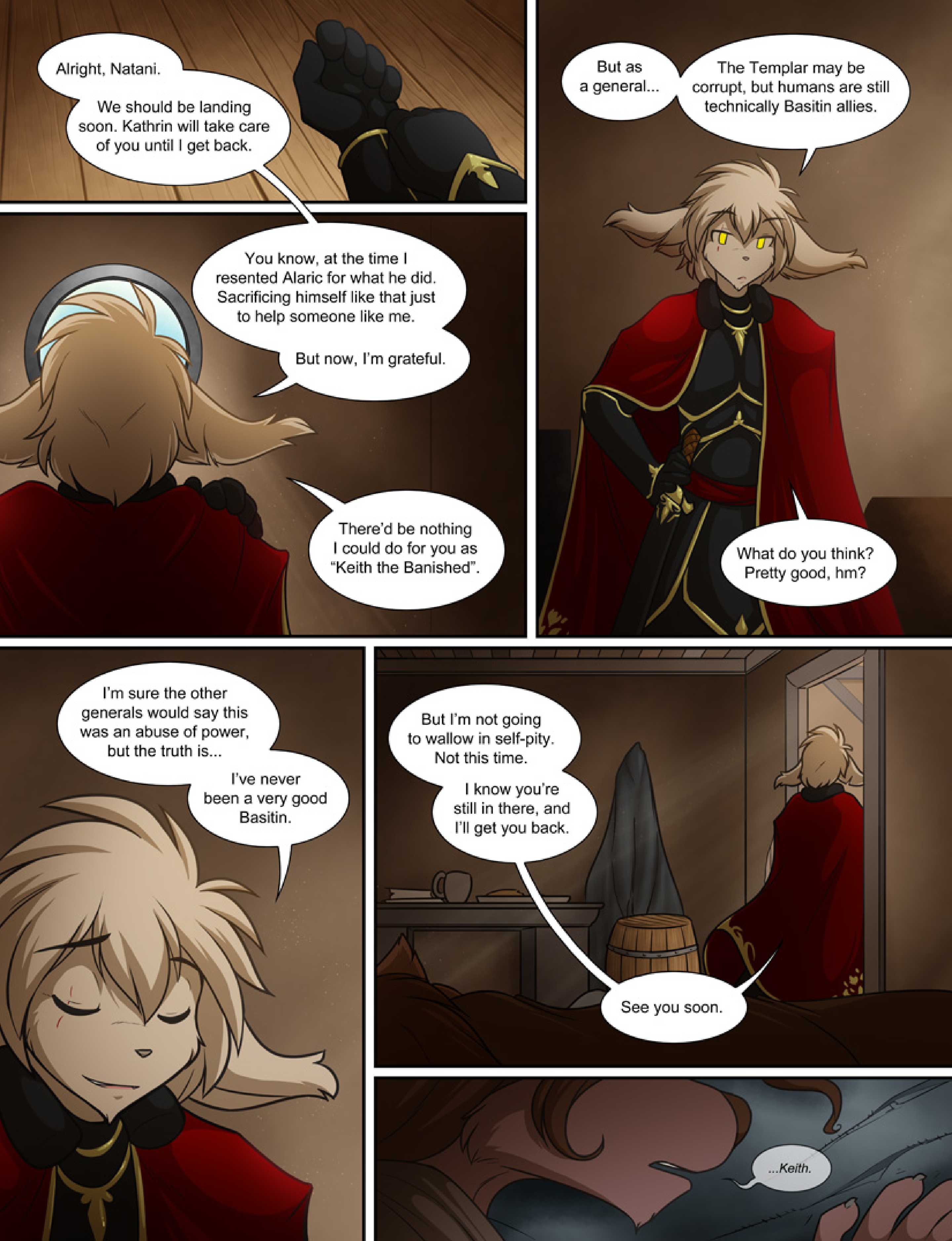
TWOKINDS

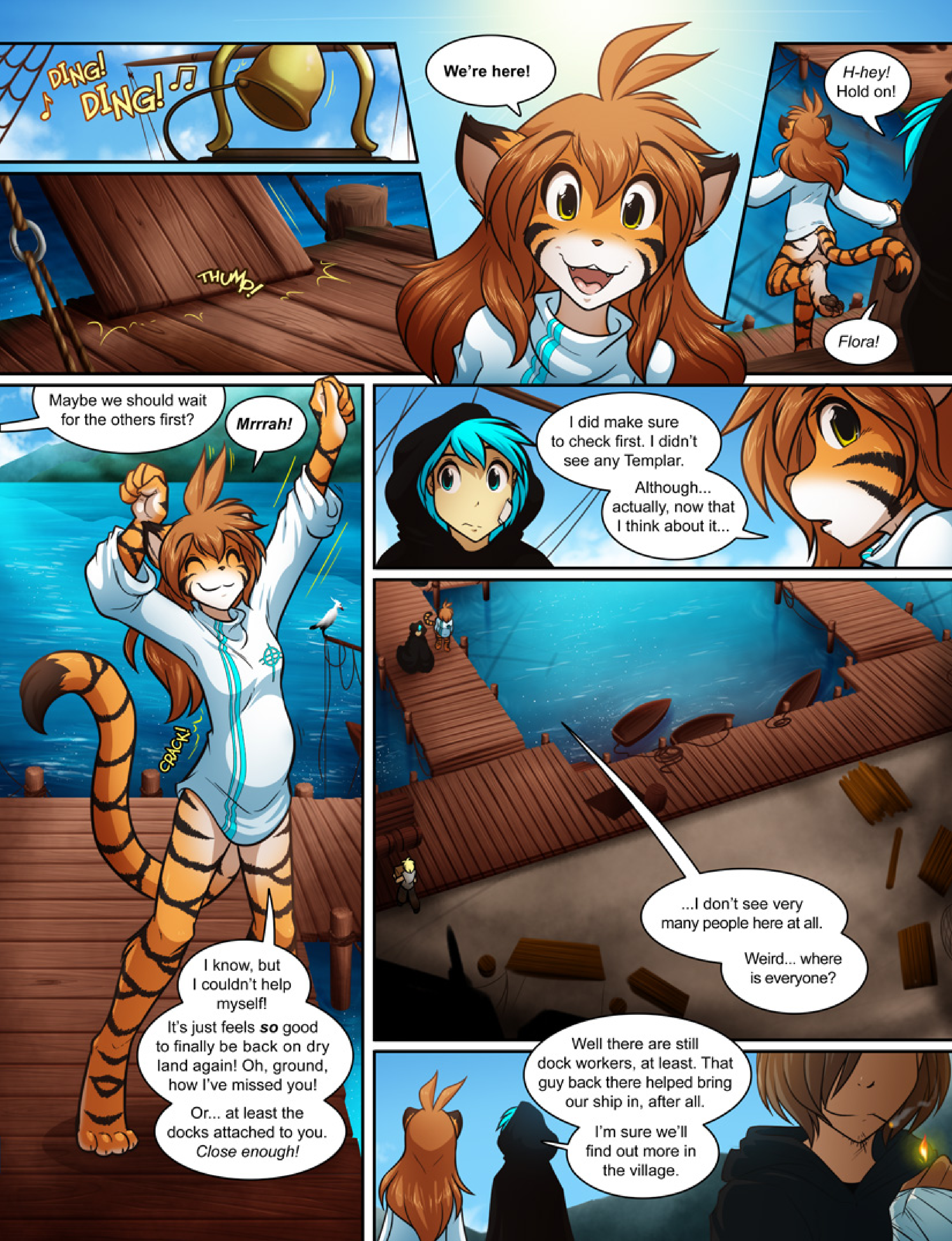

EDINMIRE
WAR!
WE NEED YOU!
REWARD
MISSING.
LIST OF DEAD
MISSING
BAR

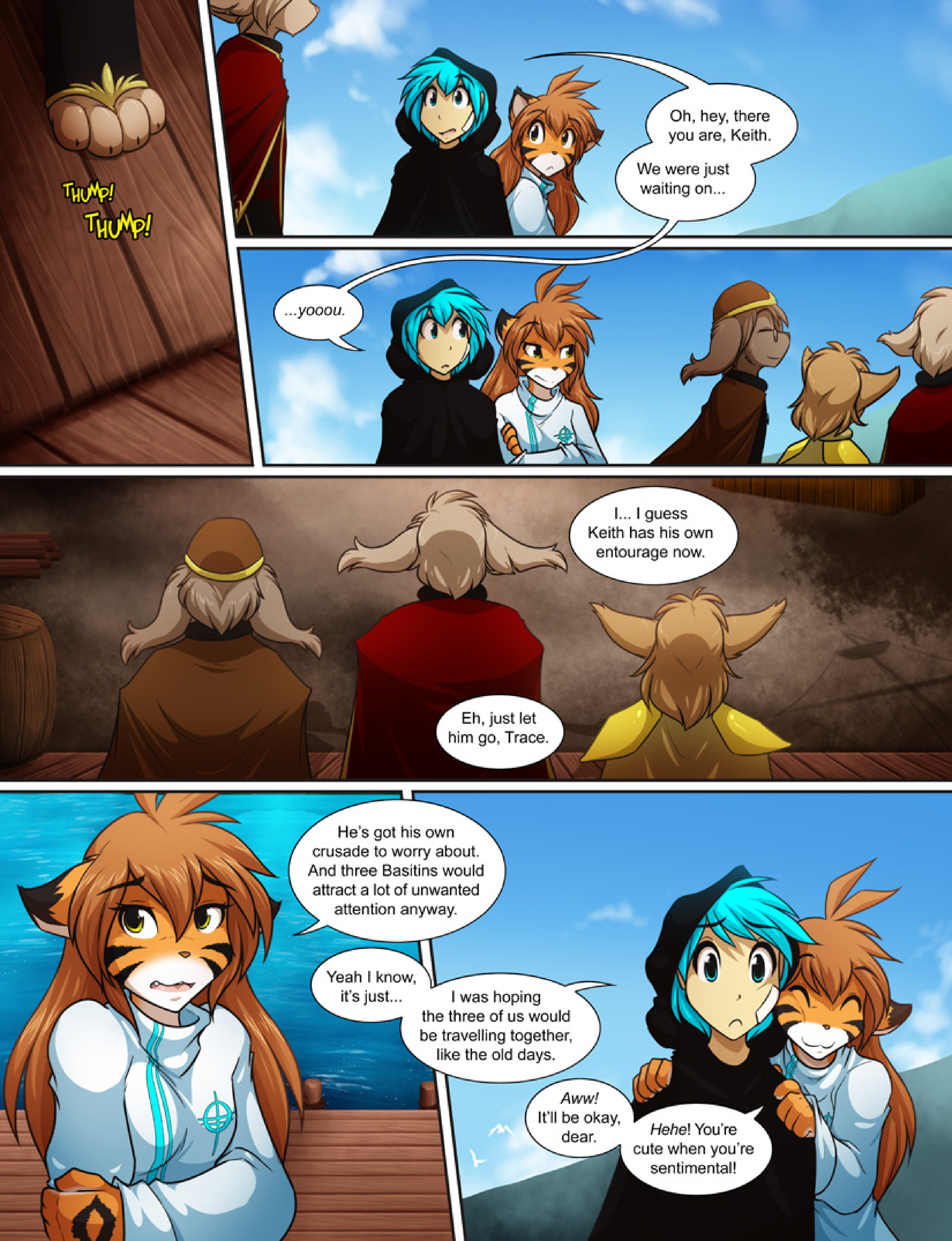
Chapter 18 COMING HOME

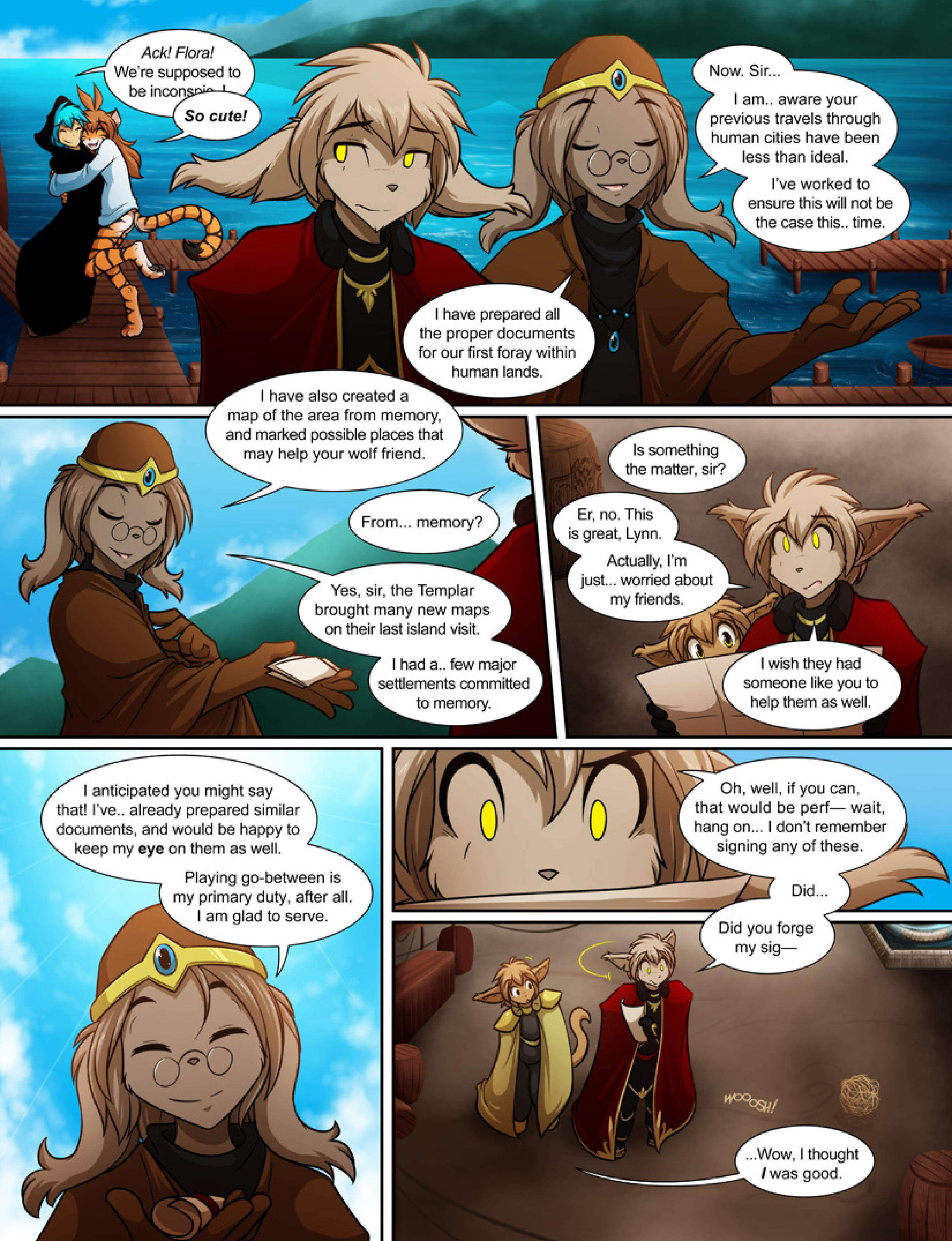

Many days later...
Hey, look!
I can see mountains! We must be getting close to the mainland!
Eric was right, the currents made coming back a lot faster.
Still, it felt way longer to me, especially after... *all that's happened.*
Mr'eah...
Speaking of which, how's your cheek doing?
Oh, i-it's fine.
It doesn't hurt anymore, but I figured I'd keep this on.
Might help make me less recognizable in the village.
I still can't believe Keith did that!
What a ***jerk!***
He was just upset. I don't blame him.
Well I do!
Being scared and angry is no excuse to start lashing out at other people!
Especially friends!
Sigh...
Yeah, well, I'm the last person who can criticize him for doing something like that.
I just hope we can find something to help Natani, for both their sakes.

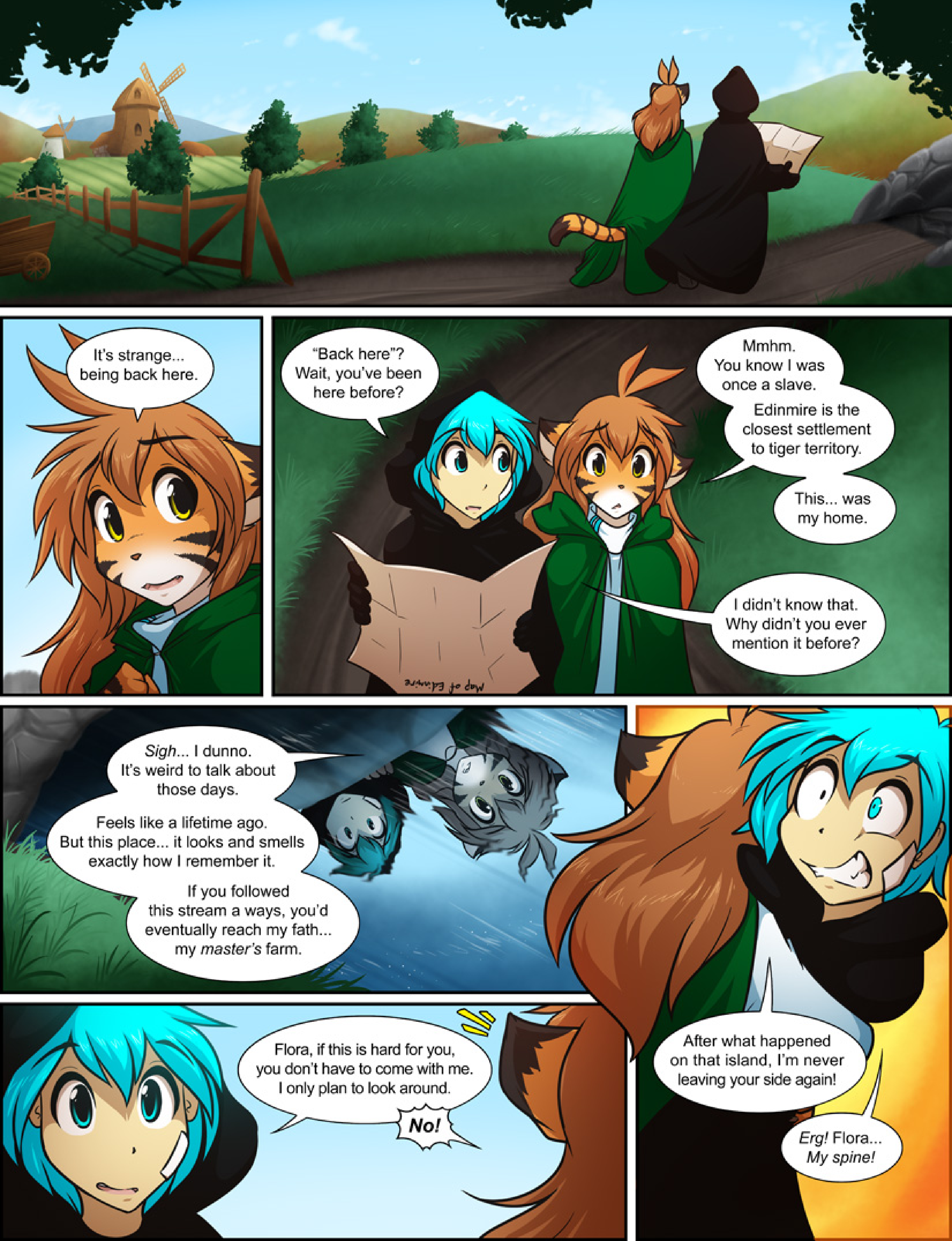

You couldn't help Laura, you can't help Natani...
I can't believe you were once Grand Templar. What good are you now?
You're ***useless!***
...Maybe he's right.
Trace, don't say that! Keith was *way* out of line!
He's just taking it out on you because it's how he feels about himself right now.
He's not wrong though, is he?
What good have I done?
Ever since waking up all I've managed to do is put you guys in danger.
I have power, but it only seems to work when I'm not thinking about it, and half the time it's hurting my friends.
And everyone keeps telling me the world's falling apart because of me.
Trace... it's not your fault.
Isn't it, though?
Not being able to remember doesn't make me innocent.
I ***am*** the person who corrupted the Templar. I think facing up to that fact is my best hope of retaining myself if my memories ever do return.
But to do that I need to learn all I can about who I am.
And that begins at **Edinmire**.

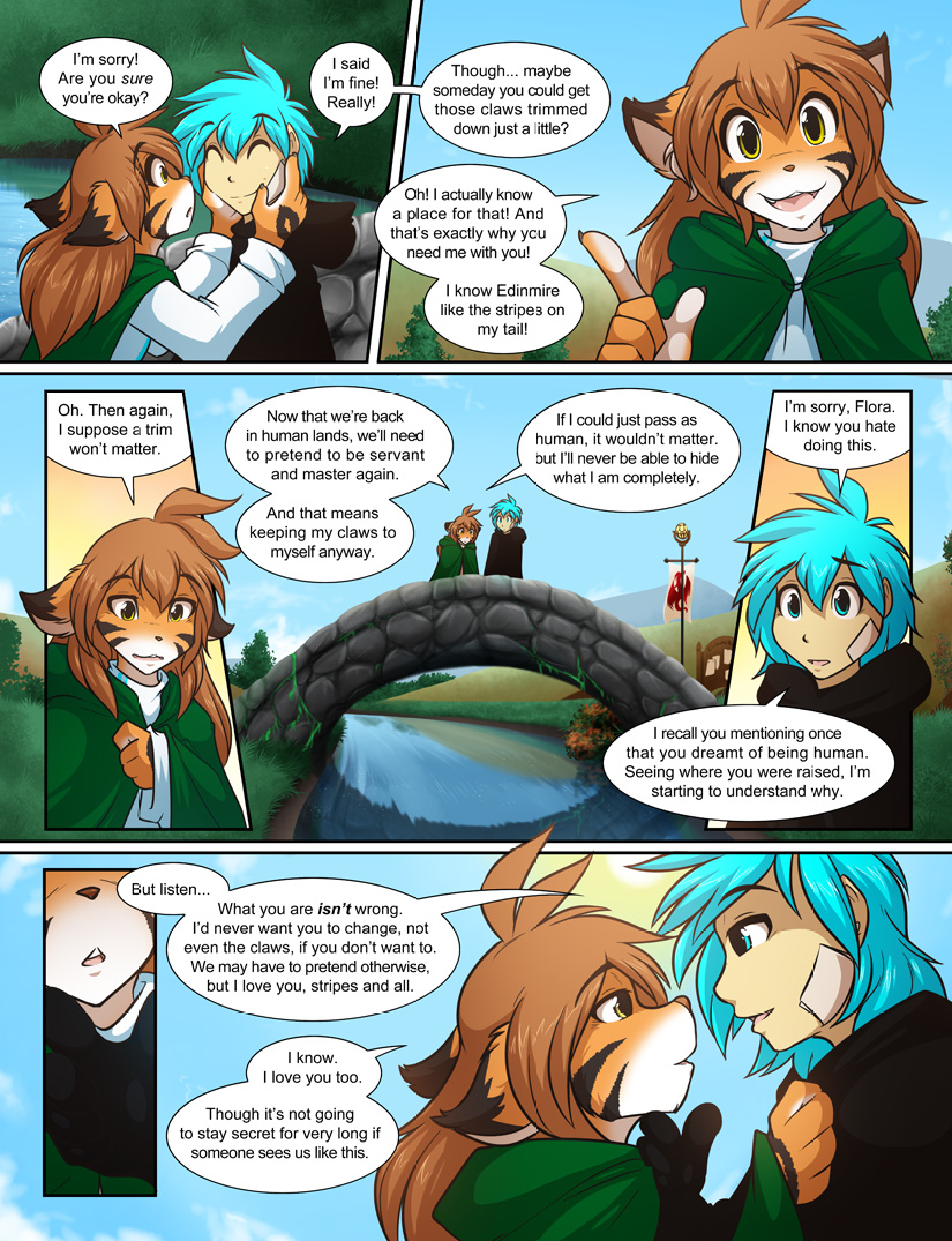

Alright, Natani.
We should be landing soon. Kathrin will take care of you until I get back.
You know, at the time I resented Alaric for what he did. Sacrificing himself like that just to help someone like me.
But now, I'm grateful.
There'd be nothing I could do for you as "Keith the Banished".
But as a general...
The Templar may be corrupt, but humans are still technically Basitin allies.
What do you think? Pretty good, hm?
I'm sure the other generals would say this was an abuse of power, but the truth is...
I've never been a very good Basitin.
But I'm not going to wallow in self-pity. Not this time.
I know you're still in there, and I'll get you back.
See you soon.
...Keith.

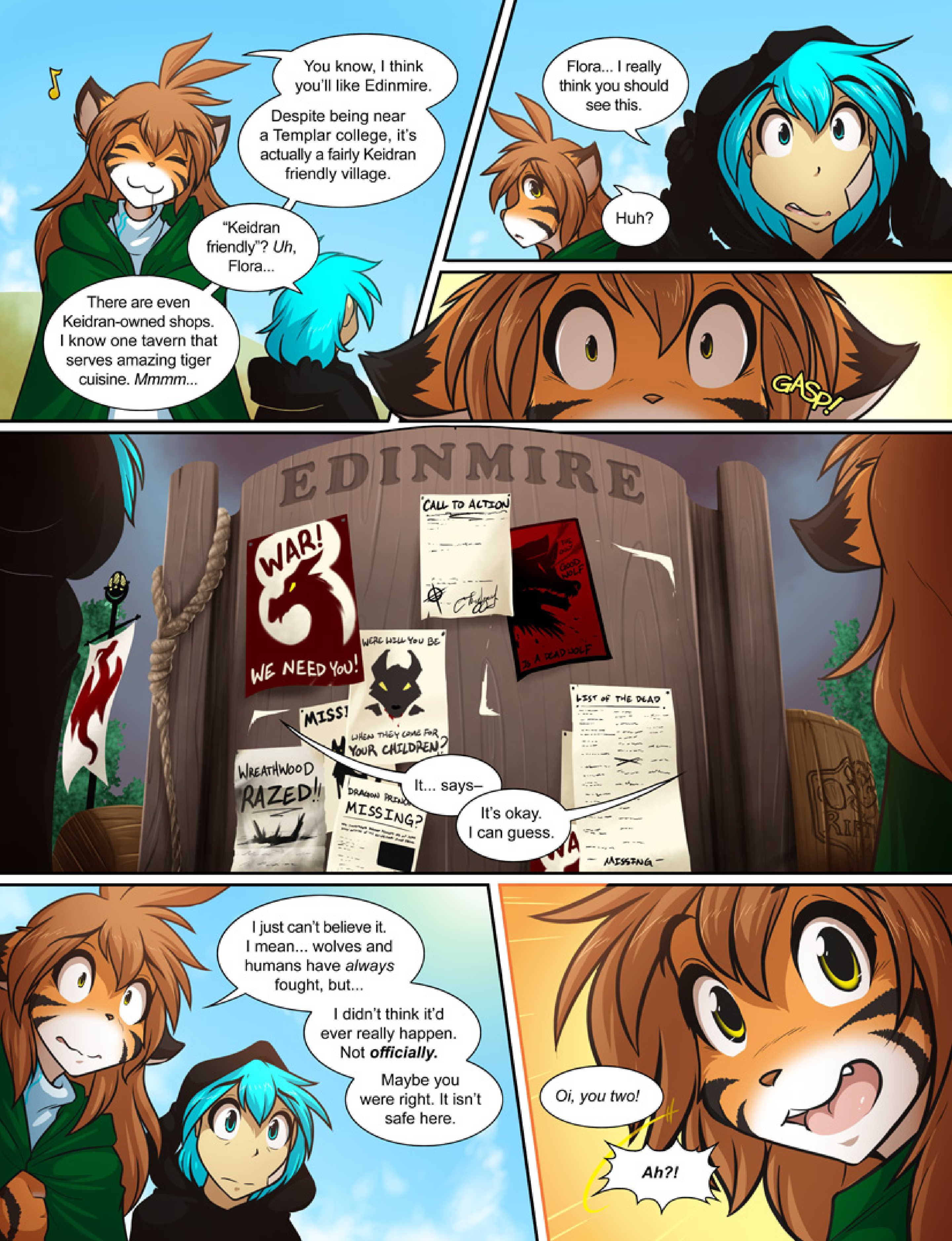

DING!
DING!
♪ ♫
THUMP!
We're here!
H-hey! Hold on!
Flora!
Maybe we should wait for the others first?
Mrrrah!
CRACK!
I know, but I couldn't help myself!
It's just feels *so* good to finally be back on dry land again! Oh, ground, how I've missed you!
Or... at least the docks attached to you. *Close enough!*
I did make sure to check first. I didn't see any Templar.
Although... actually, now that I think about it...
...I don't see very many people here at all.
Weird... where is everyone?
Well there are still dock workers, at least. That guy back there helped bring our ship in, after all.
I'm sure we'll find out more in the village.

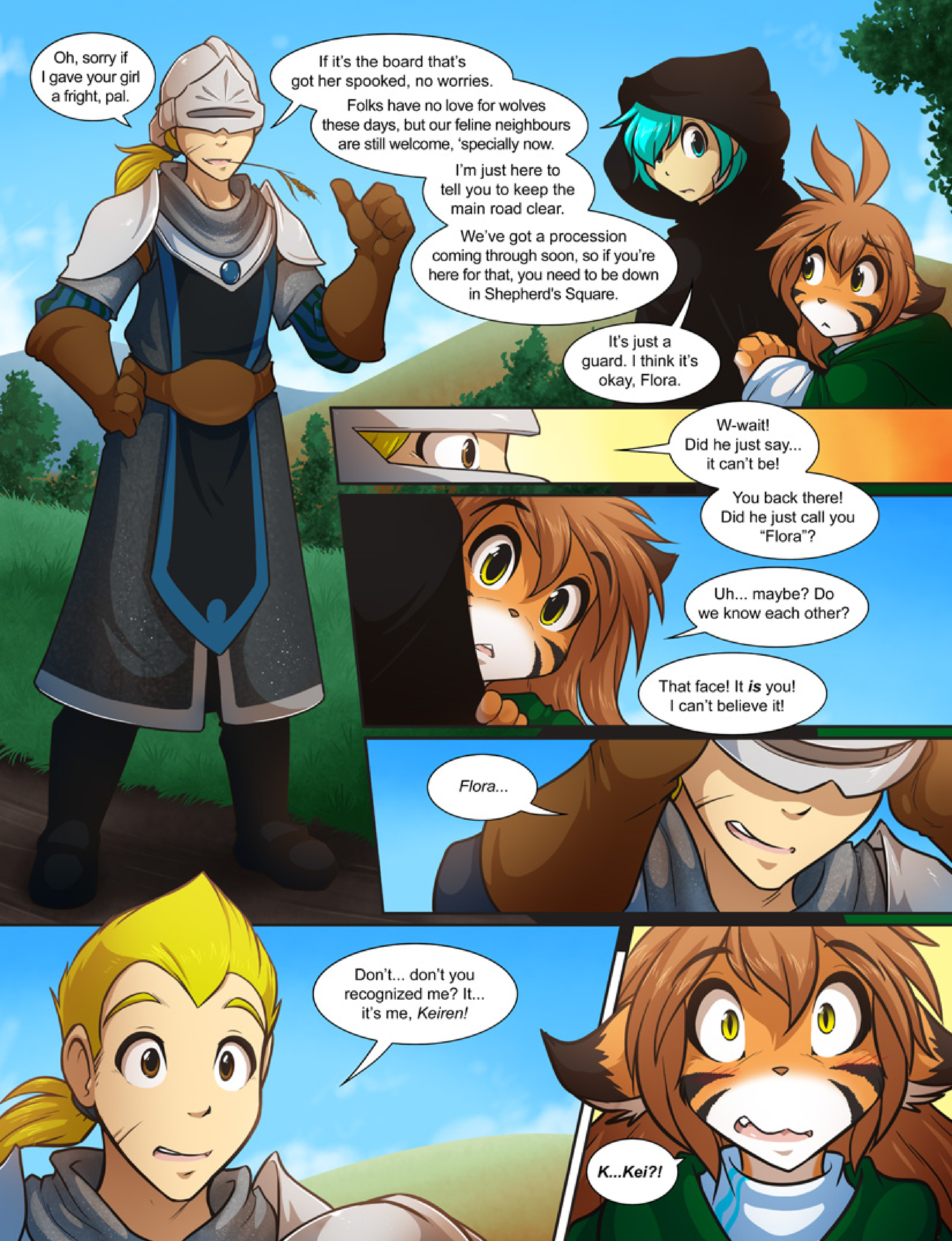

THUMP!
THUMP!
Oh, hey, there you are, Keith.
We were just waiting on...
...yooou.
I... I guess Keith has his own entourage now.
Eh, just let him go, Trace.
He's got his own crusade to worry about. And three Basitins would attract a lot of unwanted attention anyway.
Yeah I know, it's just...
I was hoping the three of us would be travelling together, like the old days.
Aww! It'll be okay, dear.
Hehe! You're cute when you're sentimental!

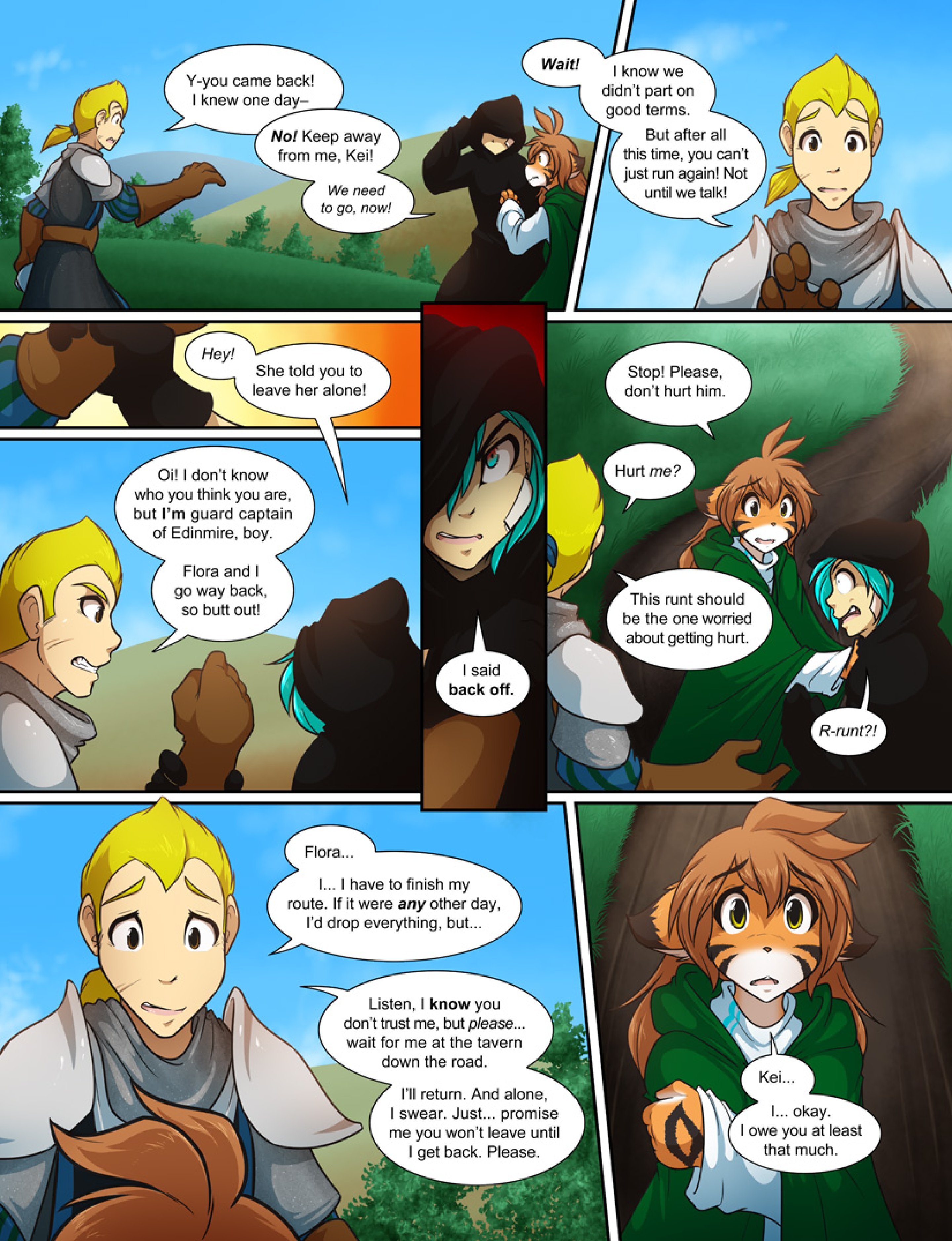

Ack! Flora! We're supposed to be inconspic
So cute!
Now. Sir...
I am.. aware your previous travels through human cities have been less than ideal.
I've worked to ensure this will not be the case this.. time.
I have prepared all the proper documents for our first foray within human lands.
I have also created a map of the area from memory, and marked possible places that may help your wolf friend.
From... memory?
Yes, sir, the Templar brought many new maps on their last island visit.
I had a.. few major settlements committed to memory.
Is something the matter, sir?
Er, no. This is great, Lynn.
Actually, I'm just... worried about my friends.
I wish they had someone like you to help them as well.
I anticipated you might say that! I've.. already prepared similar documents, and would be happy to keep my **eye** on them as well.
Playing go-between is my primary duty, after all. I am glad to serve.
Oh, well, if you can, that would be perf— wait, hang on... I don't remember signing any of these.
Did...
Did you forge my sig—
WOOOSH!
...Wow, I thought ***I*** was good.

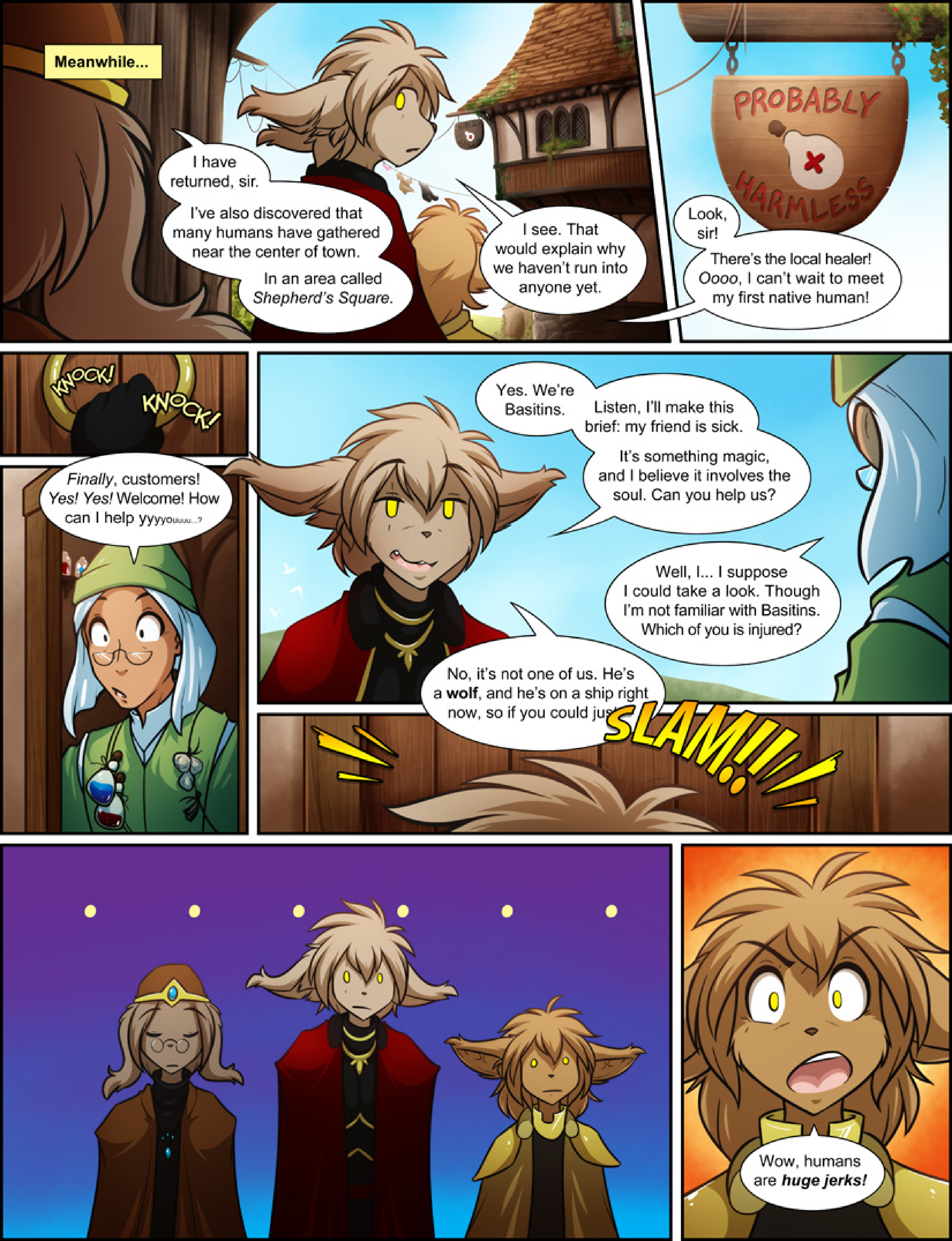

It's strange... being back here.
"Back here"? Wait, you've been here before?
Mmhm. You know I was once a slave.
Edinmire is the closest settlement to tiger territory.
This... was my home.
I didn't know that. Why didn't you ever mention it before?
Map of Edinmire
Sigh... I dunno. It's weird to talk about those days.
Feels like a lifetime ago. But this place... it looks and smells exactly how I remember it.
If you followed this stream a ways, you'd eventually reach my fath... my *master's* farm.
Flora, if this is hard for you, you don't have to come with me. I only plan to look around.
No!
After what happened on that island, I'm never leaving your side again!
Erg! Flora... *My spine!*

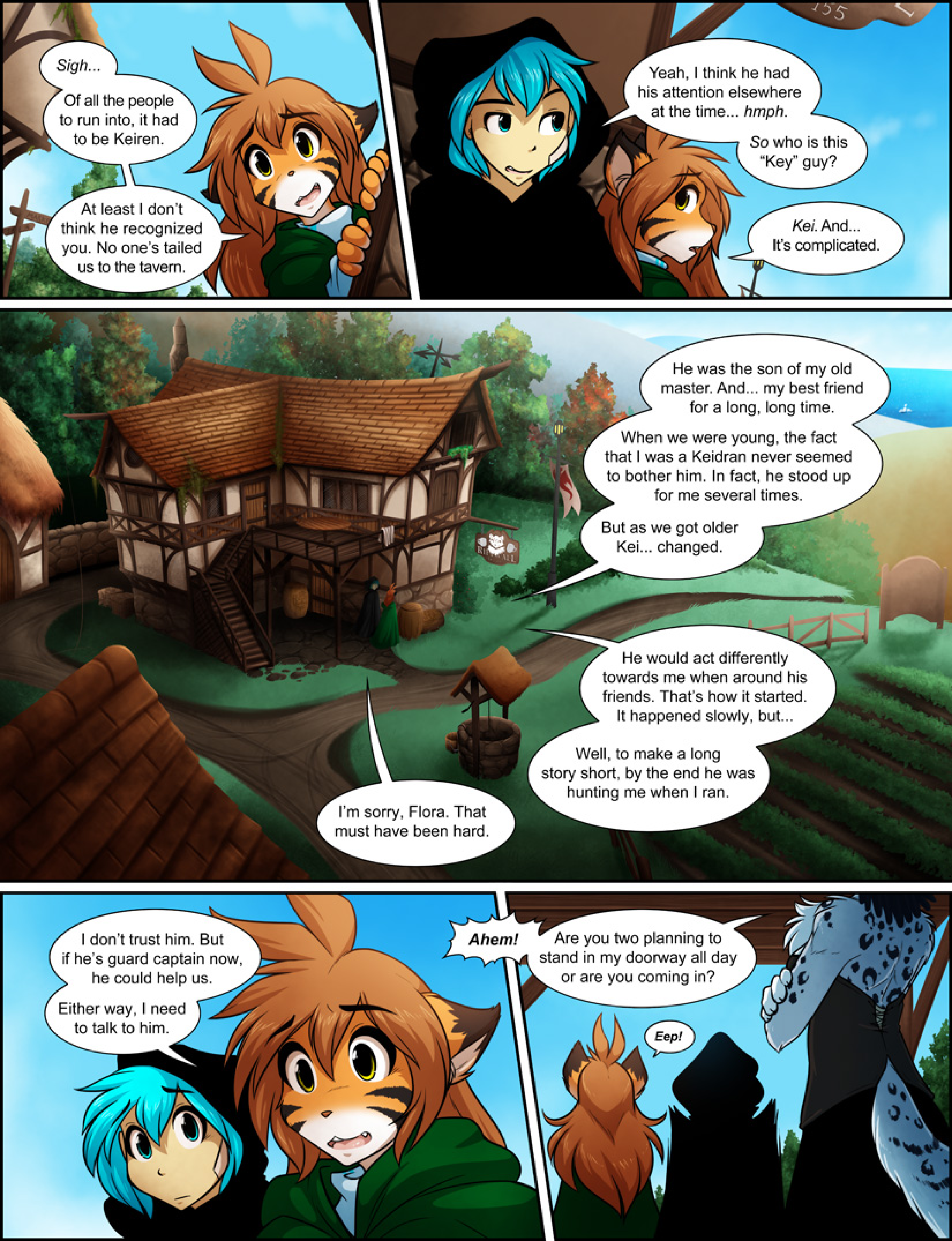

I'm sorry! Are you *sure* you're okay?
I said I'm fine! Really!
Though... maybe someday you could get those claws trimmed down just a little?
Oh! I actually know a place for that! And that's exactly why you need me with you!
I know Edinmire like the stripes on my tail!
Oh. Then again, I suppose a trim won't matter.
Now that we're back in human lands, we'll need to pretend to be servant and master again.
And that means keeping my claws to myself anyway.
If I could just pass as human, it wouldn't matter. but I'll never be able to hide what I am completely.
I'm sorry, Flora. I know you hate doing this.
I recall you mentioning once that you dreamt of being human. Seeing where you were raised, I'm starting to understand why.
But listen... What you are ***isn't*** wrong. I'd never want you to change, not even the claws, if you don't want to. We may have to pretend otherwise, but I love you, stripes and all.
I know. I love you too.
Though it's not going to stay secret for very long if someone sees us like this.

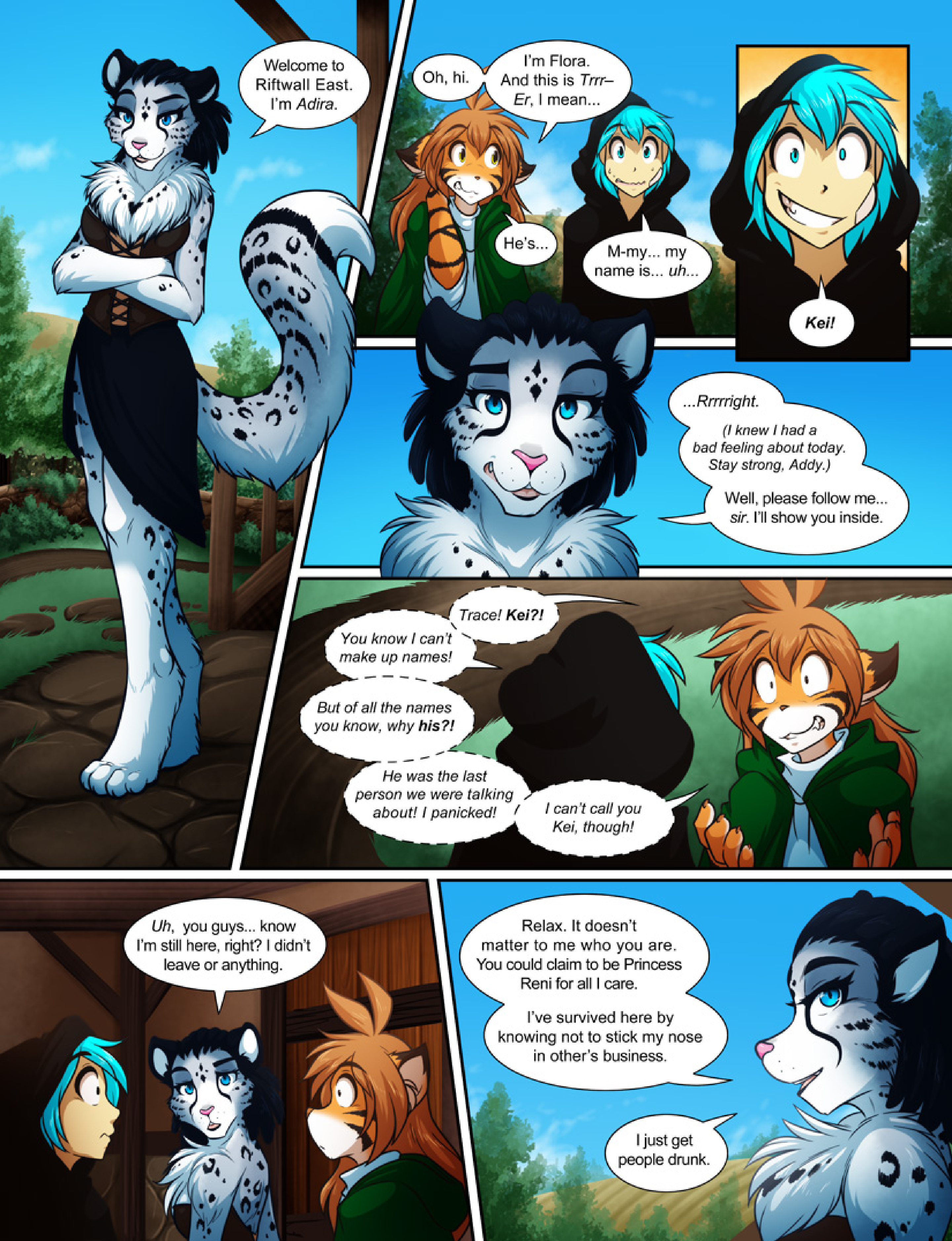

You know, I think you'll like Edinmire.
Despite being near a Templar college, it's actually a fairly Keidran friendly village.
"Keidran friendly"? *Uh*, Flora...
There are even Keidran-owned shops. I know one tavern that serves amazing tiger cuisine. *Mmmm*...
Flora... I really think you should see this.
Huh?
GASP!
EDINMIRE
CALL TO ACTION
WAR! WE NEED YOU!
THE ONLY GOOD WOLF IS A DEAD WOLF
WERE WILL YOU BE WHEN THEY COME FOR YOUR CHILDREN?
MISS
WREATHWOOD RAZED!!
DRAGON PRINCE MISSING?
LIST OF THE DEAD
MISSING
It... says–
It's okay. I can guess.
I just can't believe it. I mean... wolves and humans have *always* fought, but...
I didn't think it'd ever really happen. Not ***officially.***
Maybe you were right. It isn't safe here.
Oi, you two!
Ah?!

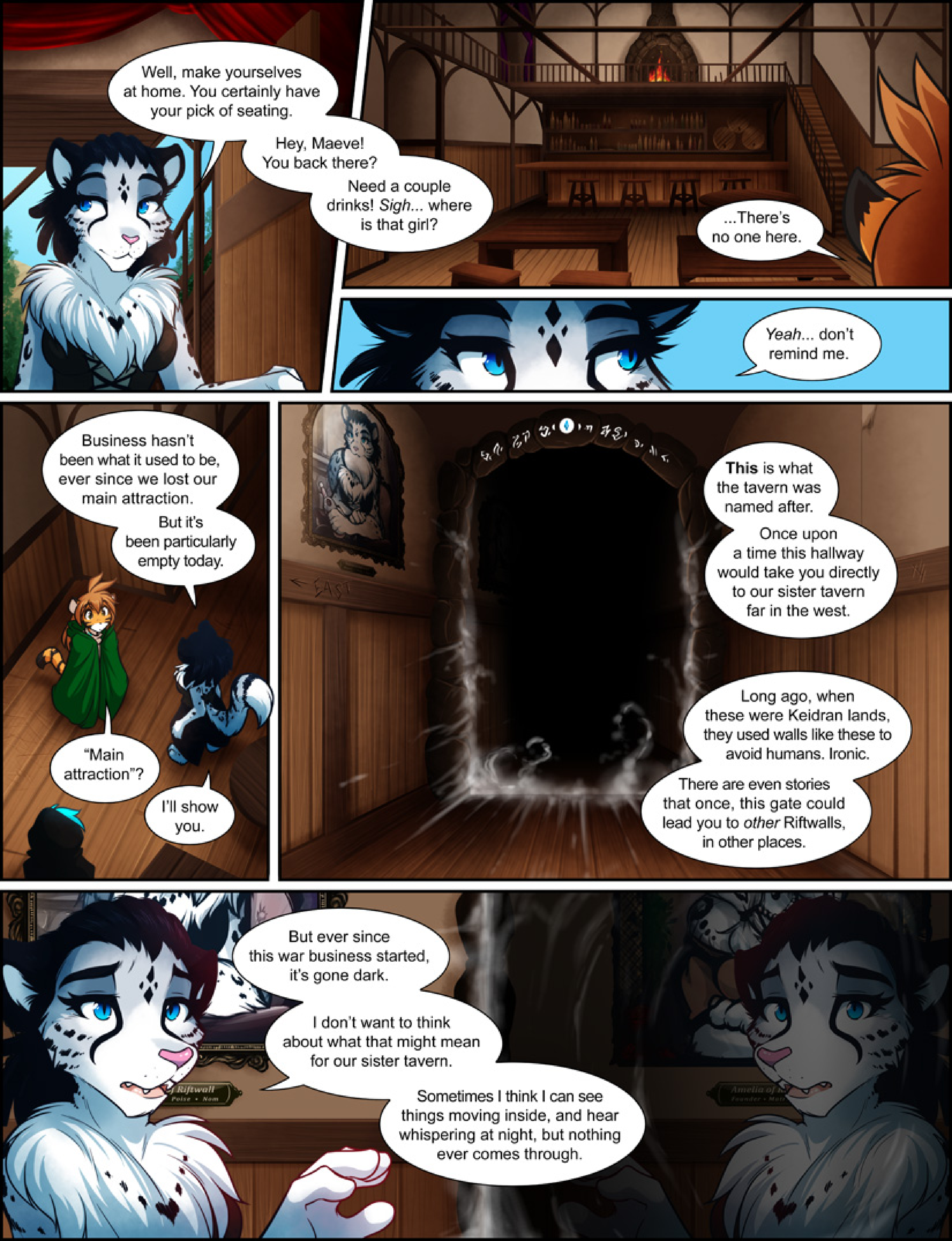

Oh, sorry if I gave your girl a fright, pal.
If it's the board that's got her spooked, no worries.
Folks have no love for wolves these days, but our feline neighbours are still welcome, 'specially now.
I'm just here to tell you to keep the main road clear.
We've got a procession coming through soon, so if you're here for that, you need to be down in Shepherd's Square.
It's just a guard. I think it's okay, Flora.
W-wait! Did he just say... it can't be!
You back there! Did he just call you "Flora"?
Uh... maybe? Do we know each other?
That face! It *is* you! I can't believe it!
Flora...
Don't... don't you recognized me? It... it's me, *Keiren!*
K...Kei?!

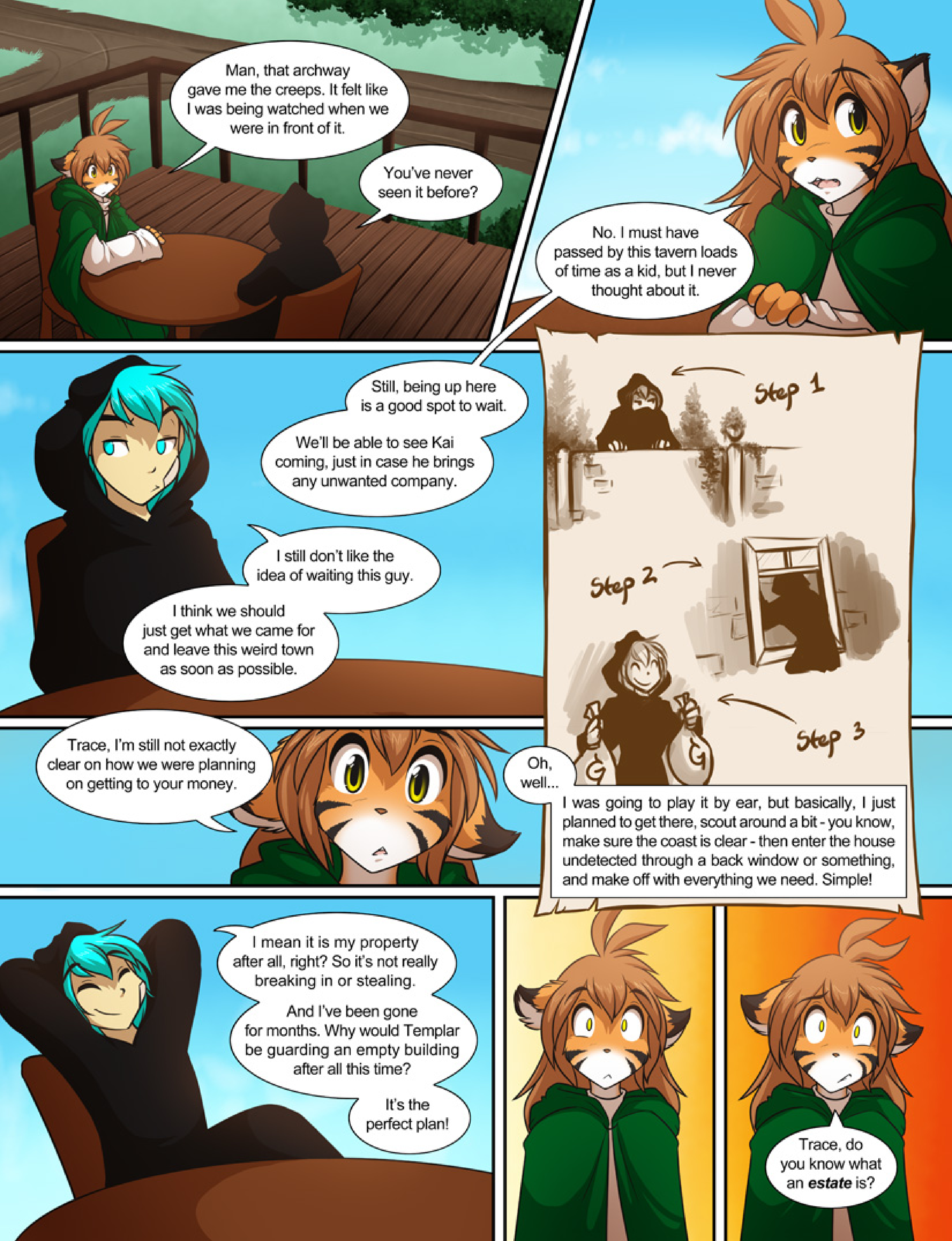

Y-you came back! I knew one day–
No! Keep away from me, Kei!
We need to go, now!
Wait!
I know we didn't part on good terms.
But after all this time, you can't just run again! Not until we talk!
Hey!
She told you to leave her alone!
Oi! I don't know who you think you are, but **I'm** guard captain of Edinmire, boy.
Flora and I go way back, so butt out!
I said **back off.**
Stop! Please, don't hurt him.
Hurt *me?*
This runt should be the one worried about getting hurt.
R-runt?!
Flora...
I... I have to finish my route. If it were ***any*** other day, I'd drop everything, but...
Listen, I **know** you don't trust me, but *please*... wait for me at the tavern down the road.
I'll return. And alone, I swear. Just... promise me you won't leave until I get back. Please.
Kei...
I... okay. I owe you at least that much.

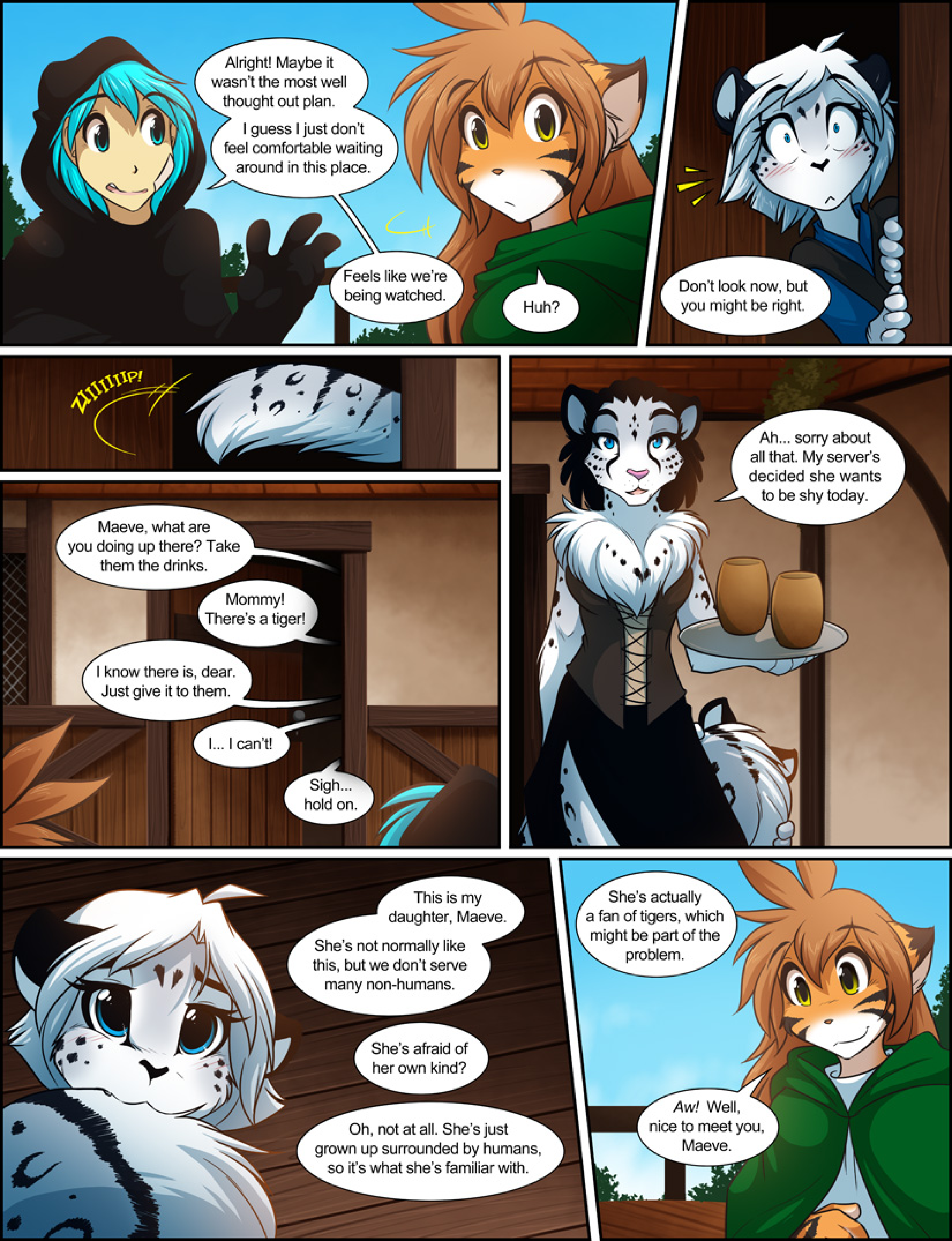

Meanwhile...
I have returned, sir.
I've also discovered that many humans have gathered near the center of town.
In an area called *Shepherd's Square*.
I see. That would explain why we haven't run into anyone yet.
PROBABLY HARMLESS
Look, sir!
There's the local healer! *Oooo*, I can't wait to meet my first native human!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
Finally, customers! *Yes! Yes!* Welcome! How can I help yyyyouuuu...?
Yes. We're Basitins.
Listen, I'll make this brief: my friend is sick.
It's something magic, and I believe it involves the soul. Can you help us?
Well, I... I suppose I could take a look. Though I'm not familiar with Basitins. Which of you is injured?
No, it's not one of us. He's a **wolf**, and he's on a ship right now, so if you could just
SLAM!!!
Wow, humans are ***huge jerks!***

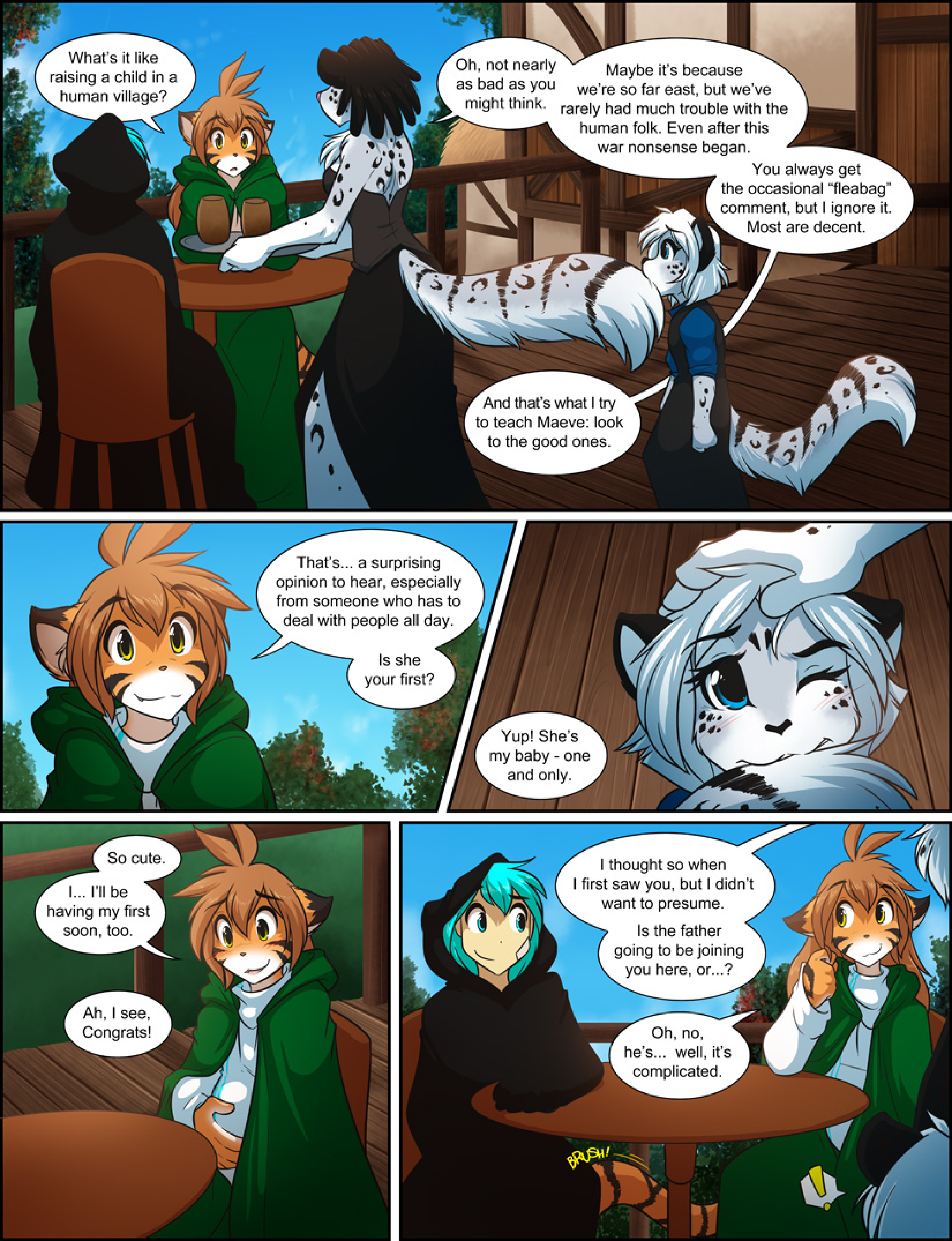

Sigh...
Of all the people to run into, it had to be Keiren.
At least I don't think he recognized you. No one's tailed us to the tavern.
155
Yeah, I think he had his attention elsewhere at the time... *hmph*.
So who is this "Key" guy?
Kei. And... It's complicated.
He was the son of my old master. And... my best friend for a long, long time.
When we were young, the fact that I was a Keidran never seemed to bother him. In fact, he stood up for me several times.
But as we got older Kei... changed.
He would act differently towards me when around his friends. That's how it started. It happened slowly, but...
Well, to make a long story short, by the end he was hunting me when I ran.
I'm sorry, Flora. That must have been hard.
I don't trust him. But if he's guard captain now, he could help us.
Either way, I need to talk to him.
Ahem!
Are you two planning to stand in my doorway all day or are you coming in?
Eep!

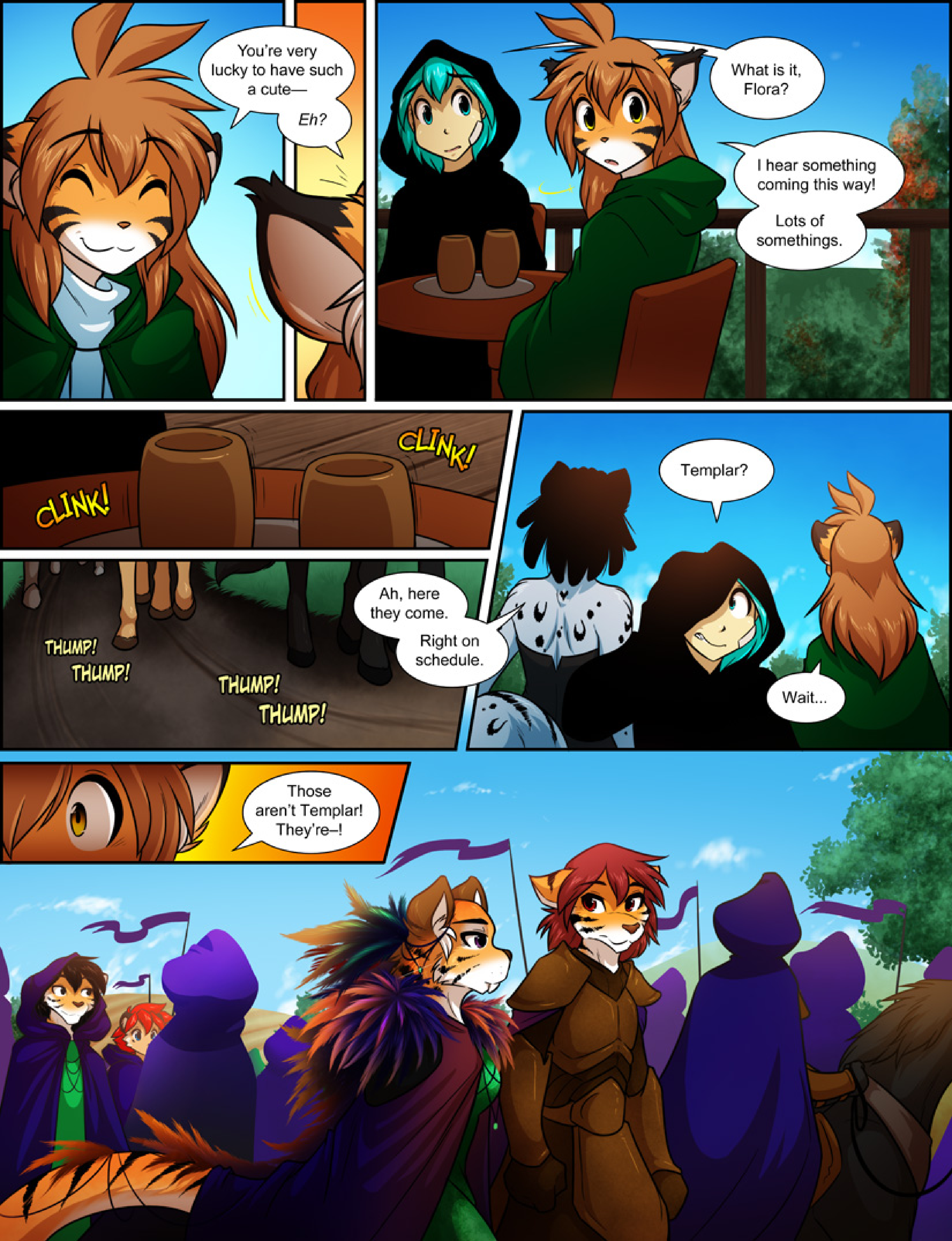

Welcome to Riftwall East. I'm *Adira*.
Oh, hi.
I'm Flora. And this is *Trrr–* *Er*, I mean...
He's...
M-my... my name is... *uh*...
Kei!
...Rrrrright.
(I knew I had a bad feeling about today. Stay strong, Addy.)
Well, please follow me... *sir*. I'll show you inside.
Trace! ***Kei?!***
You know I can't make up names!
But of all the names you know, why ***his?!***
He was the last person we were talking about! I panicked!
I can't call you Kei, though!
Uh, you guys... know I'm still here, right? I didn't leave or anything.
Relax. It doesn't matter to me who you are. You could claim to be Princess Reni for all I care.
I've survived here by knowing not to stick my nose in other's business.
I just get people drunk.

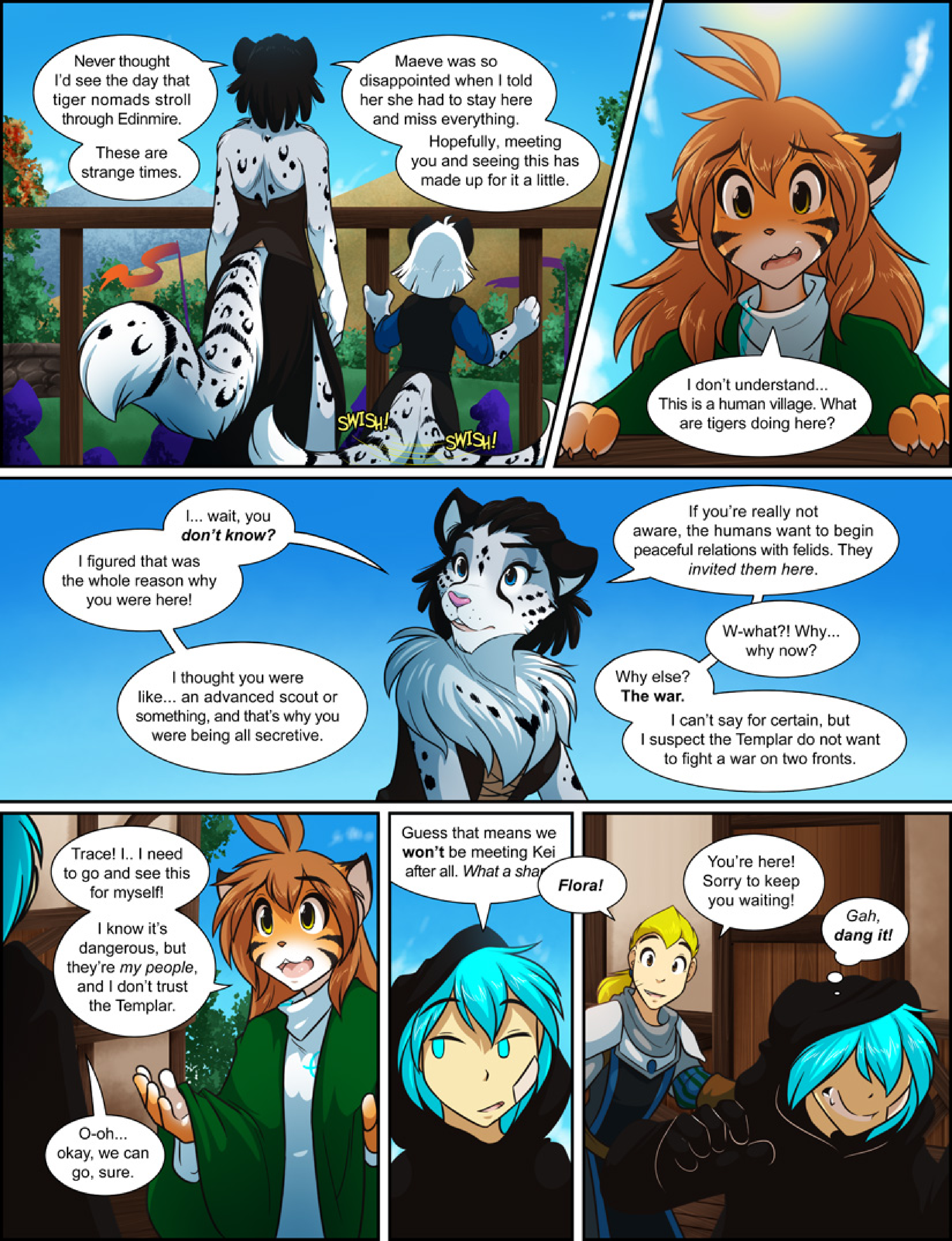

Well, make yourselves at home. You certainly have your pick of seating.
Hey, Maeve! You back there?
Need a couple drinks! *Sigh*... where is that girl?
...There's no one here.
Yeah... don't remind me.
Business hasn't been what it used to be, ever since we lost our main attraction.
But it's been particularly empty today.
"Main attraction"?
I'll show you.
EAST
This is what the tavern was named after.
Once upon a time this hallway would take you directly to our sister tavern far in the west.
Long ago, when these were Keidran lands, they used walls like these to avoid humans. Ironic.
There are even stories that once, this gate could lead you to *other* Riftwalls, in other places.
Riftwall
Poise • Nom
But ever since this war business started, it's gone dark.
I don't want to think about what that might mean for our sister tavern.
Sometimes I think I can see things moving inside, and hear whispering at night, but nothing ever comes through.

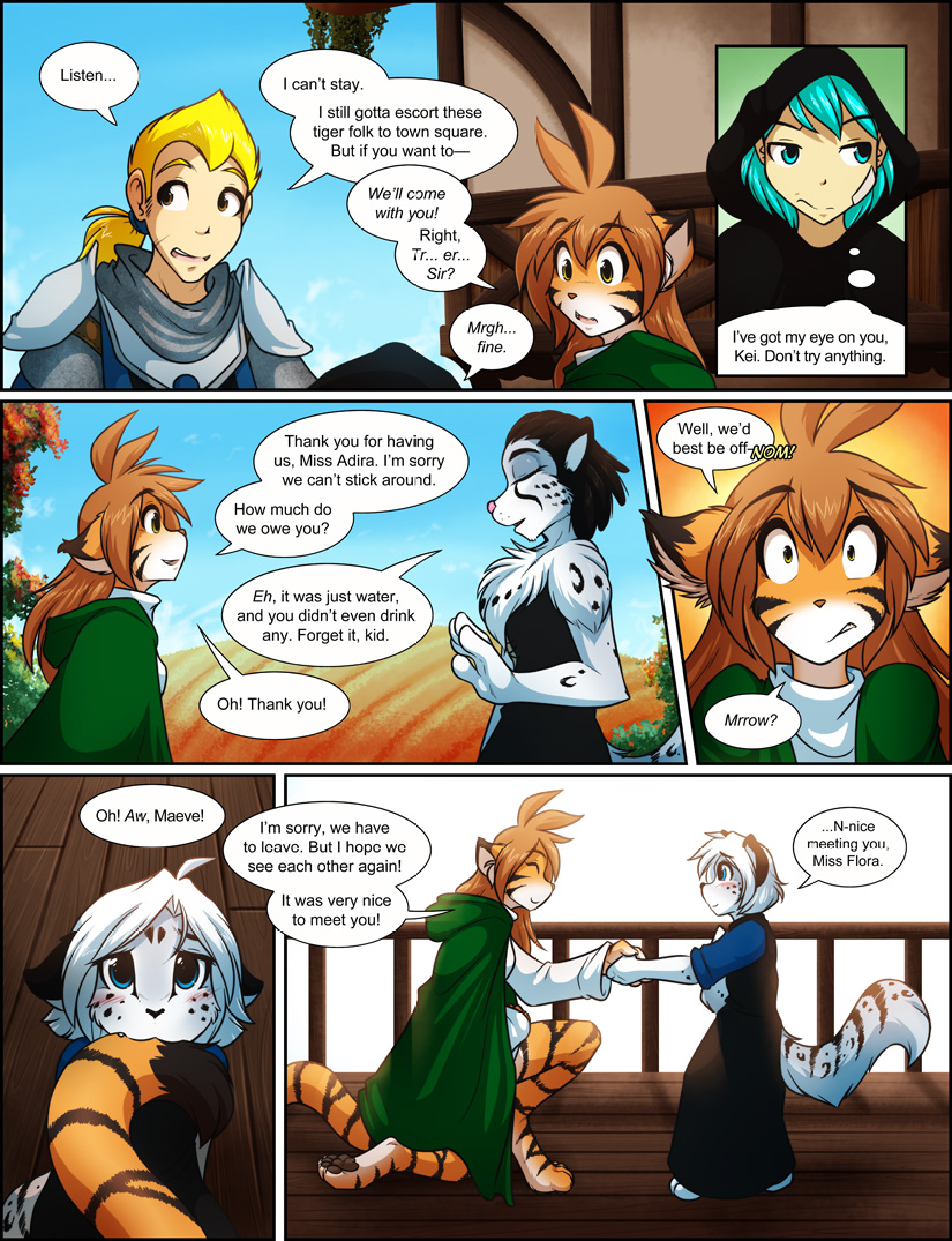

Man, that archway gave me the creeps. It felt like I was being watched when we were in front of it.
You've never seen it before?
No. I must have passed by this tavern loads of time as a kid, but I never thought about it.
Still, being up here is a good spot to wait.
We'll be able to see Kai coming, just in case he brings any unwanted company.
I still don't like the idea of waiting this guy.
I think we should just get what we came for and leave this weird town as soon as possible.
Trace, I'm still not exactly clear on how we were planning on getting to your money.
Oh, well...
Step 1
Step 2
G
G
Step 3
I was going to play it by ear, but basically, I just planned to get there, scout around a bit - you know, make sure the coast is clear - then enter the house undetected through a back window or something, and make off with everything we need. Simple!
I mean it is my property after all, right? So it's not really breaking in or stealing.
And I've been gone for months. Why would Templar be guarding an empty building after all this time?
It's the perfect plan!
Trace, do you know what an *estate* is?

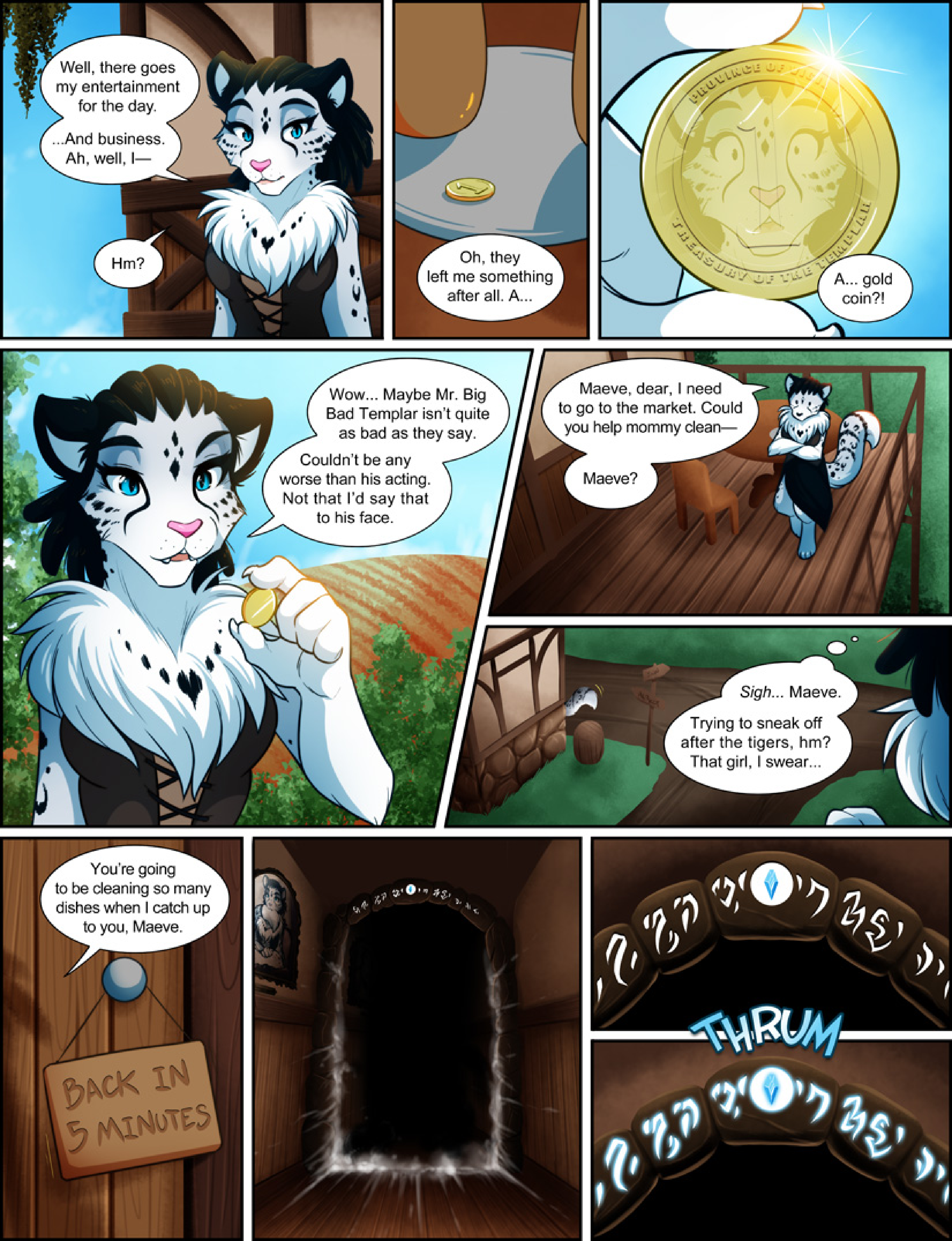

Alright! Maybe it wasn't the most well thought out plan.
I guess I just don't feel comfortable waiting around in this place.
Feels like we're being watched.
Huh?
Don't look now, but you might be right.
ZIIIIIP!
Maeve, what are you doing up there? Take them the drinks.
Mommy! There's a tiger!
I know there is, dear. Just give it to them.
I... I can't!
Sigh... hold on.
Ah... sorry about all that. My server's decided she wants to be shy today.
This is my daughter, Maeve.
She's not normally like this, but we don't serve many non-humans.
She's afraid of her own kind?
Oh, not at all. She's just grown up surrounded by humans, so it's what she's familiar with.
She's actually a fan of tigers, which might be part of the problem.
Aw! Well, nice to meet you, Maeve.

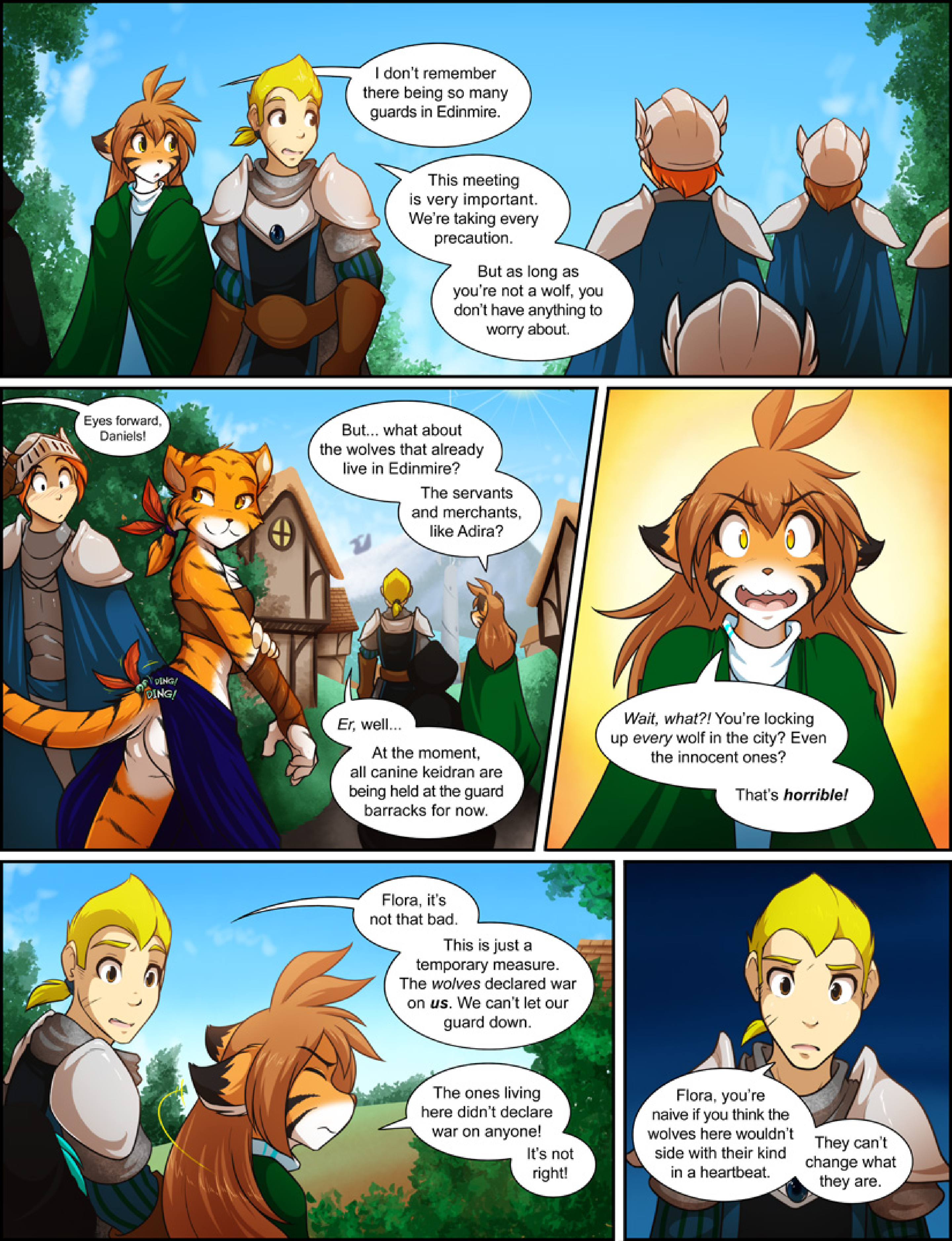

What's it like raising a child in a human village?
Oh, not nearly as bad as you might think.
Maybe it's because we're so far east, but we've rarely had much trouble with the human folk. Even after this war nonsense began.
You always get the occasional "fleabag" comment, but I ignore it. Most are decent.
And that's what I try to teach Maeve: look to the good ones.
That's... a surprising opinion to hear, especially from someone who has to deal with people all day.
Is she your first?
Yup! She's my baby - one and only.
So cute.
I... I'll be having my first soon, too.
Ah, I see, Congrats!
I thought so when I first saw you, but I didn't want to presume.
Is the father going to be joining you here, or...?
Oh, no, he's... well, it's complicated.
BRUSH!
!

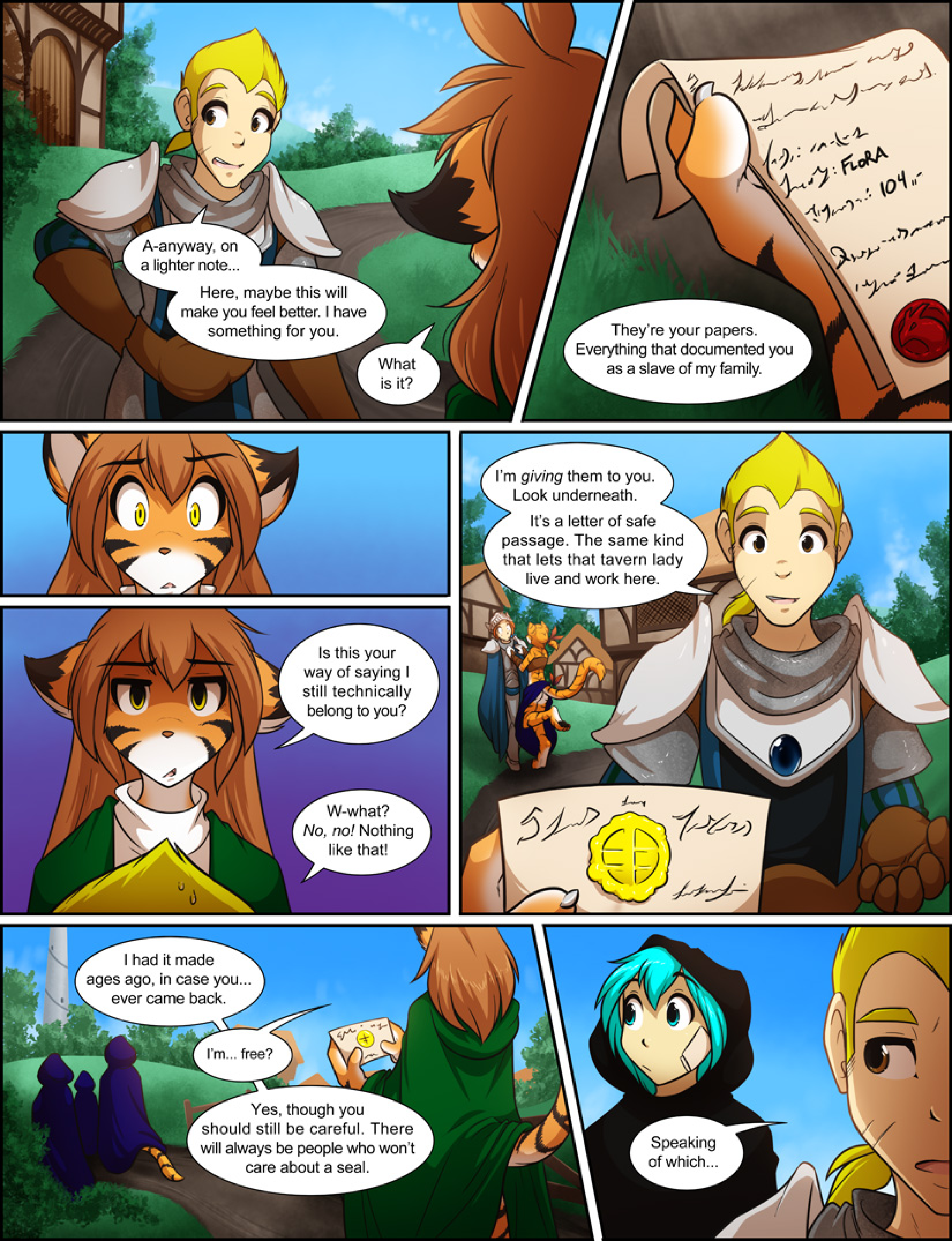

You're very lucky to have such a cute—
Eh?
What is it, Flora?
I hear something coming this way!
Lots of somethings.
CLINK!
CLINK!
Templar?
THUMP!
THUMP!
THUMP!
THUMP!
Ah, here they come.
Right on schedule.
Wait...
Those aren't Templar! They're–!

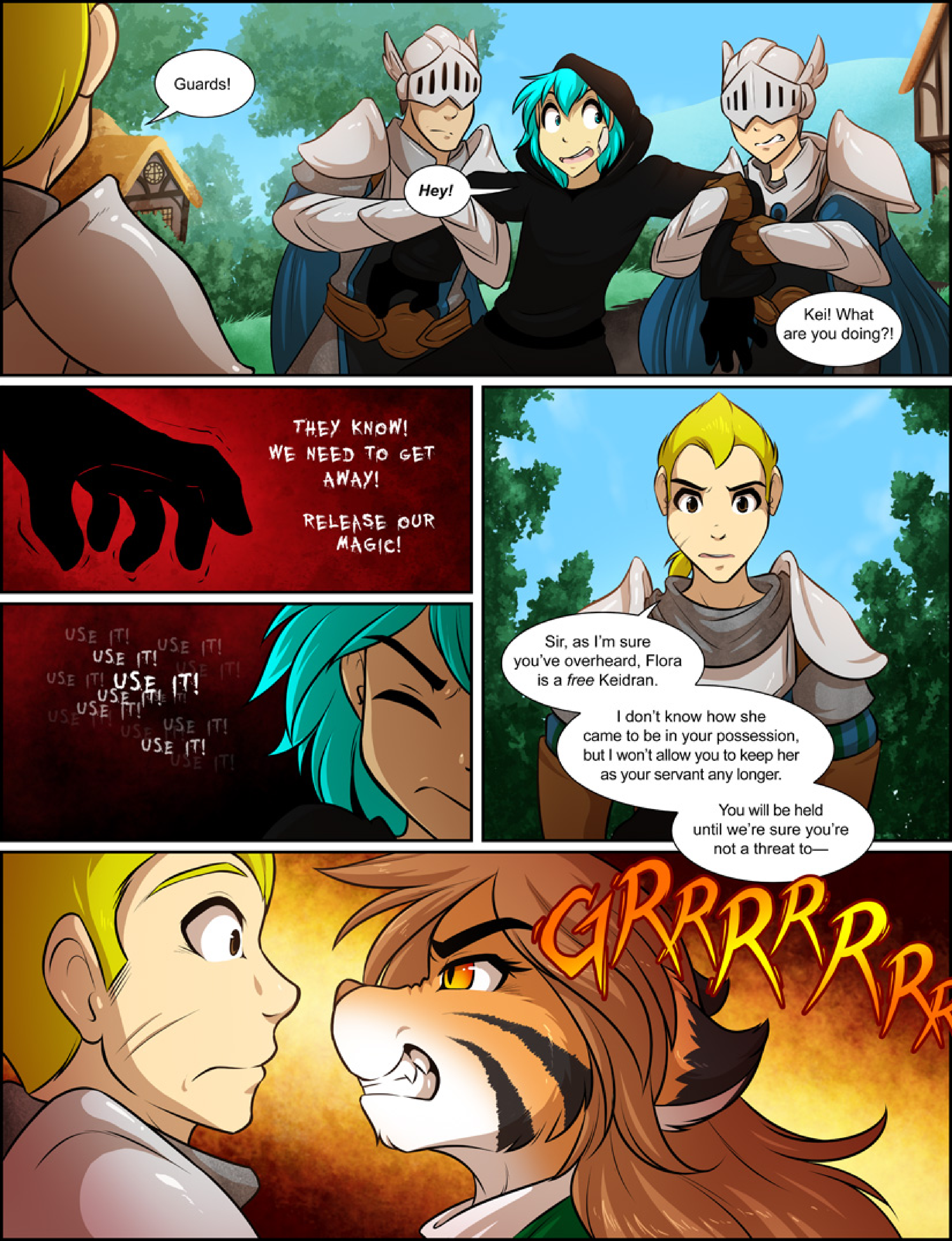

Never thought I'd see the day that tiger nomads stroll through Edinmire.
These are strange times.
Maeve was so disappointed when I told her she had to stay here and miss everything.
Hopefully, meeting you and seeing this has made up for it a little.
SWISH!
SWISH!
I don't understand... This is a human village. What are tigers doing here?
I... wait, you ***don't know?***
I figured that was the whole reason why you were here!
I thought you were like... an advanced scout or something, and that's why you were being all secretive.
If you're really not aware, the humans want to begin peaceful relations with felids. They *invited them here*.
W-what?! Why... why now?
Why else? **The war.**
I can't say for certain, but I suspect the Templar do not want to fight a war on two fronts.
Trace! I.. I need to go and see this for myself!
I know it's dangerous, but they're *my people*, and I don't trust the Templar.
O-oh... okay, we can go, sure.
Guess that means we **won't** be meeting Kei after all. *What a sha*
Flora!
You're here! Sorry to keep you waiting!
Gah, ***dang it!***

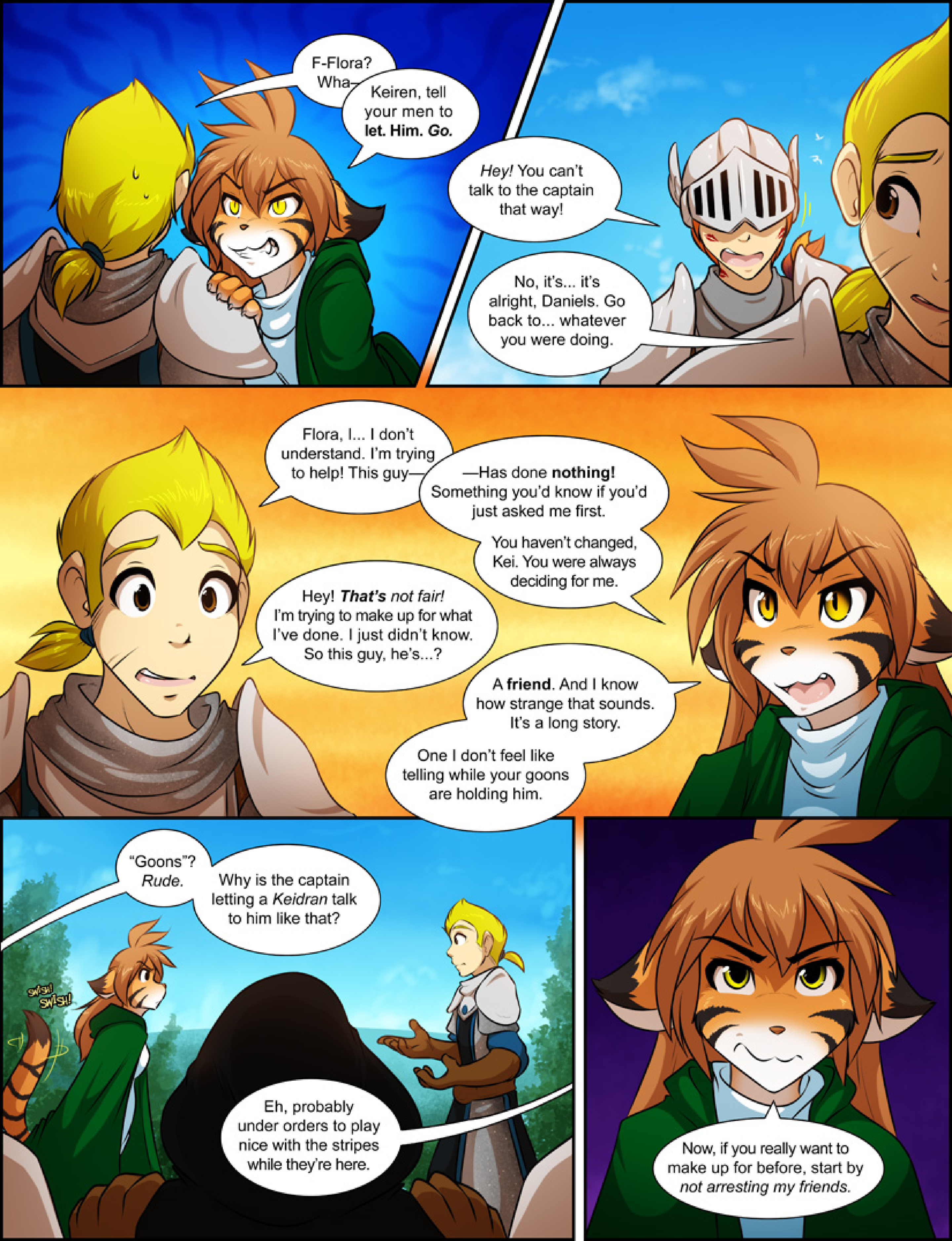

Listen...
I can't stay.
I still gotta escort these tiger folk to town square. But if you want to—
We'll come with you!
Right, *Tr... er...* *Sir?*
Mrgh... fine.
I've got my eye on you, Kei. Don't try anything.
Thank you for having us, Miss Adira. I'm sorry we can't stick around.
How much do we owe you?
Eh, it was just water, and you didn't even drink any. Forget it, kid.
Oh! Thank you!
Well, we'd best be off-
NOM!
Mrrow?
Oh! *Aw*, Maeve!
I'm sorry, we have to leave. But I hope we see each other again!
It was very nice to meet you!
...N-nice meeting you, Miss Flora.

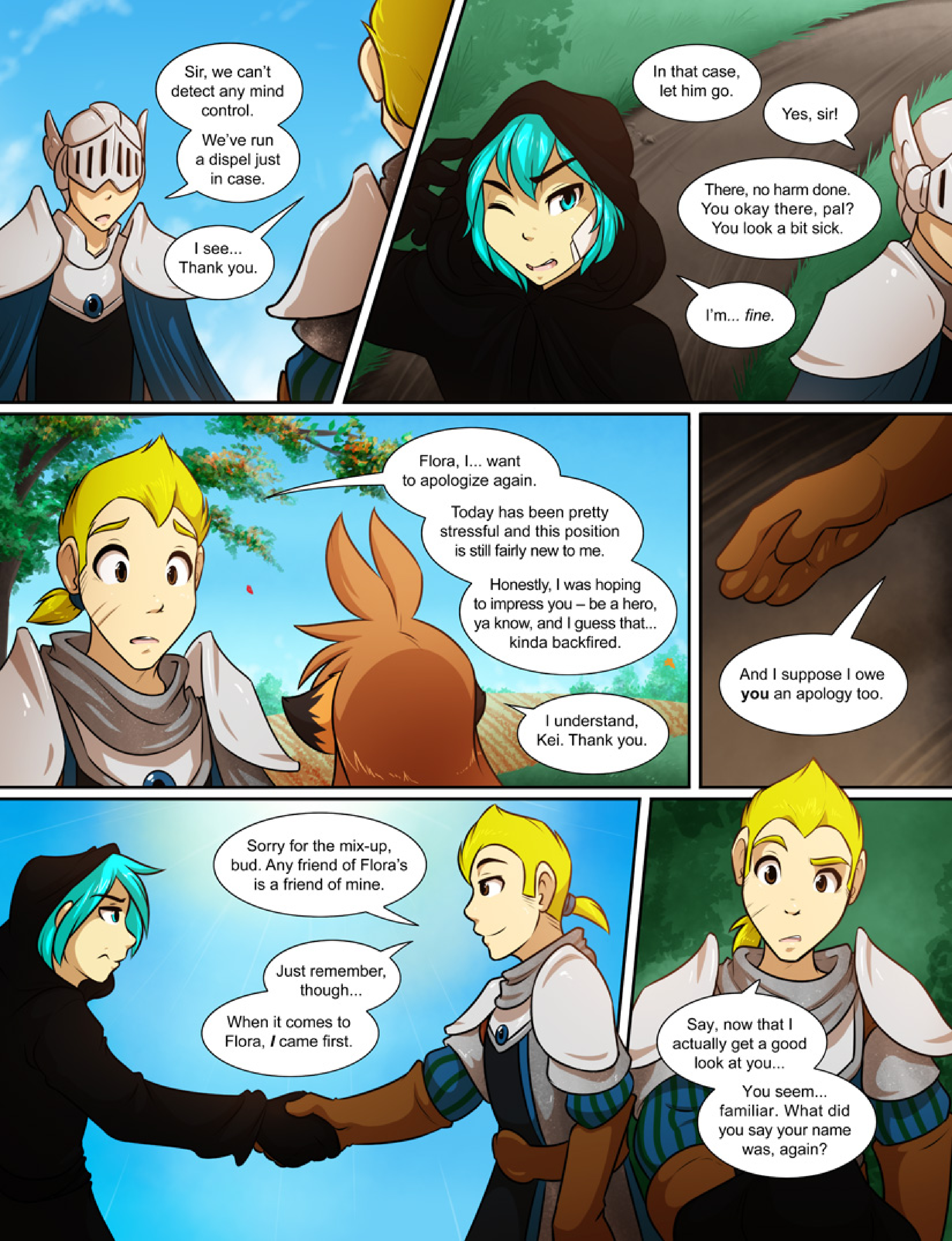

Well, there goes my entertainment for the day.
...And business. Ah, well, I—
Hm?
Oh, they left me something after all. A...
A... gold coin?!
Wow... Maybe Mr. Big Bad Templar isn't quite as bad as they say.
Couldn't be any worse than his acting. Not that I'd say that to his face.
Maeve, dear, I need to go to the market. Could you help mommy clean—
Maeve?
Sigh... Maeve.
Trying to sneak off after the tigers, hm? That girl, I swear...
You're going to be cleaning so many dishes when I catch up to you, Maeve.
BACK IN 5 MINUTES
THRUM

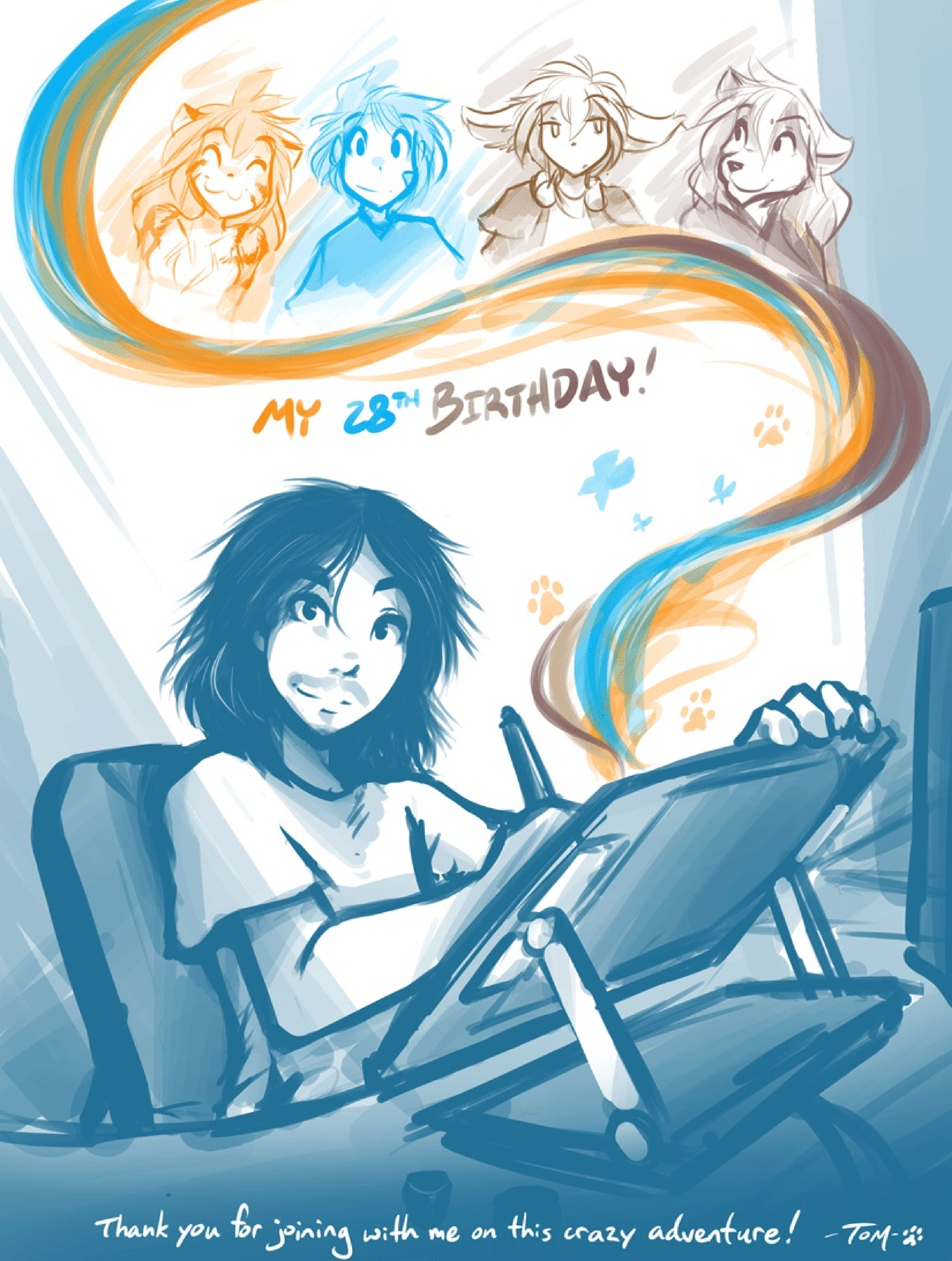

I don't remember there being so many guards in Edinmire.
This meeting is very important. We're taking every precaution.
But as long as you're not a wolf, you don't have anything to worry about.
Eyes forward, Daniels!
But... what about the wolves that already live in Edinmire?
The servants and merchants, like Adira?
DING! DING!
Er, well...
At the moment, all canine keidran are being held at the guard barracks for now.
Wait, what?! You're locking up *every* wolf in the city? Even the innocent ones?
That's ***horrible!***
Flora, it's not that bad.
This is just a temporary measure. The *wolves* declared war on ***us***. We can't let our guard down.
The ones living here didn't declare war on anyone!
It's not right!
Flora, you're naive if you think the wolves here wouldn't side with their kind in a heartbeat.
They can't change what they are.


A-anyway, on a lighter note...
Here, maybe this will make you feel better. I have something for you.
What is it?
FLORA
104
They're your papers. Everything that documented you as a slave of my family.
I'm *giving* them to you. Look underneath.
It's a letter of safe passage. The same kind that lets that tavern lady live and work here.
Is this your way of saying I still technically belong to you?
W-what? *No, no!* Nothing like that!
I had it made ages ago, in case you... ever came back.
I'm... free?
Yes, though you should still be careful. There will always be people who won't care about a seal.
Speaking of which...

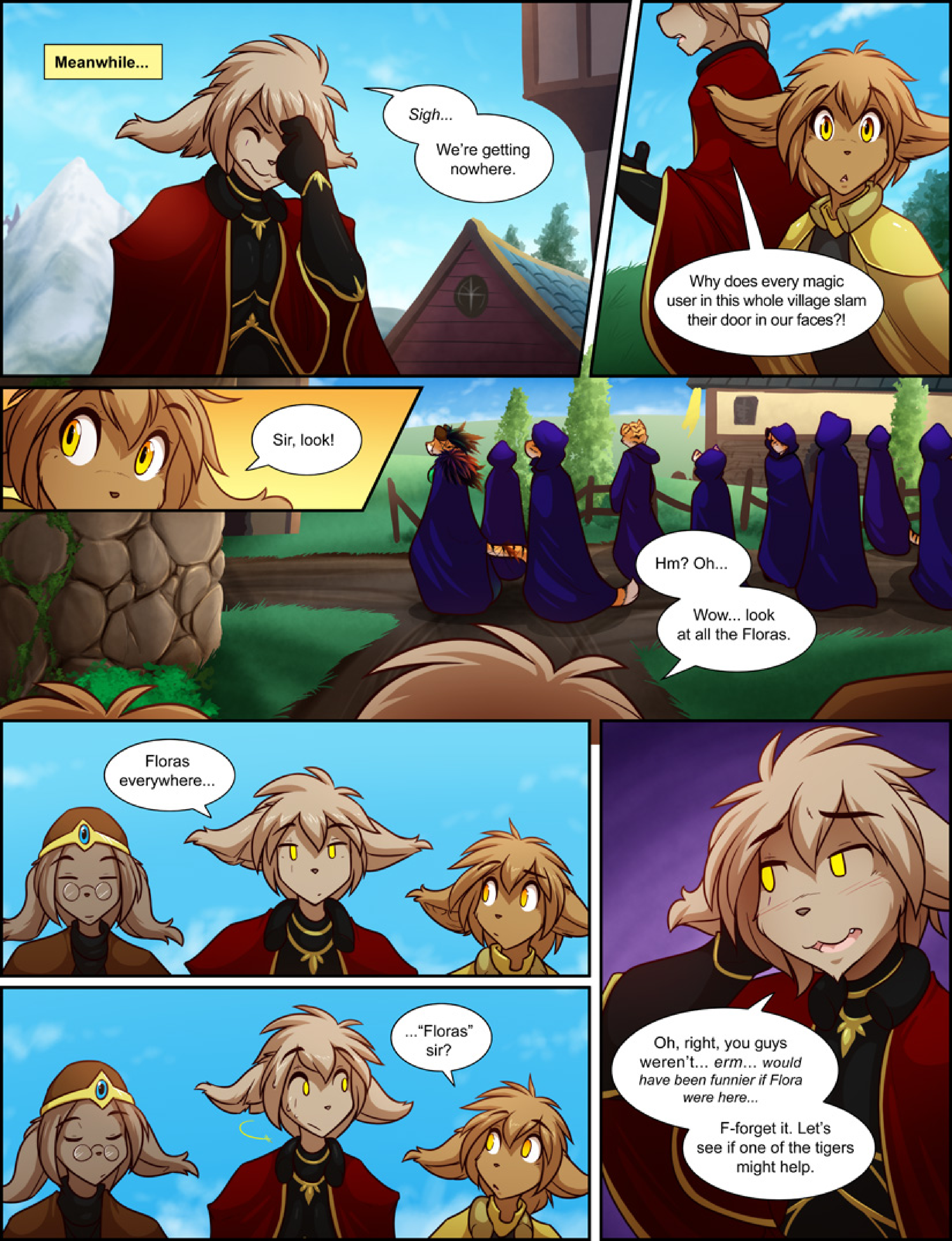

Guards!
Hey!
Kei! What are you doing?!
THEY KNOW! WE NEED TO GET AWAY!
RELEASE OUR MAGIC!
USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT! USE IT!
Sir, as I'm sure you've overheard, Flora is a *free* Keidran.
I don't know how she came to be in your possession, but I won't allow you to keep her as your servant any longer.
You will be held until we're sure you're not a threat to—
GRRRRRR

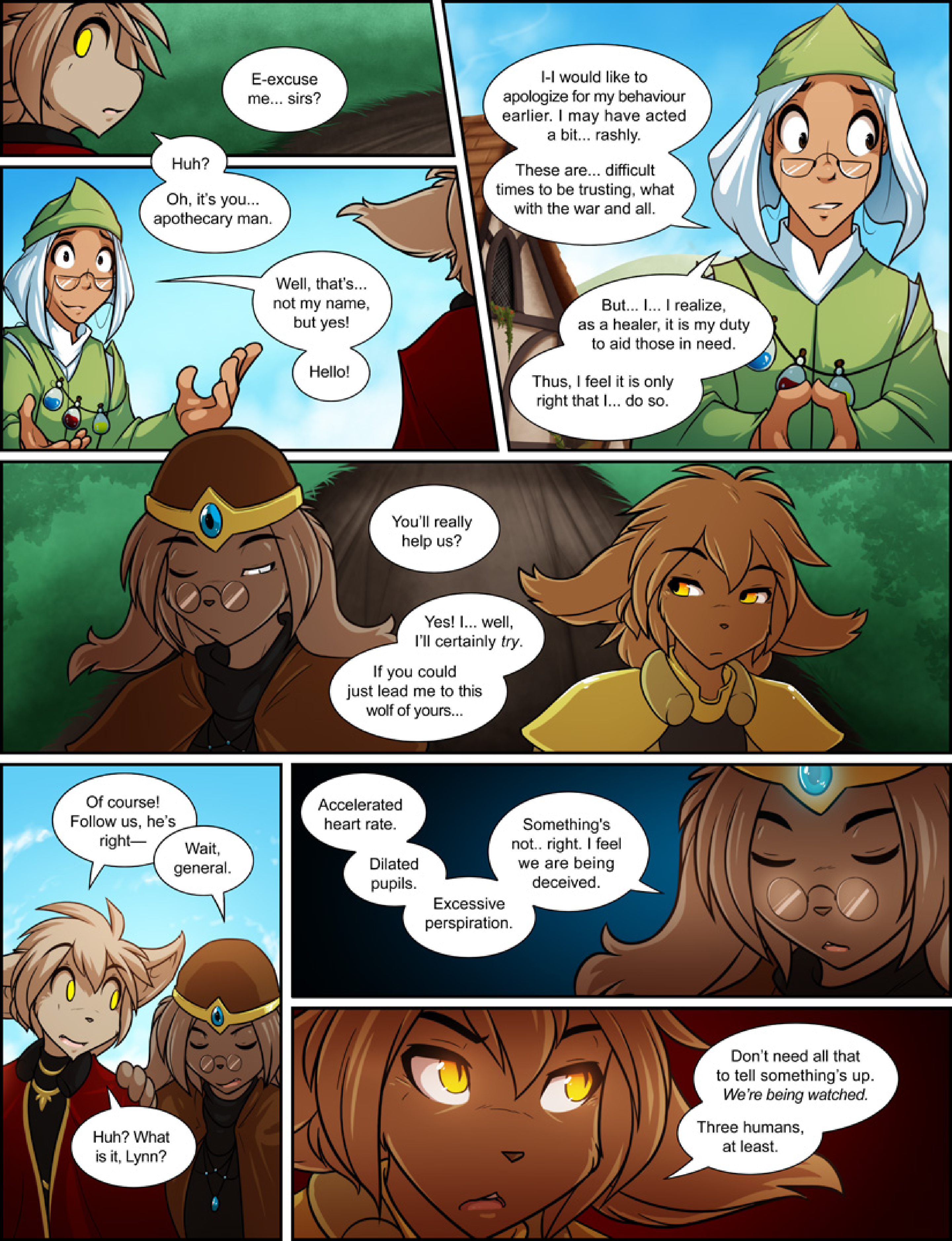

F-Flora? Wha—
Keiren, tell your men to **let. Him. *Go.***
Hey! You can't talk to the captain that way!
No, it's... it's alright, Daniels. Go back to... whatever you were doing.
Flora, I... I don't understand. I'm trying to help! This guy—
—Has done **nothing!** Something you'd know if you'd just asked me first.
You haven't changed, Kei. You were always deciding for me.
Hey! ***That's** not fair!* I'm trying to make up for what I've done. I just didn't know. So this guy, he's...?
A **friend**. And I know how strange that sounds. It's a long story.
One I don't feel like telling while your goons are holding him.
"Goons"? *Rude.*
Why is the captain letting a *Keidran* talk to him like that?
SWISH! SWISH!
Eh, probably under orders to play nice with the stripes while they're here.
Now, if you really want to make up for before, start by *not arresting my friends.*

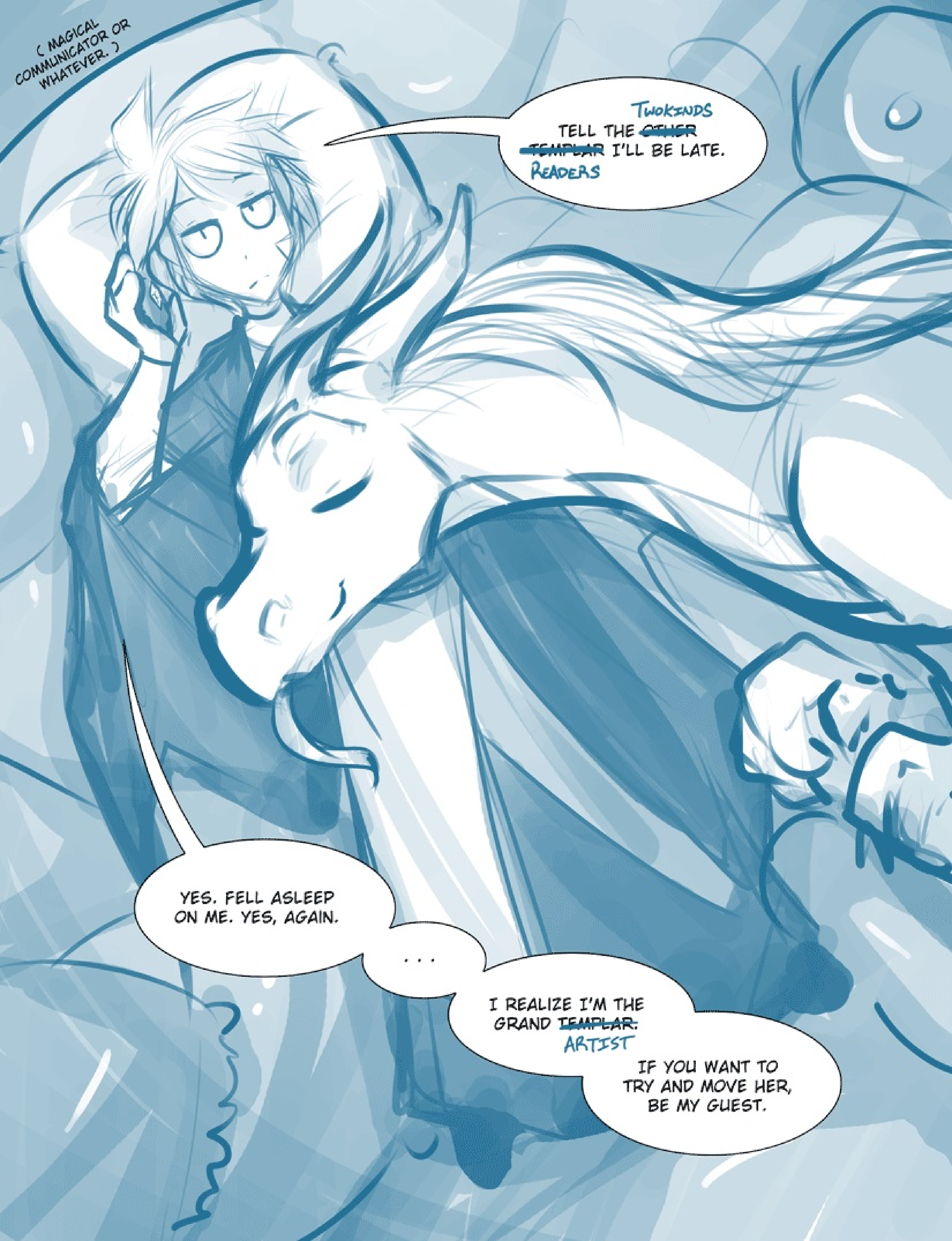

Sir, we can't detect any mind control.
We've run a dispel just in case.
I see... Thank you.
In that case, let him go.
Yes, sir!
There, no harm done. You okay there, pal? You look a bit sick.
I'm... *fine.*
Flora, I... want to apologize again.
Today has been pretty stressful and this position is still fairly new to me.
Honestly, I was hoping to impress you – be a hero, ya know, and I guess that... kinda backfired.
I understand, Kei. Thank you.
And I suppose I owe **you** an apology too.
Sorry for the mix-up, bud. Any friend of Flora's is a friend of mine.
Just remember, though...
When it comes to Flora, ***I*** came first.
Say, now that I actually get a good look at you...
You seem... familiar. What did you say your name was, again?

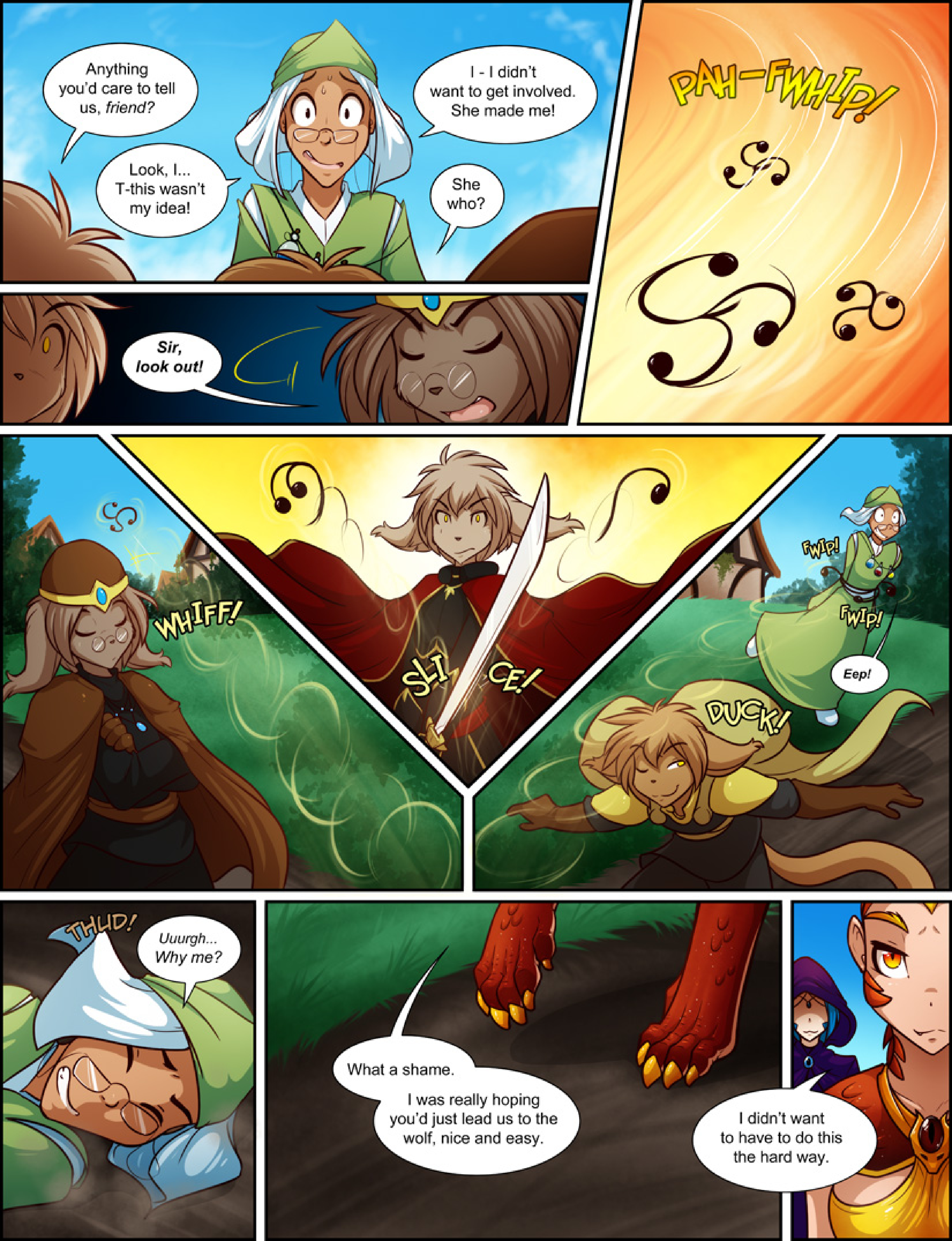


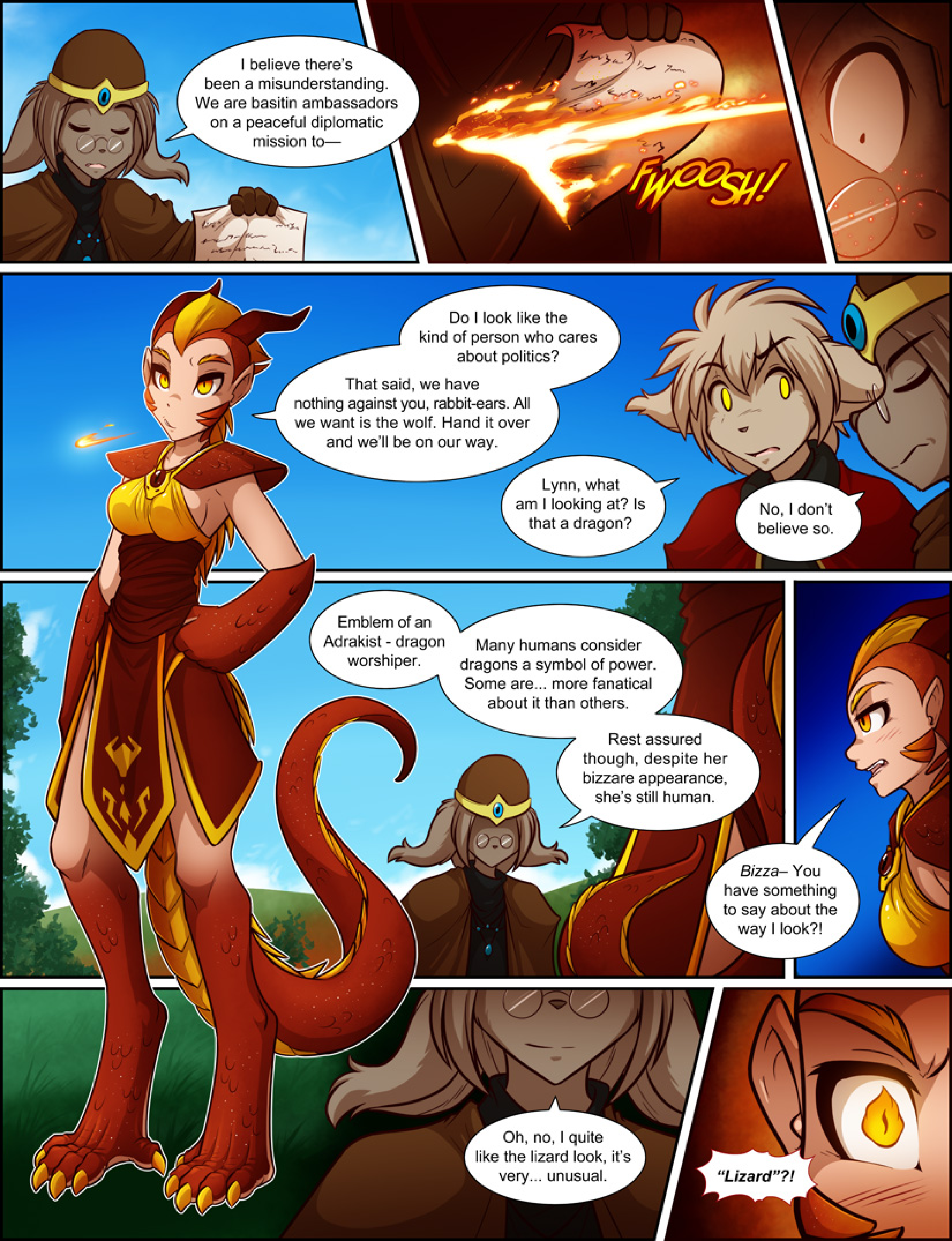
MY 28TH BIRTHDAY!
Thank you for joining with me on this crazy adventure! -TOM-

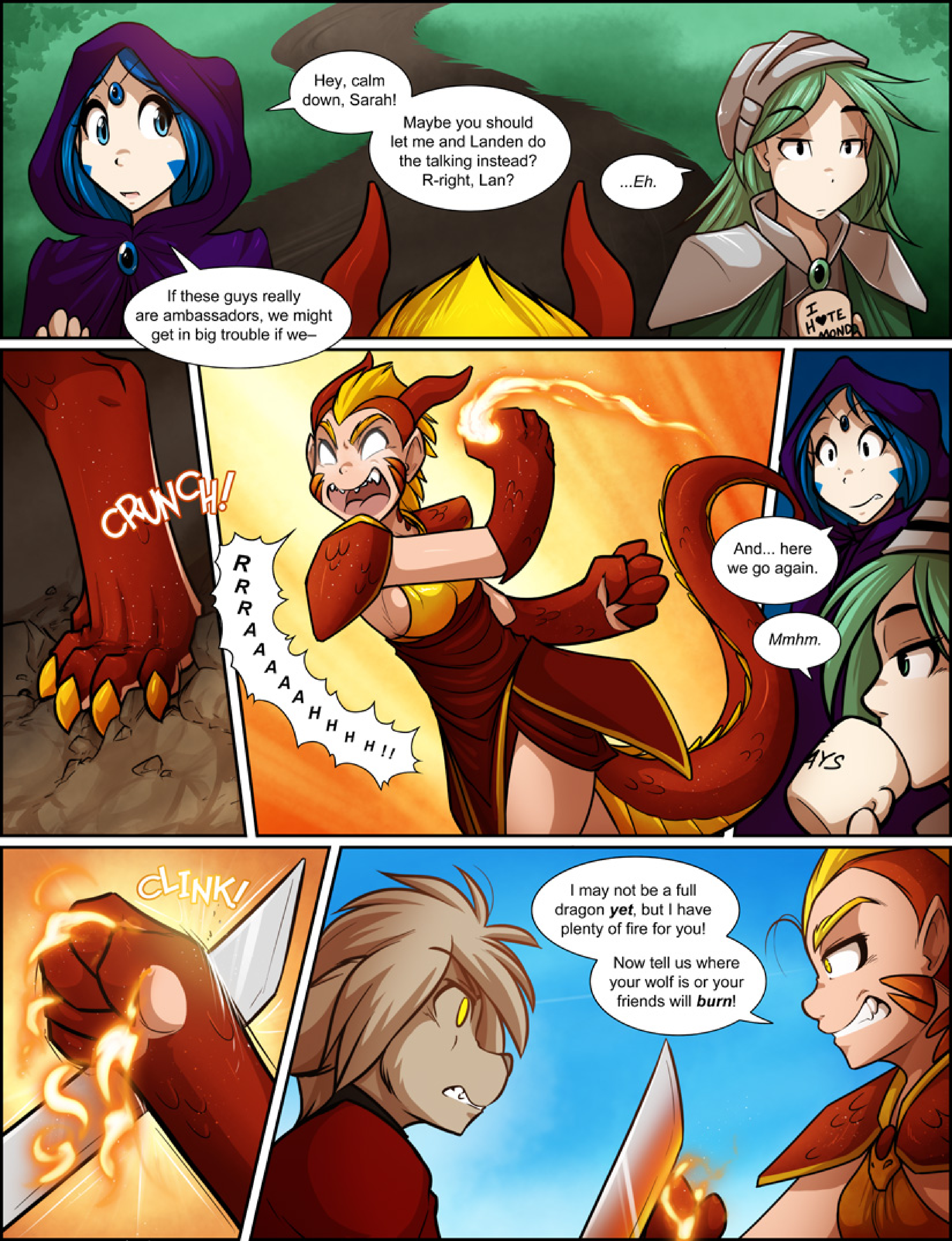

Meanwhile...
Sigh...
We're getting nowhere.
Why does every magic user in this whole village slam their door in our faces?!
Sir, look!
Hm? Oh...
Wow... look at all the Floras.
Floras everywhere...
..."Floras" sir?
Oh, right, you guys weren't... *erm... would have been funnier if Flora were here...*
F-forget it. Let's see if one of the tigers might help.

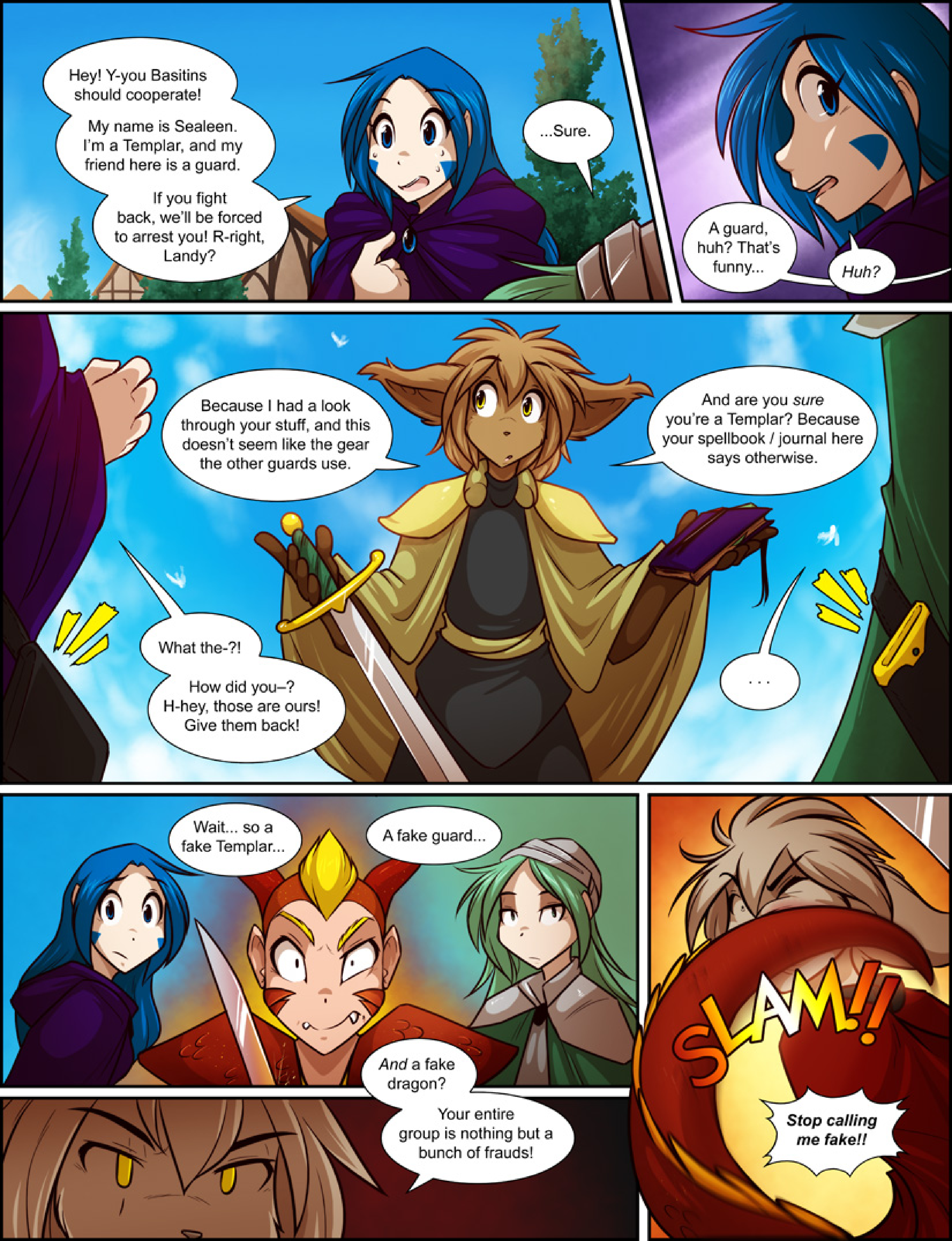

E-excuse me... sirs?
Huh?
Oh, it's you... apothecary man.
Well, that's... not my name, but yes!
Hello!
I-I would like to apologize for my behaviour earlier. I may have acted a bit... rashly.
These are... difficult times to be trusting, what with the war and all.
But... I... I realize, as a healer, it is my duty to aid those in need.
Thus, I feel it is only right that I... do so.
You'll really help us?
Yes! I... well, I'll certainly *try*.
If you could just lead me to this wolf of yours...
Of course! Follow us, he's right—
Wait, general.
Huh? What is it, Lynn?
Accelerated heart rate.
Dilated pupils.
Excessive perspiration.
Something's not.. right. I feel we are being deceived.
Don't need all that to tell something's up. *We're being watched.*
Three humans, at least.

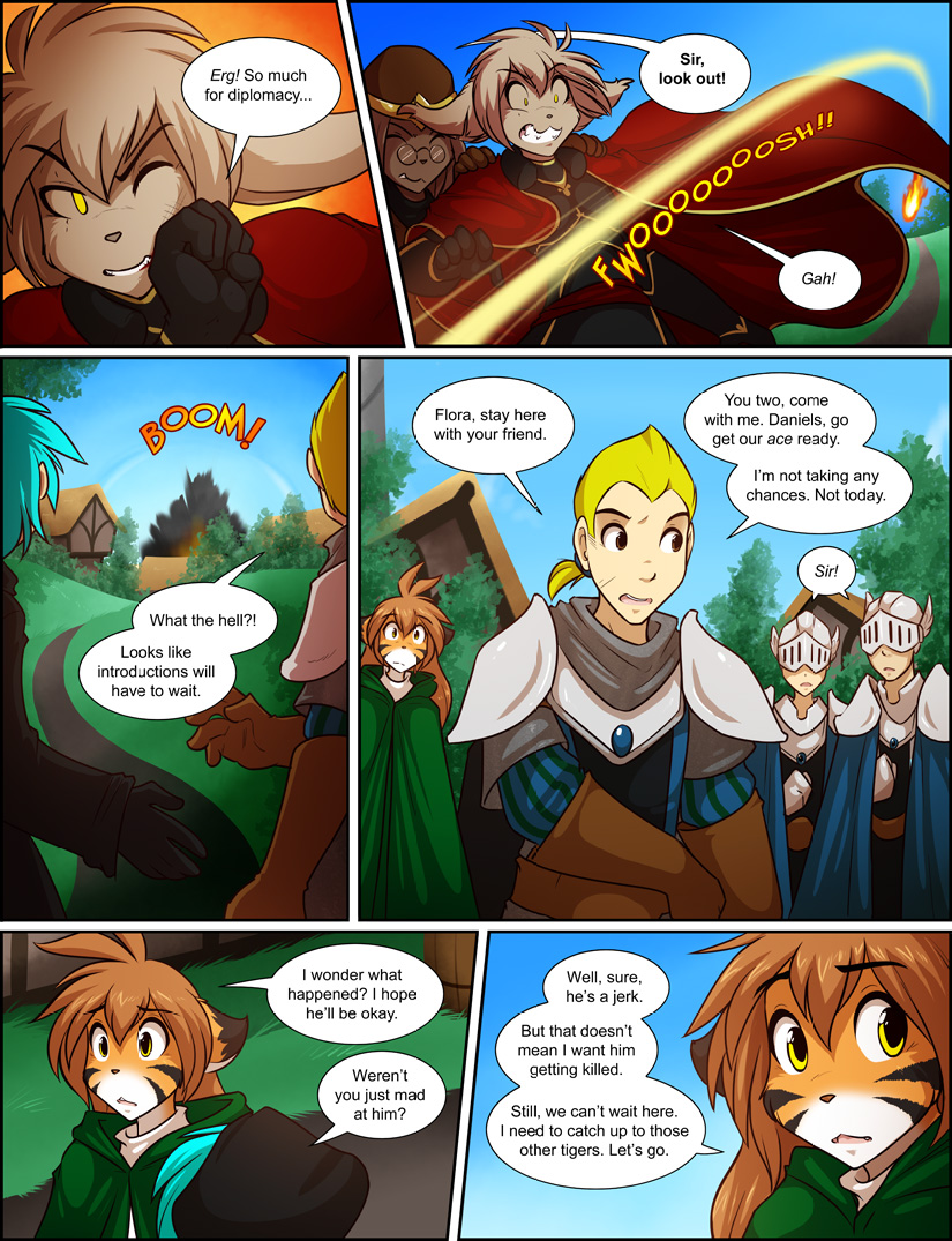

(MAGICAL COMMUNICATOR OR WHATEVER.)
TELL THE ~~OTHER~~ TWOKINDS ~~TEMPLAR~~ READERS I'LL BE LATE.
YES. FELL ASLEEP ON ME. YES, AGAIN.
. . .
I REALIZE I'M THE GRAND ~~TEMPLAR.~~ ARTIST
IF YOU WANT TO TRY AND MOVE HER, BE MY GUEST.


Anything you'd care to tell us, *friend?*
Look, I... T-this wasn't my idea!
I - I didn't want to get involved. She made me!
She who?
Sir, look out!
PAH-FWHIP!
WHIFF!
SLICE!
FWIP!
FWIP!
Eep!
DUCK!
THUD!
Uuurgh... Why me?
What a shame.
I was really hoping you'd just lead us to the wolf, nice and easy.
I didn't want to have to do this the hard way.


I believe there's been a misunderstanding. We are basitin ambassadors on a peaceful diplomatic mission to—
FWOOSH!
Do I look like the kind of person who cares about politics?
That said, we have nothing against you, rabbit-ears. All we want is the wolf. Hand it over and we'll be on our way.
Lynn, what am I looking at? Is that a dragon?
No, I don't believe so.
Emblem of an Adrakist - dragon worshiper.
Many humans consider dragons a symbol of power. Some are... more fanatical about it than others.
Rest assured though, despite her bizzare appearance, she's still human.
Bizza– You have something to say about the way I look?!
Oh, no, I quite like the lizard look, it's very... unusual.
"Lizard"?!

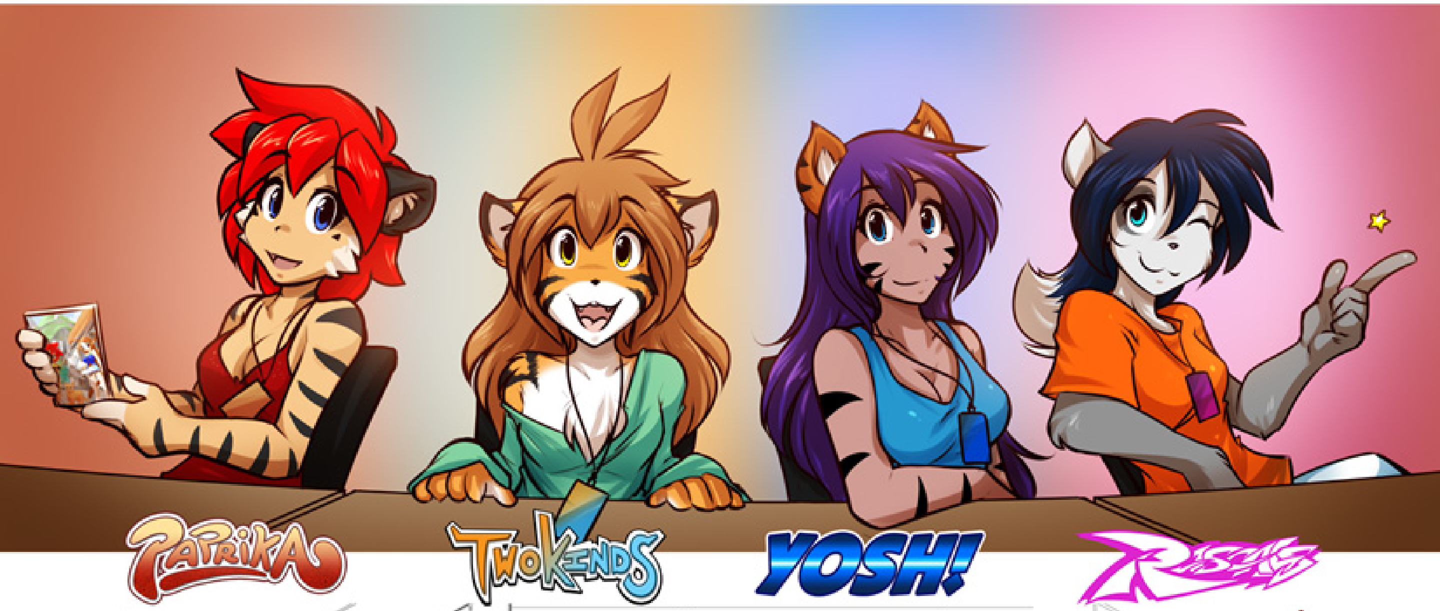

Hey, calm down, Sarah!
Maybe you should let me and Landen do the talking instead? R-right, Lan?
...*Eh.*
If these guys really are ambassadors, we might get in big trouble if we–
I H♥TE MONDA
CRUNCH!
RRRAAAAAAHHHHH!!
And... here we go again.
Mmhm.
AYS
CLINK!
I may not be a full dragon ***yet***, but I have plenty of fire for you!
Now tell us where your wolf is or your friends will ***burn***!

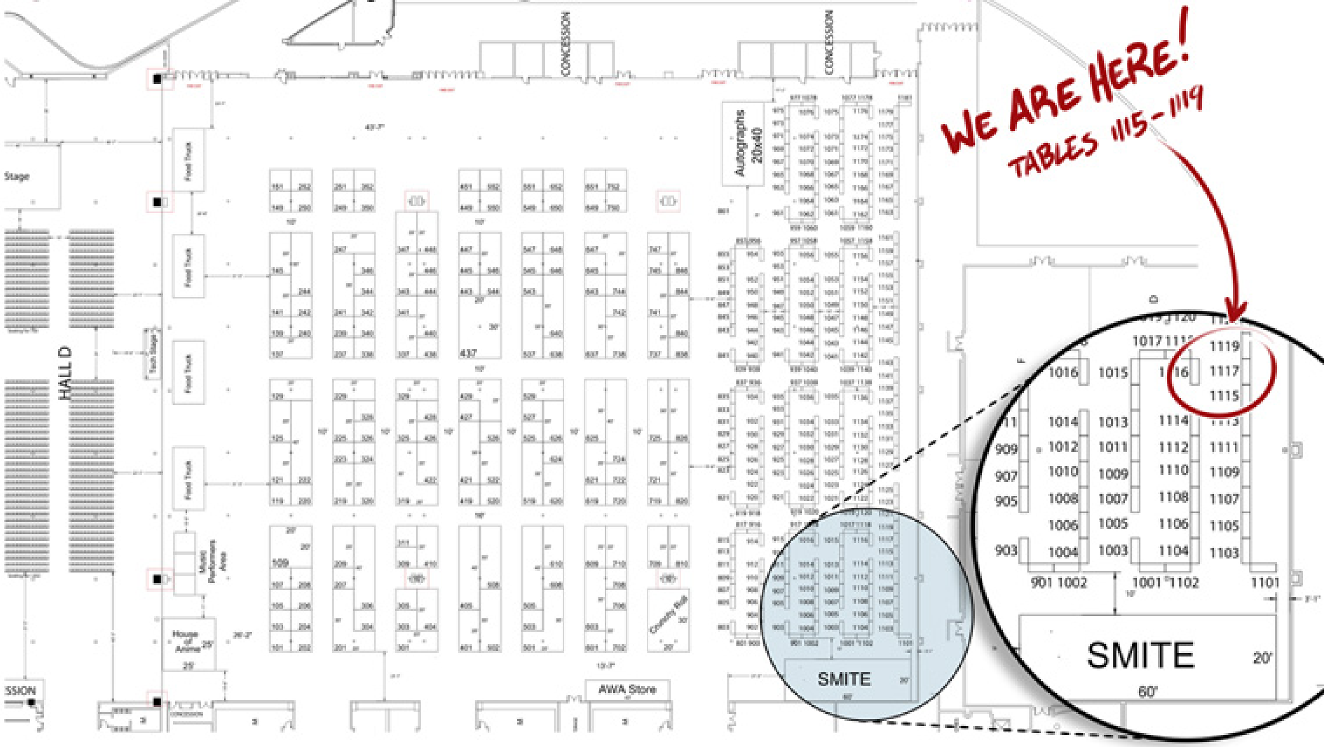

Hey! Y-you Basitins should cooperate!
My name is Sealeen. I'm a Templar, and my friend here is a guard.
If you fight back, we'll be forced to arrest you! R-right, Landy?
...Sure.
A guard, huh? That's funny...
Huh?
Because I had a look through your stuff, and this doesn't seem like the gear the other guards use.
And are you *sure* you're a Templar? Because your spellbook / journal here says otherwise.
What the-?!
How did you–? H-hey, those are ours! Give them back!
. . .
Wait... so a fake Templar...
A fake guard...
And a fake dragon?
Your entire group is nothing but a bunch of frauds!
SLAM!!
Stop calling me fake!!


Erg! So much for diplomacy...
Sir, look out!
FWOOOOOOOSH!!
Gah!
BOOM!
What the hell?!
Looks like introductions will have to wait.
Flora, stay here with your friend.
You two, come with me. Daniels, go get our *ace* ready.
I'm not taking any chances. Not today.
Sir!
I wonder what happened? I hope he'll be okay.
Weren't you just mad at him?
Well, sure, he's a jerk.
But that doesn't mean I want him getting killed.
Still, we can't wait here. I need to catch up to those other tigers. Let's go.

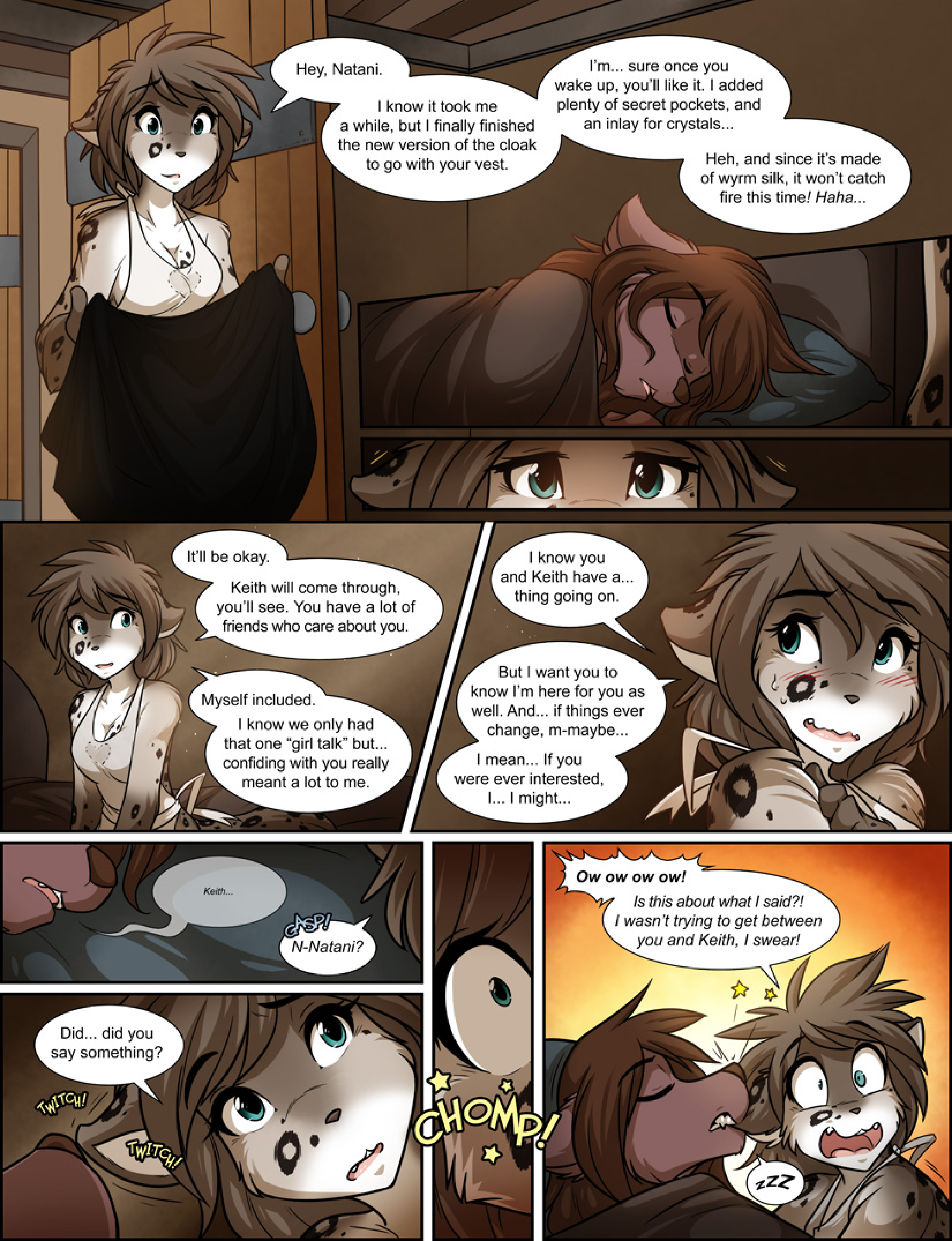
ANIME WEEKEND ATLANTA

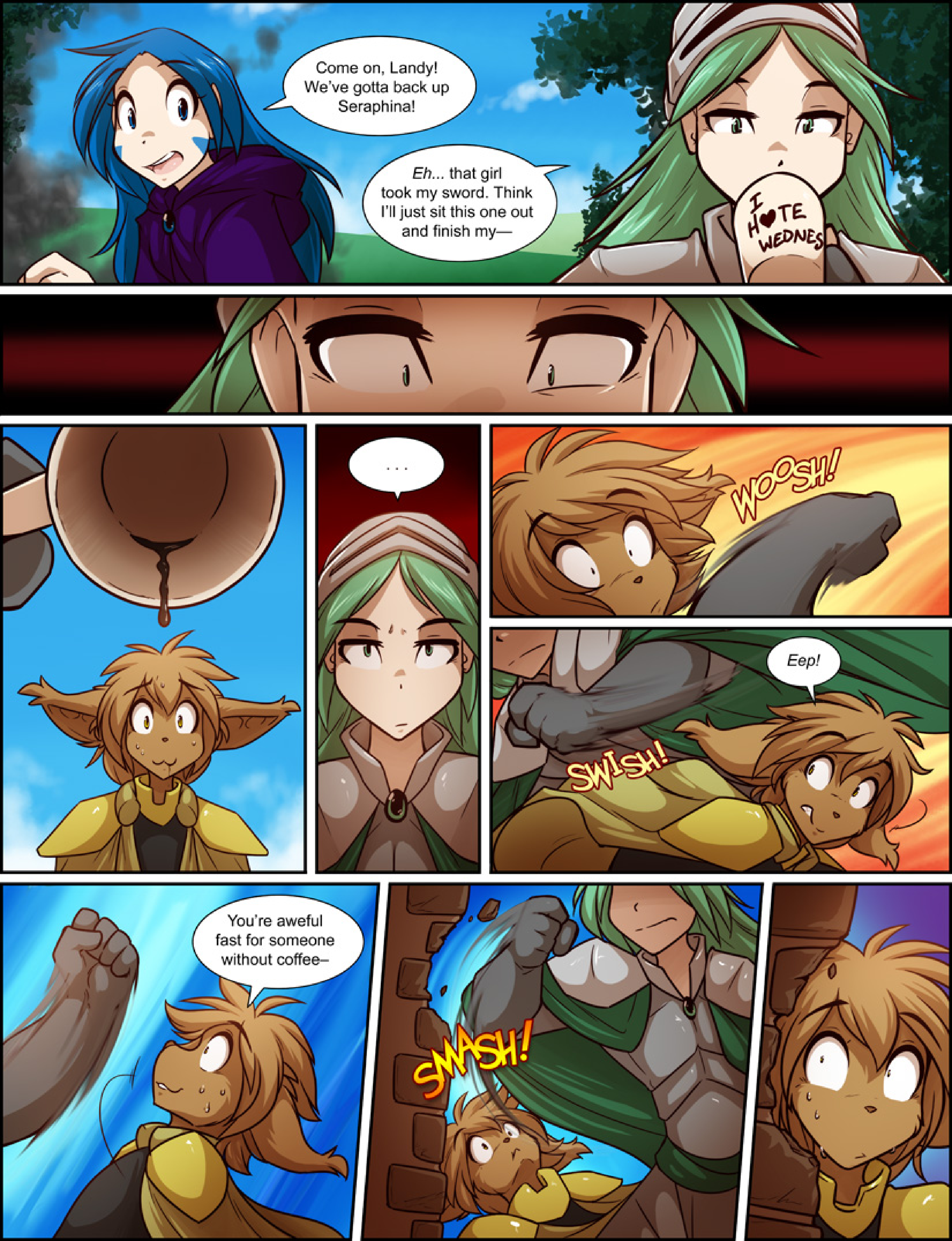
SEPTEMBER 24 - 27 2015 @ COBB GALLERIA IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

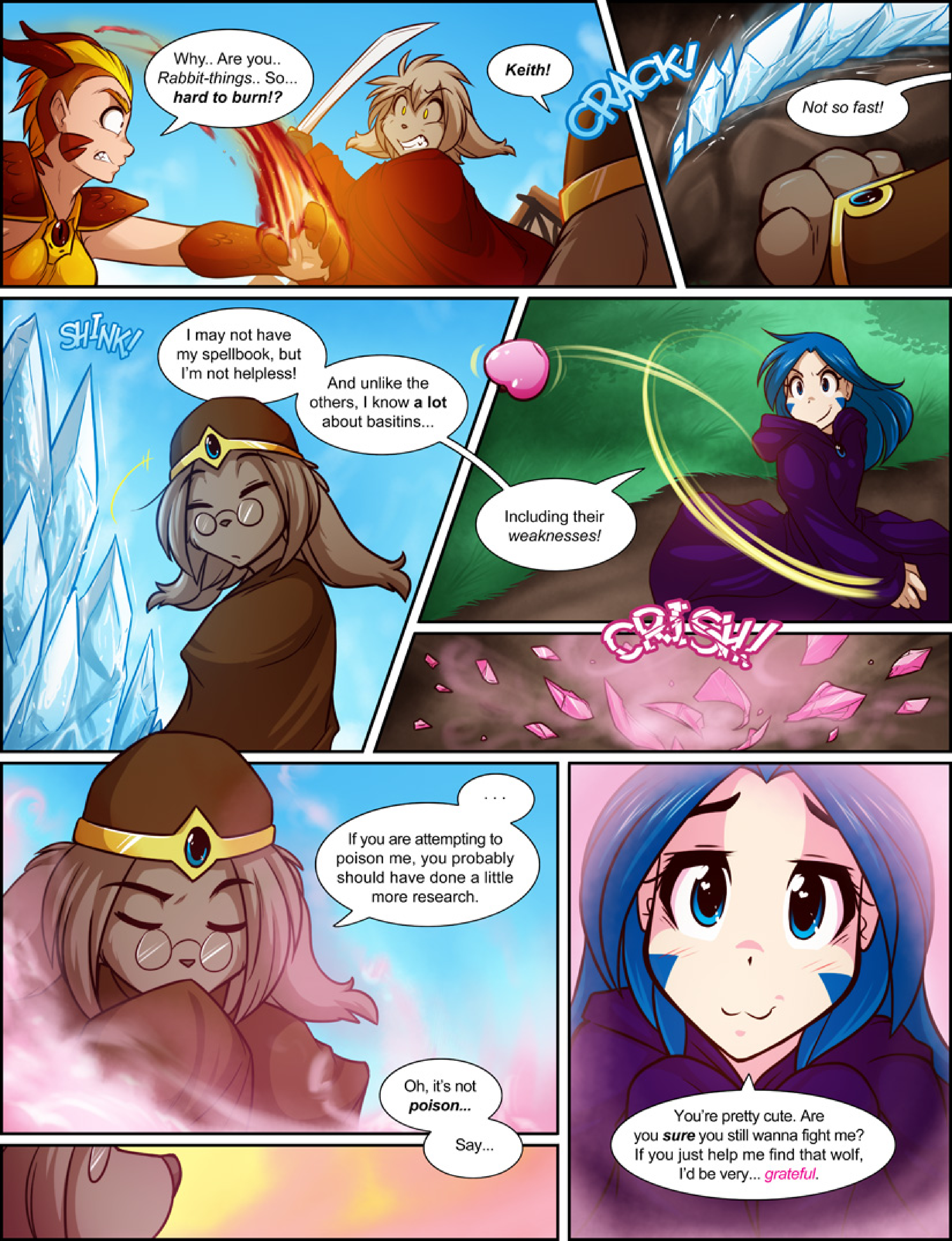

PAPRIKA
TWOKINDS
YOSH!
RISSA


WE ARE HERE!
TABLES 1115-1119
CONCESSION
CONCESSION
Autographs 20x40
Stage
HALL D
Food Truck
Food Truck
Food Truck
Food Truck
Tech Stage
Music Performers Area
House of Anime
Crunchy Roll
AWA Store
SMITE
1119
1117
1115
SMITE
20'
60'

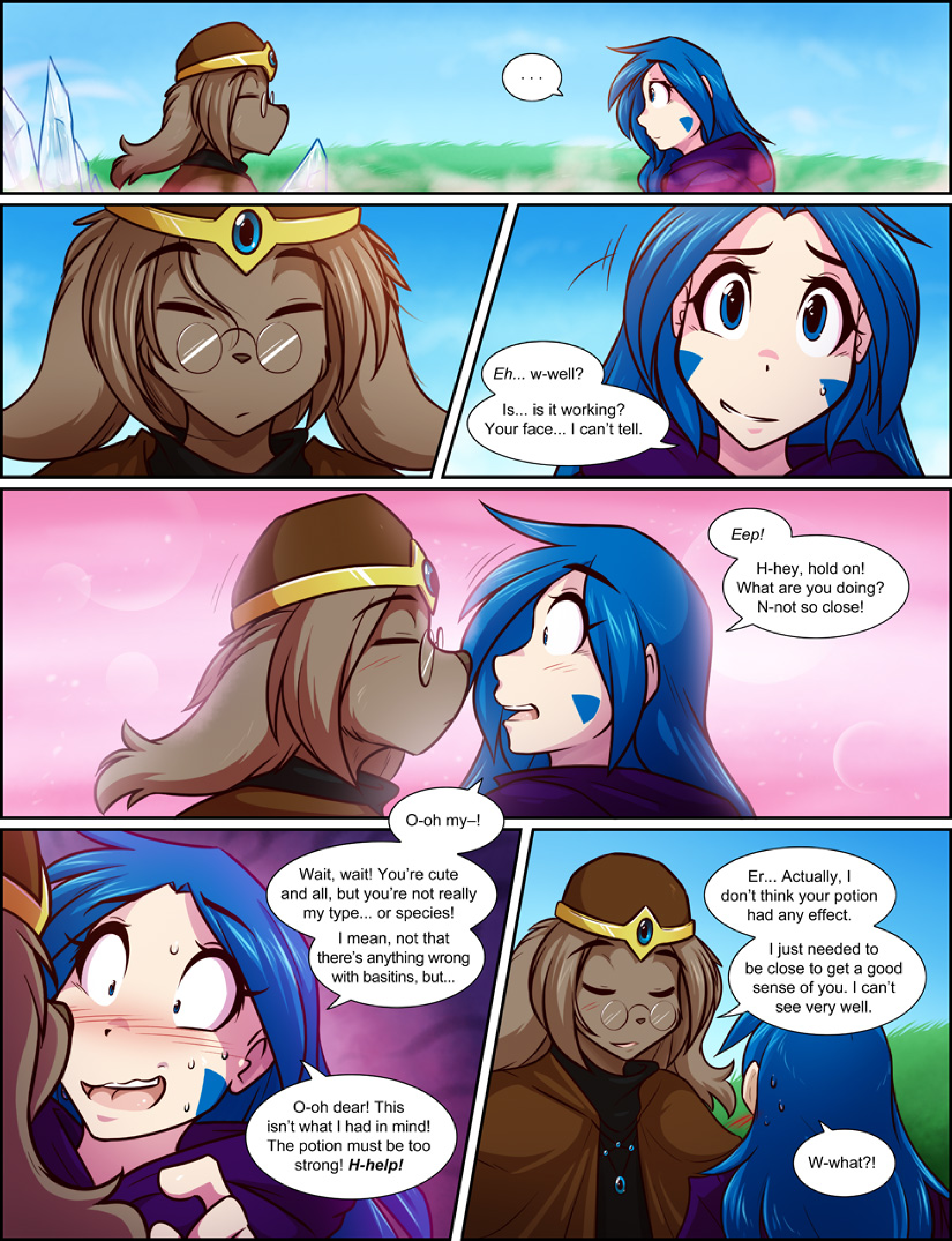
IT'S NOT TOO LATE! IF YOU'RE IN THE AREA, COME OUT TO SEE US THIS WEEKEND!
FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO **AWA-CON.COM**

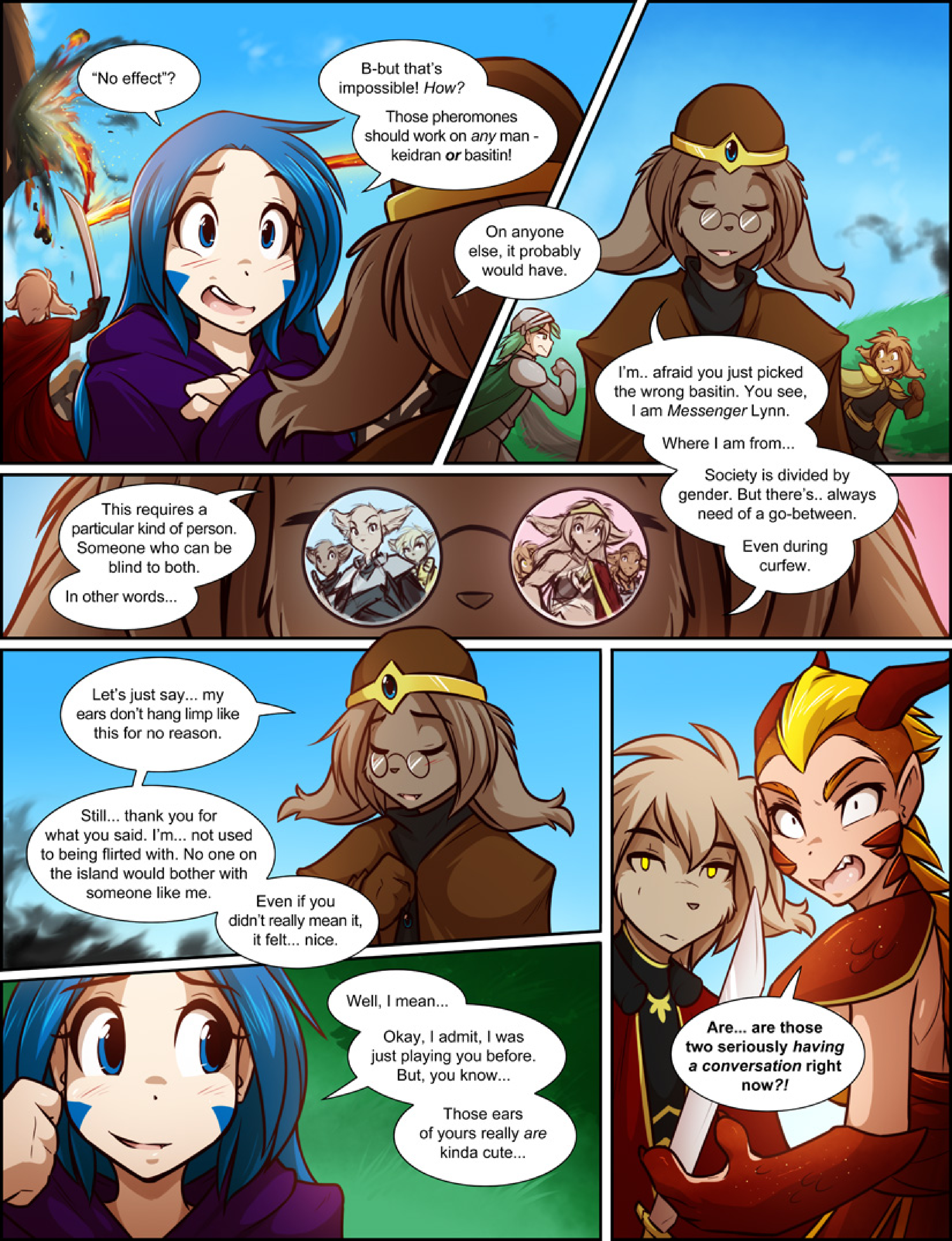

Hey, Natani.
I know it took me a while, but I finally finished the new version of the cloak to go with your vest.
I'm... sure once you wake up, you'll like it. I added plenty of secret pockets, and an inlay for crystals...
Heh, and since it's made of wyrm silk, it won't catch fire this time! *Haha...*
It'll be okay.
Keith will come through, you'll see. You have a lot of friends who care about you.
Myself included.
I know we only had that one "girl talk" but... confiding with you really meant a lot to me.
I know you and Keith have a... thing going on.
But I want you to know I'm here for you as well. And... if things ever change, m-maybe...
I mean... If you were ever interested, I... I might...
Keith...
GASP!
N-Natani?
Did... did you say something?
TWITCH!
TWITCH!
CHOMP!
Ow ow ow ow!
Is this about what I said?! I wasn't trying to get between you and Keith, I swear!
zZZ

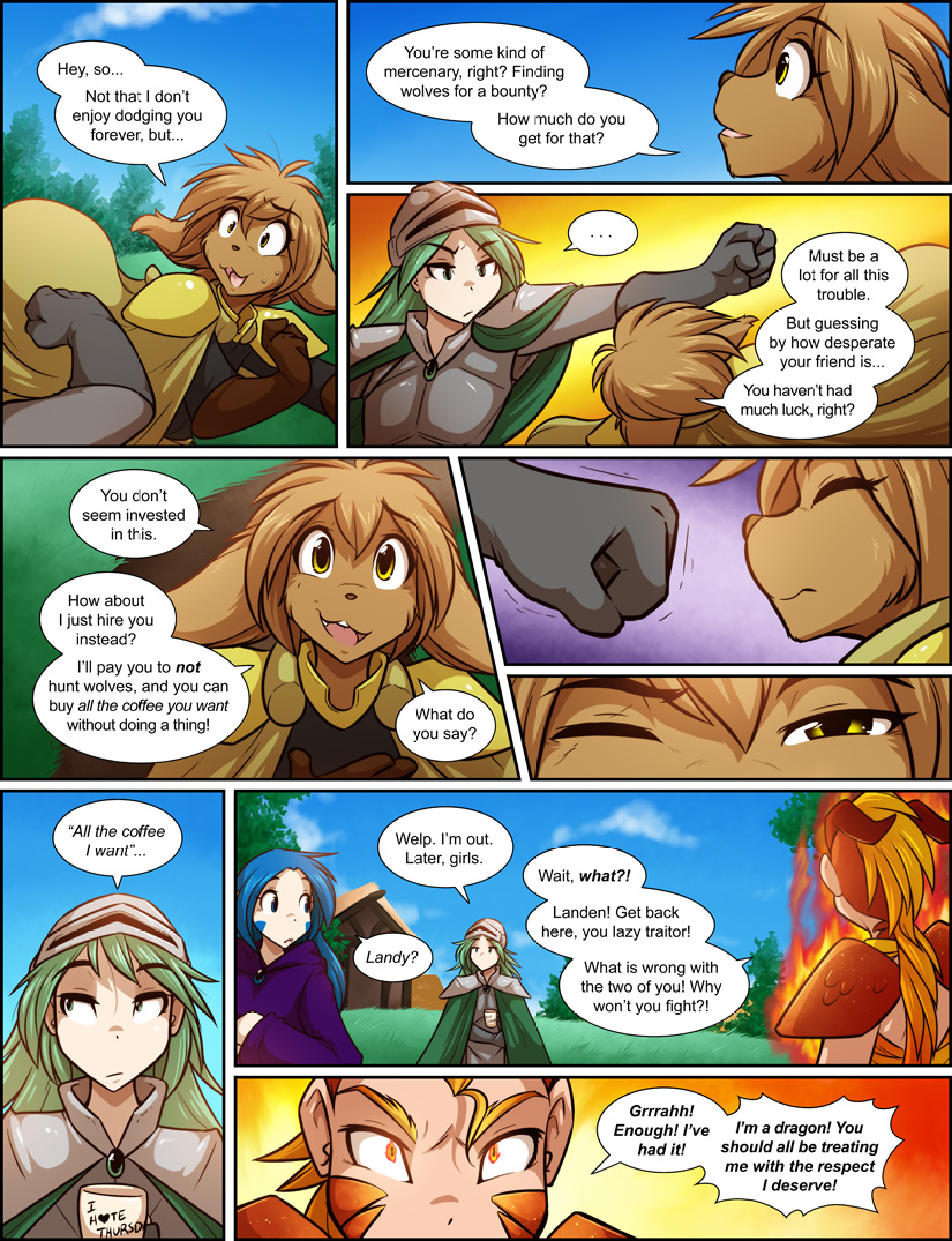

Come on, Landy! We've gotta back up Seraphina!
Eh... that girl took my sword. Think I'll just sit this one out and finish my—
I H♥TE WEDNES
. . .
WOOSH!
Eep!
SWISH!
You're aweful fast for someone without coffee–
SMASH!

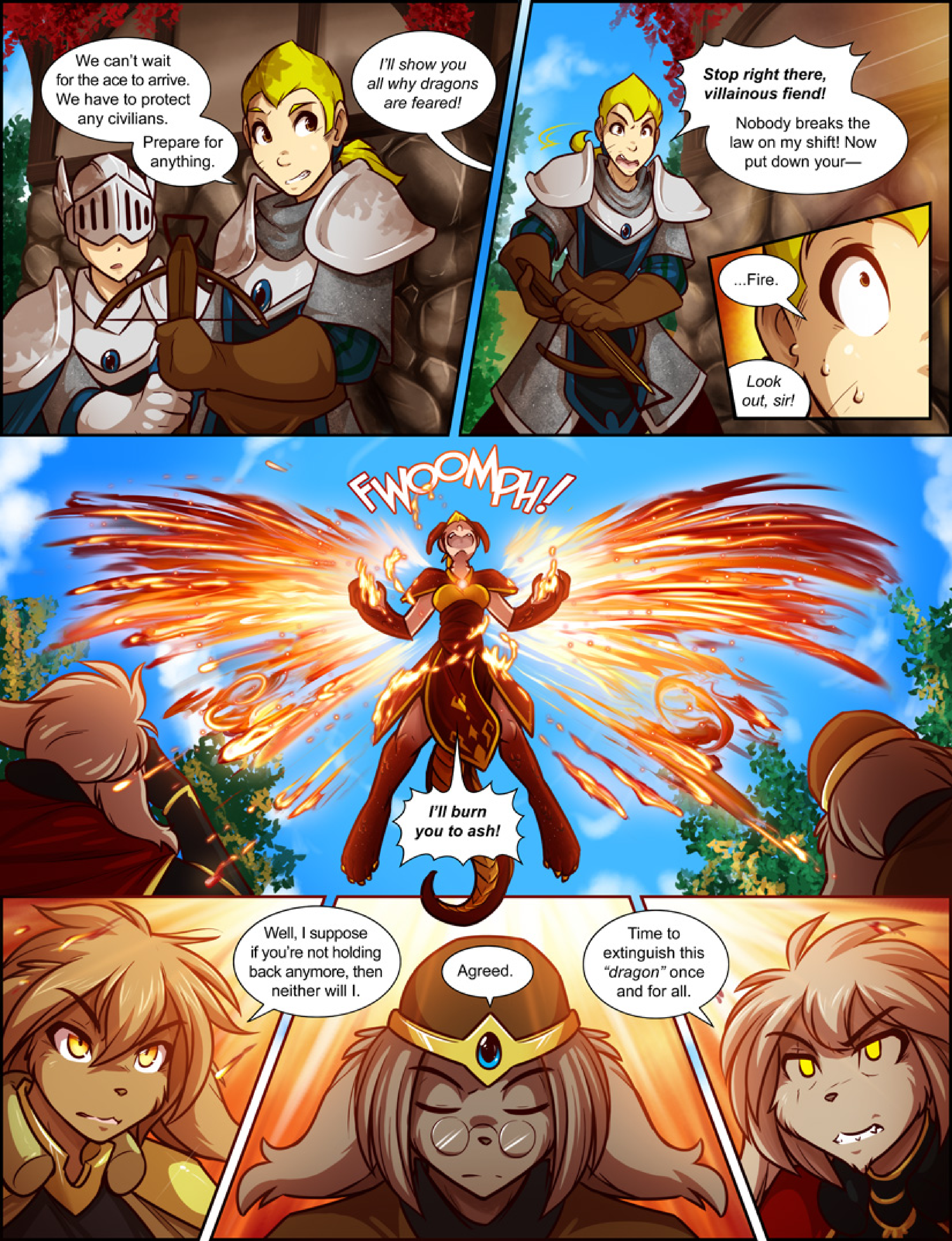

Why.. Are you.. *Rabbit-things*.. So... **hard to burn!?**
Keith!
CRACK!
Not so fast!
SHINK!
I may not have my spellbook, but I'm not helpless!
And unlike the others, I know **a lot** about basitins...
Including their *weaknesses!*
CRISH!
. . .
If you are attempting to poison me, you probably should have done a little more research.
Oh, it's not ***poison...***
Say...
You're pretty cute. Are you ***sure*** you still wanna fight me? If you just help me find that wolf, I'd be very... *grateful*.

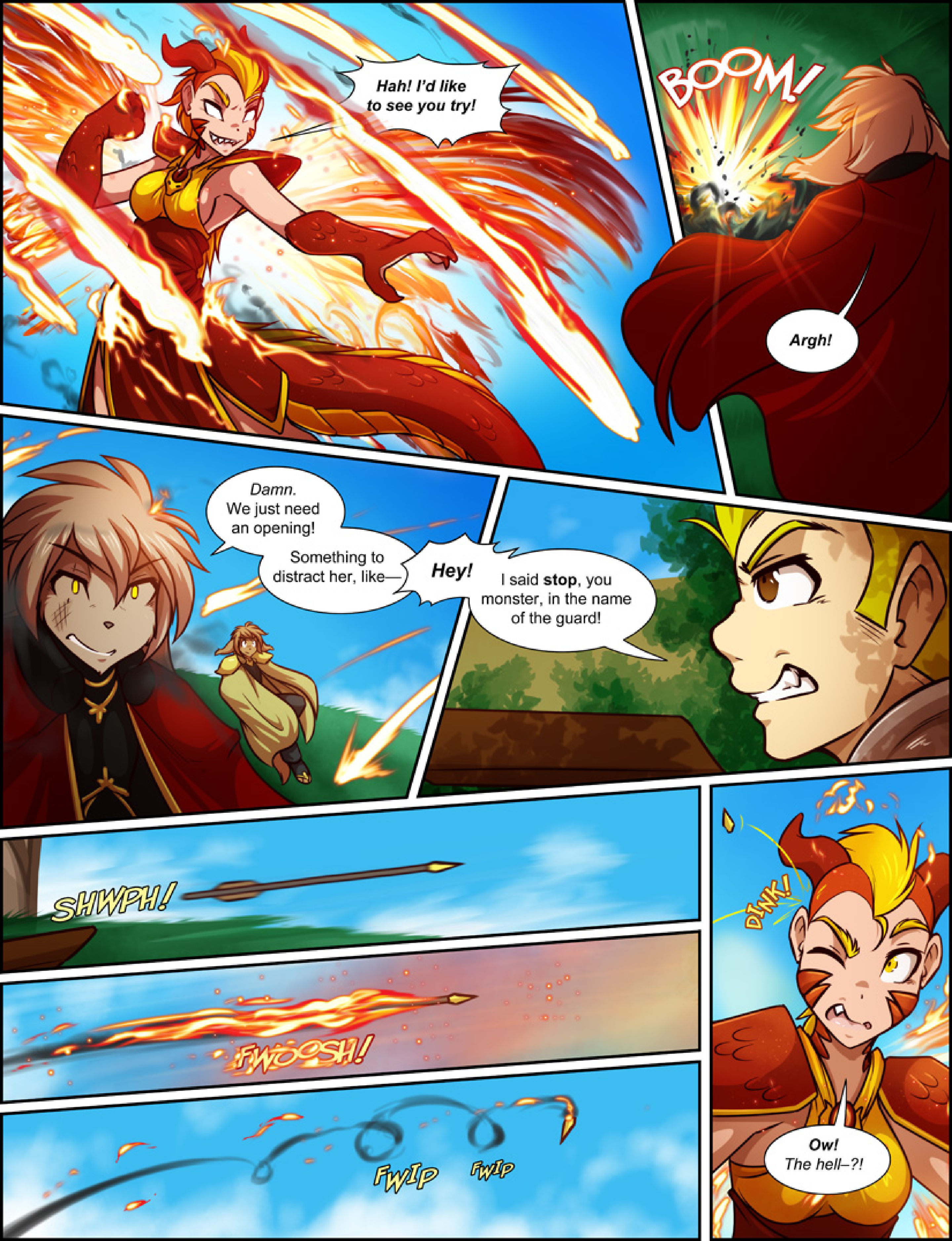
TwoKinds
12
12 YEARS AND STILL GOING STRONG!

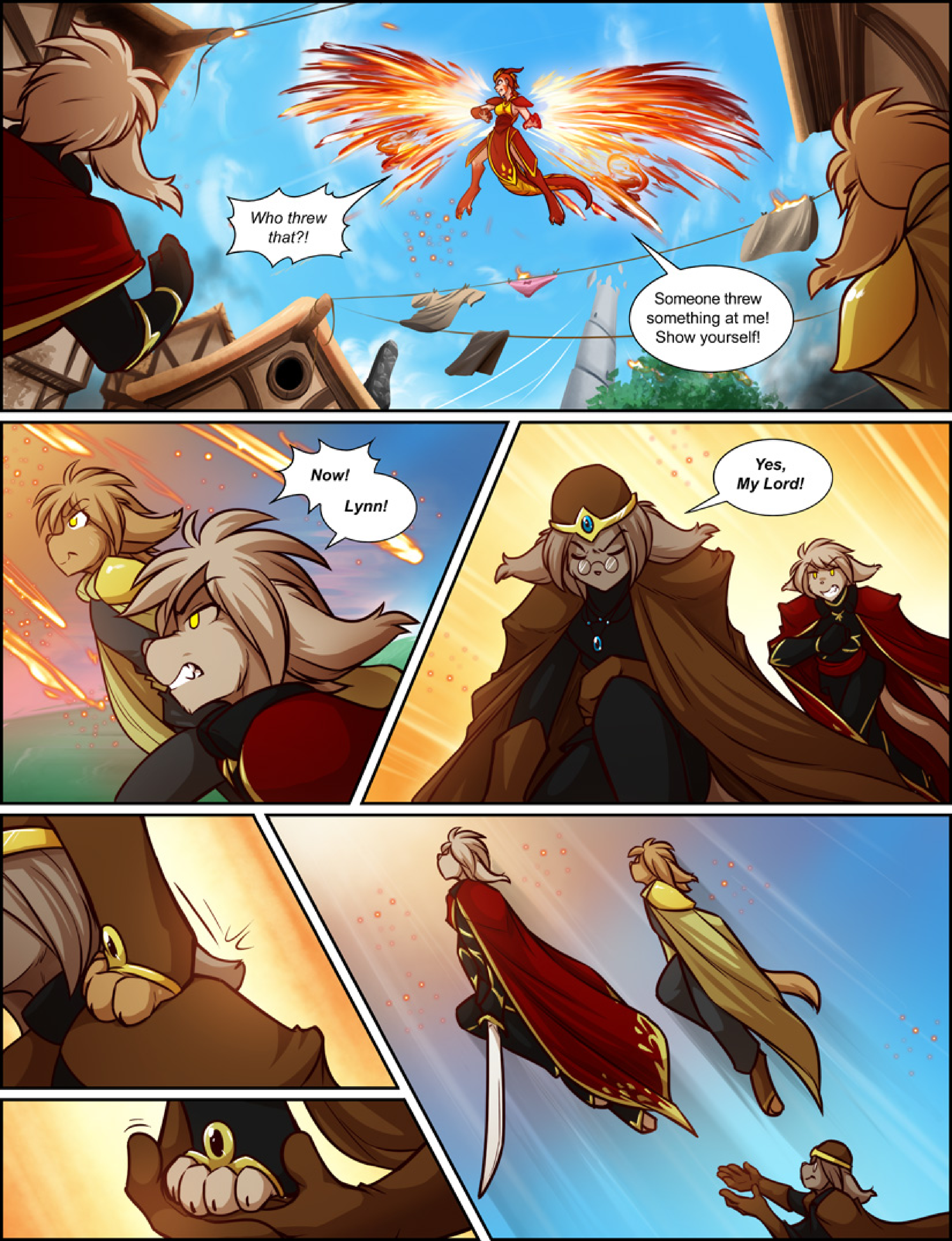

. . .
Eh... w-well?
Is... is it working? Your face... I can't tell.
Eep!
H-hey, hold on! What are you doing? N-not so close!
O-oh my–!
Wait, wait! You're cute and all, but you're not really my type... or species!
I mean, not that there's anything wrong with basitins, but...
O-oh dear! This isn't what I had in mind! The potion must be too strong! ***H-help!***
Er... Actually, I don't think your potion had any effect.
I just needed to be close to get a good sense of you. I can't see very well.
W-what?!

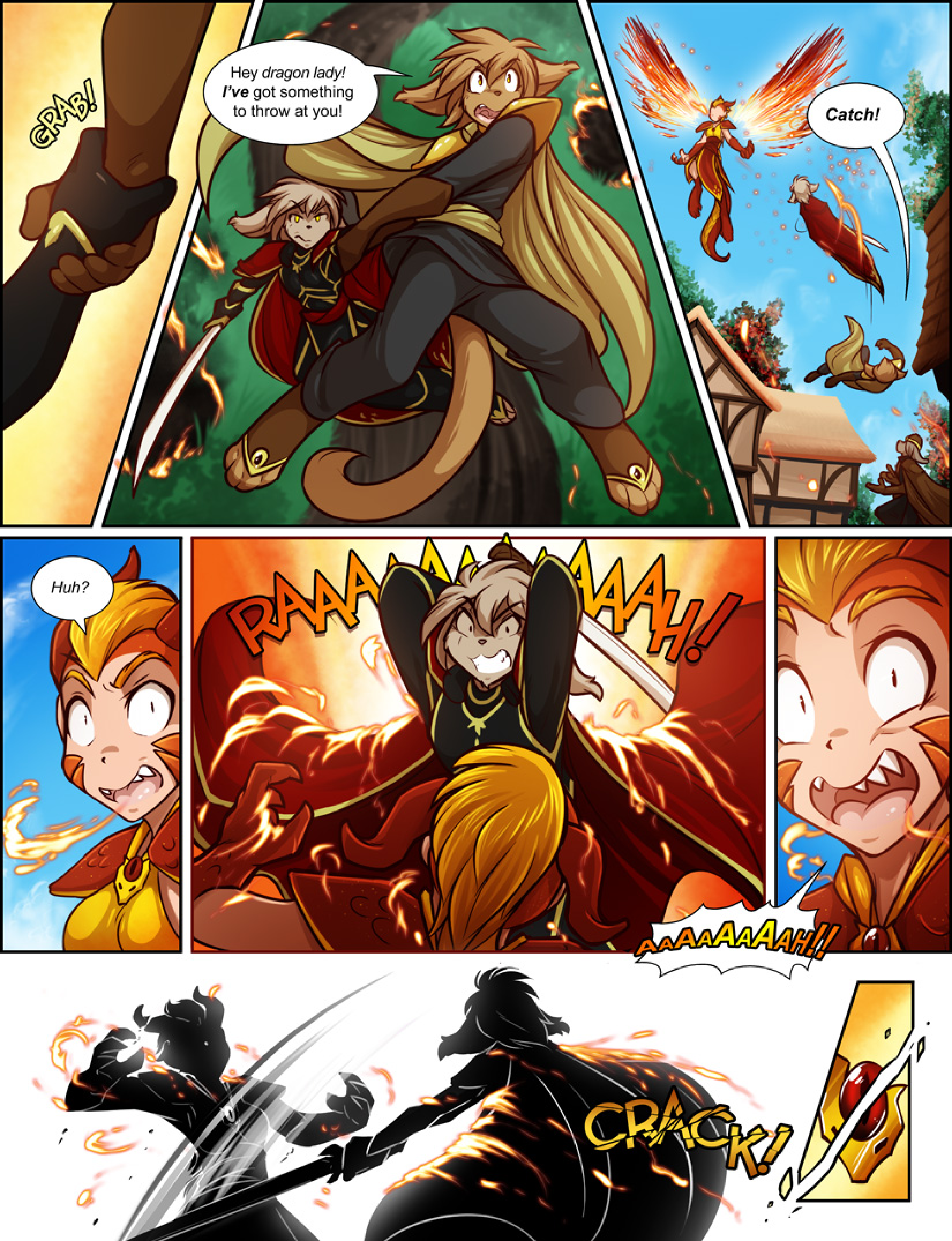

"No effect"?
B-but that's impossible! *How?*
Those pheromones should work on *any* man - keidran ***or*** basitin!
On anyone else, it probably would have.
I'm.. afraid you just picked the wrong basitin. You see, I am *Messenger* Lynn.
Where I am from...
Society is divided by gender. But there's.. always need of a go-between.
Even during curfew.
This requires a particular kind of person. Someone who can be blind to both.
In other words...
Let's just say... my ears don't hang limp like this for no reason.
Still... thank you for what you said. I'm... not used to being flirted with. No one on the island would bother with someone like me.
Even if you didn't really mean it, it felt... nice.
Well, I mean...
Okay, I admit, I was just playing you before. But, you know...
Those ears of yours really *are* kinda cute...
Are... are those two seriously *having a conversation* right now?!

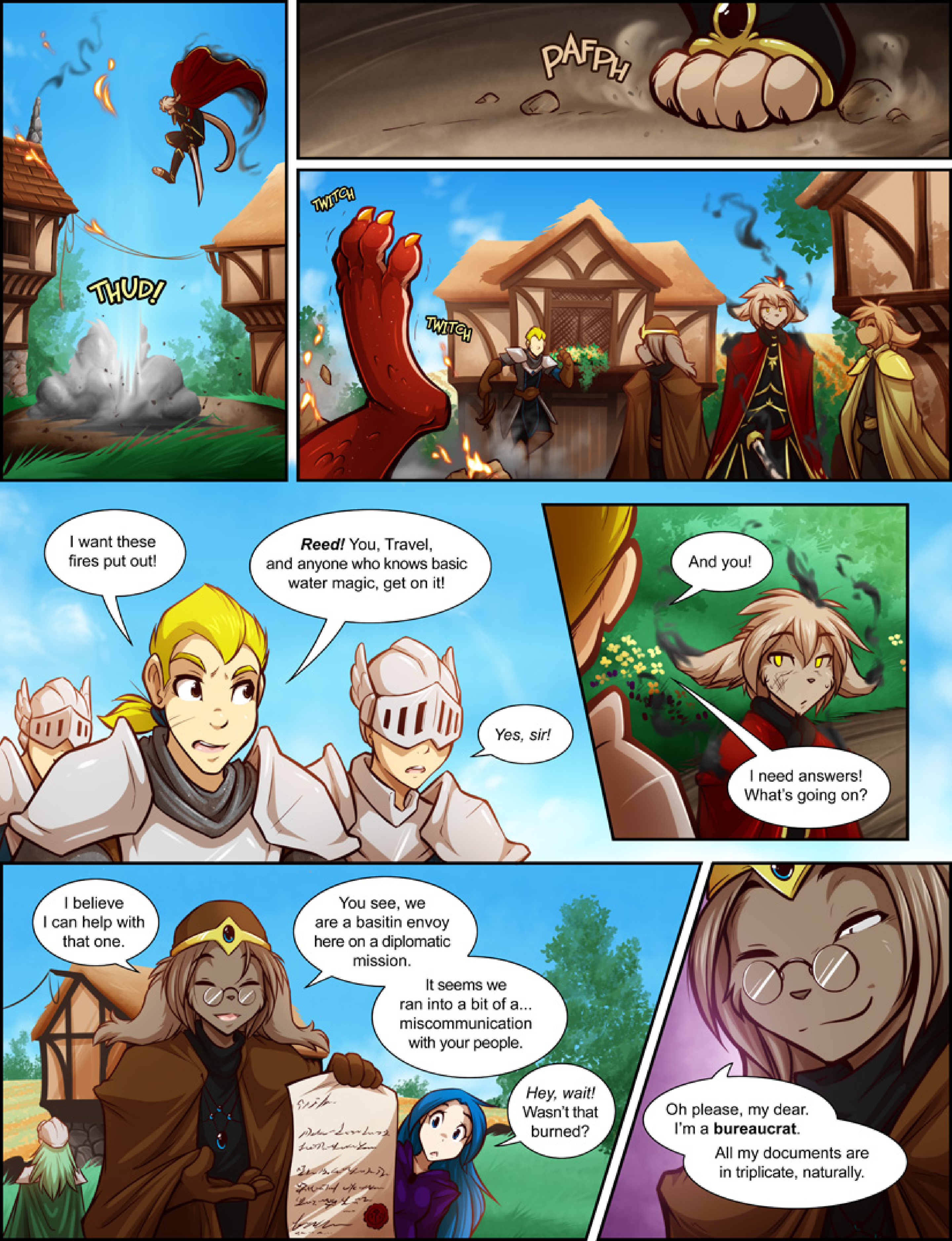

Hey, so...
Not that I don't enjoy dodging you forever, but...
You're some kind of mercenary, right? Finding wolves for a bounty?
How much do you get for that?
. . .
Must be a lot for all this trouble.
But guessing by how desperate your friend is...
You haven't had much luck, right?
You don't seem invested in this.
How about I just hire you instead?
I'll pay you to ***not*** hunt wolves, and you can buy *all the coffee you want* without doing a thing!
What do you say?
"All the coffee I want"...
I ♥TE THURSD
Welp. I'm out. Later, girls.
Landy?
Wait, ***what?!***
Landen! Get back here, you lazy traitor!
What is wrong with the two of you! Why won't you fight?!
Grrrahh! Enough! I've had it!
I'm a dragon! You should all be treating me with the respect I deserve!

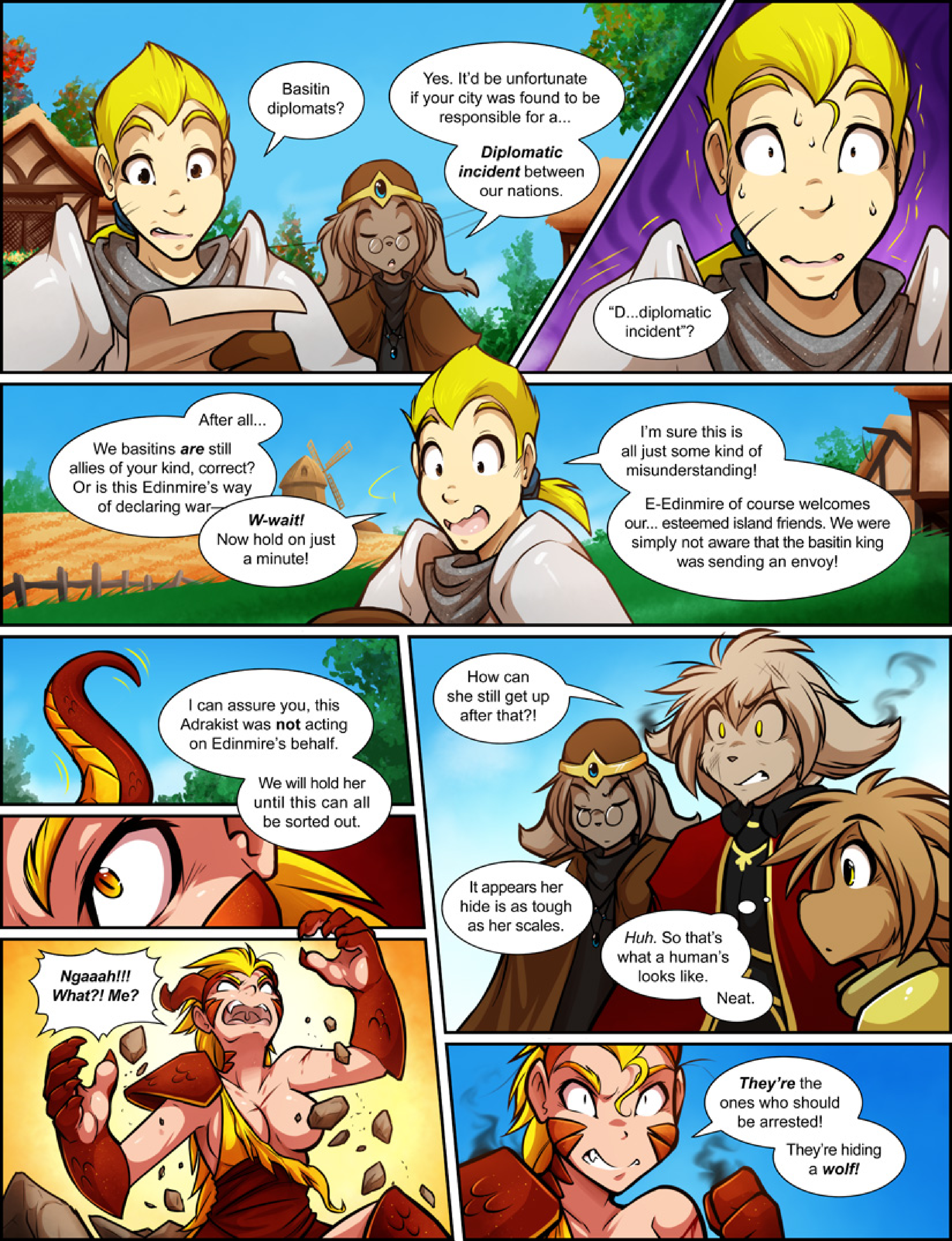

We can't wait for the ace to arrive. We have to protect any civilians.
Prepare for anything.
I'll show you all why dragons are feared!
Stop right there, villainous fiend!
Nobody breaks the law on my shift! Now put down your—
...Fire.
Look out, sir!
FWOOMPH!
I'll burn you to ash!
Well, I suppose if you're not holding back anymore, then neither will I.
Agreed.
Time to extinguish this "dragon" once and for all.

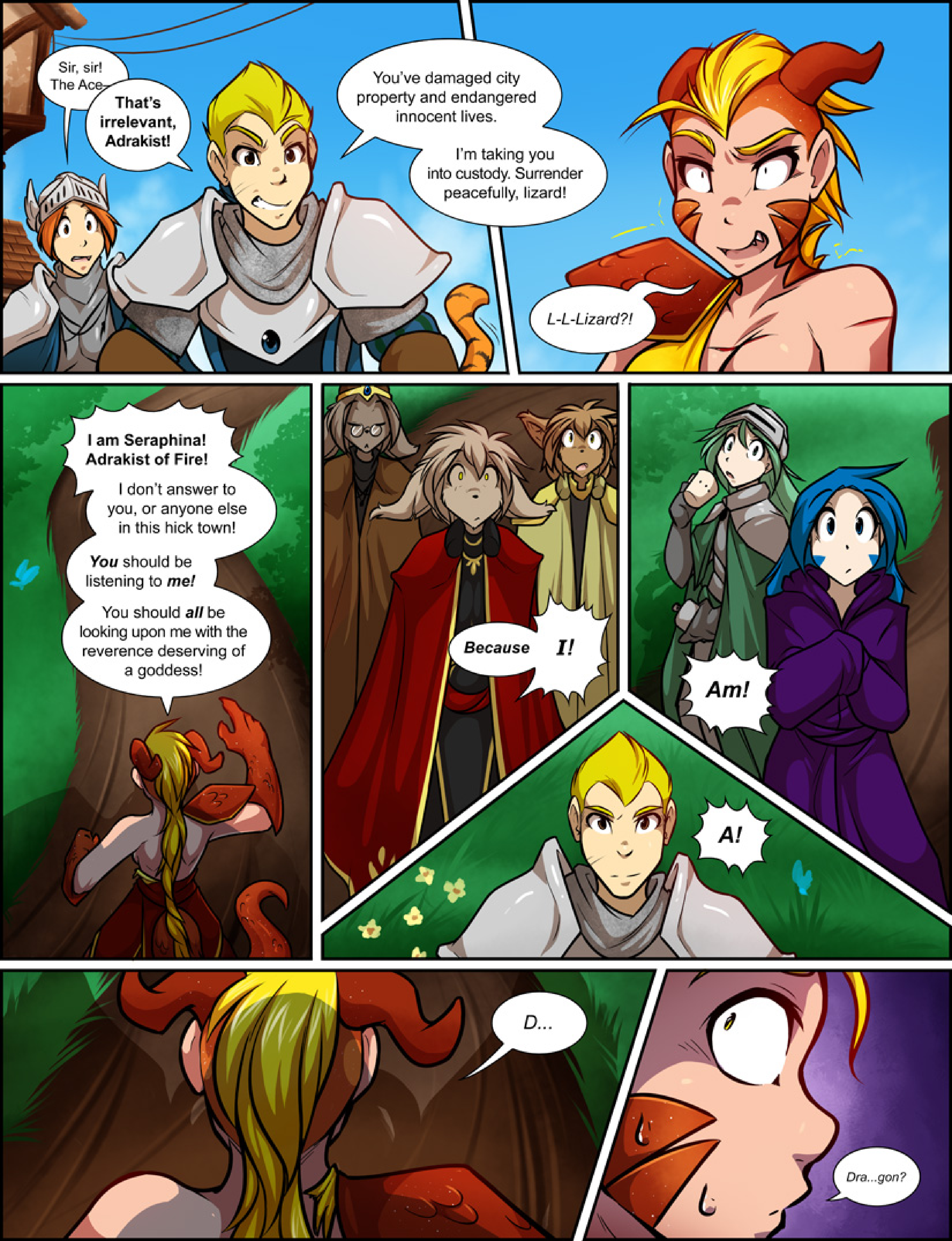

Hah! I'd like to see you try!
BOOM!
Argh!
Damn. We just need an opening!
Something to distract her, like—
Hey!
I said **stop**, you monster, in the name of the guard!
SHWPH!
FWOOSH!
FWIP
FWIP
DINK!
Ow! *The hell–?!*

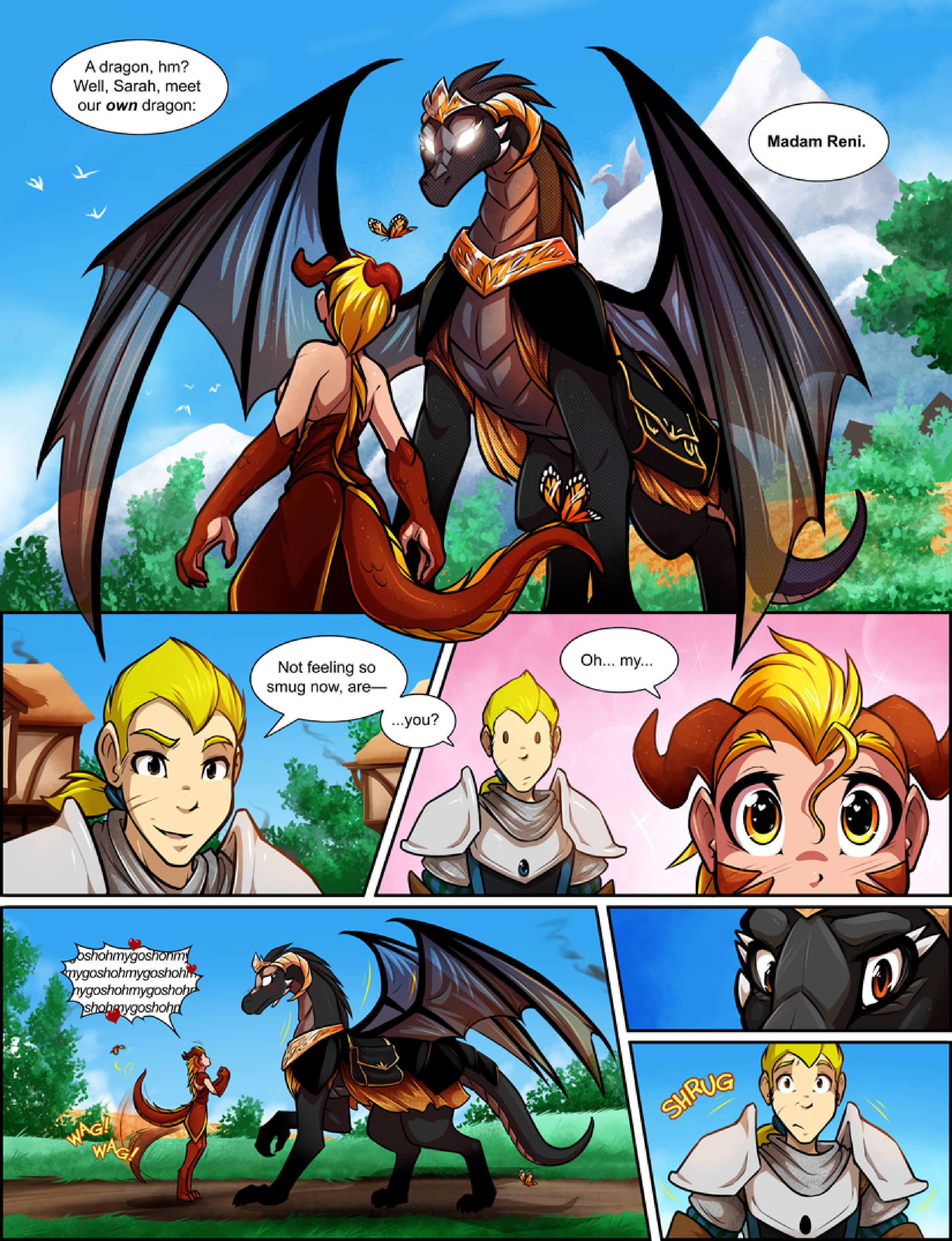

Who threw that?!
Someone threw something at me! Show yourself!
Now!
Lynn!
Yes, My Lord!

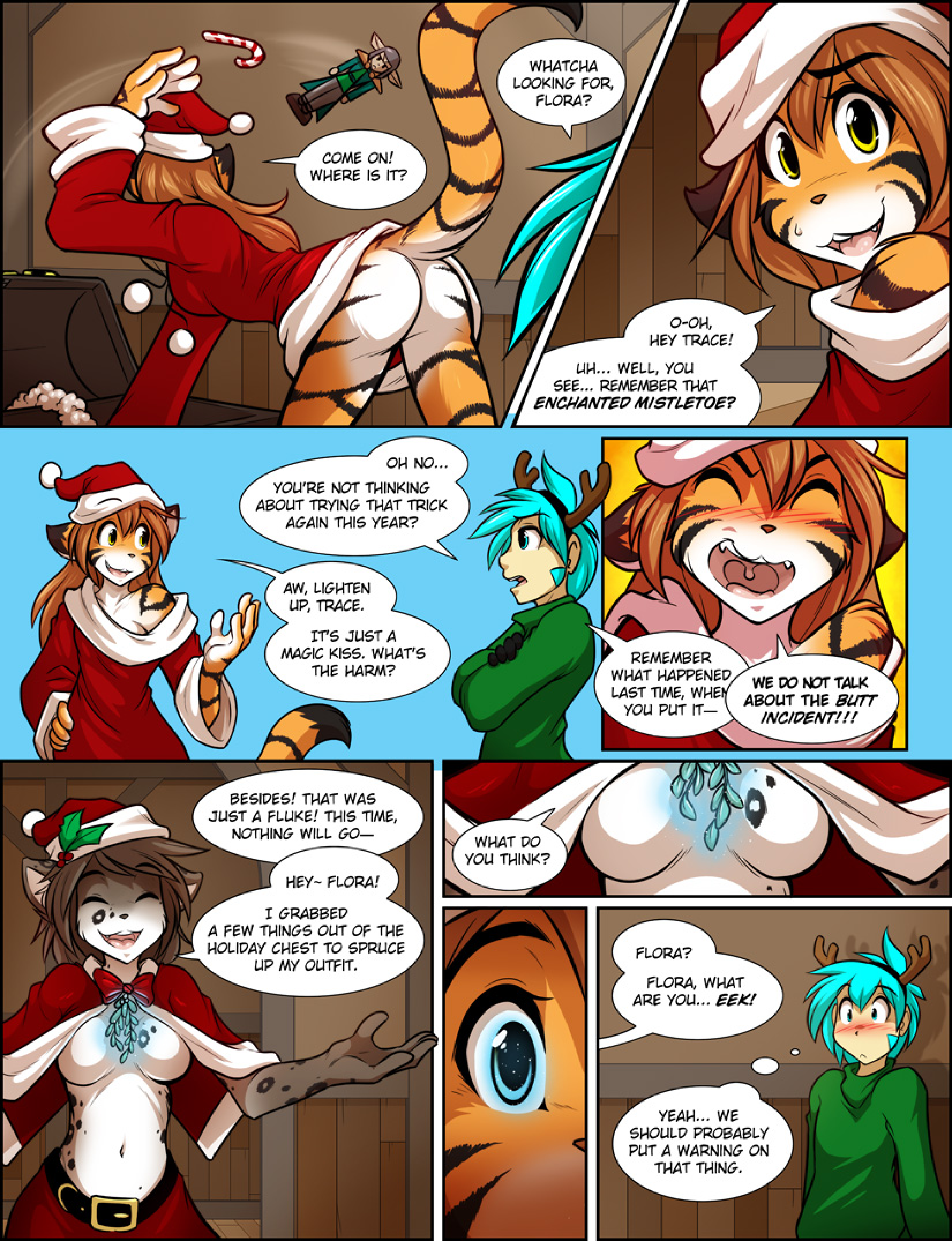

GRAB!
Hey *dragon lady!* ***I've*** got something to throw at you!
Catch!
Huh?
RAAAAAAAAAAAH!
AAAAAAAAH!!
CRACK!

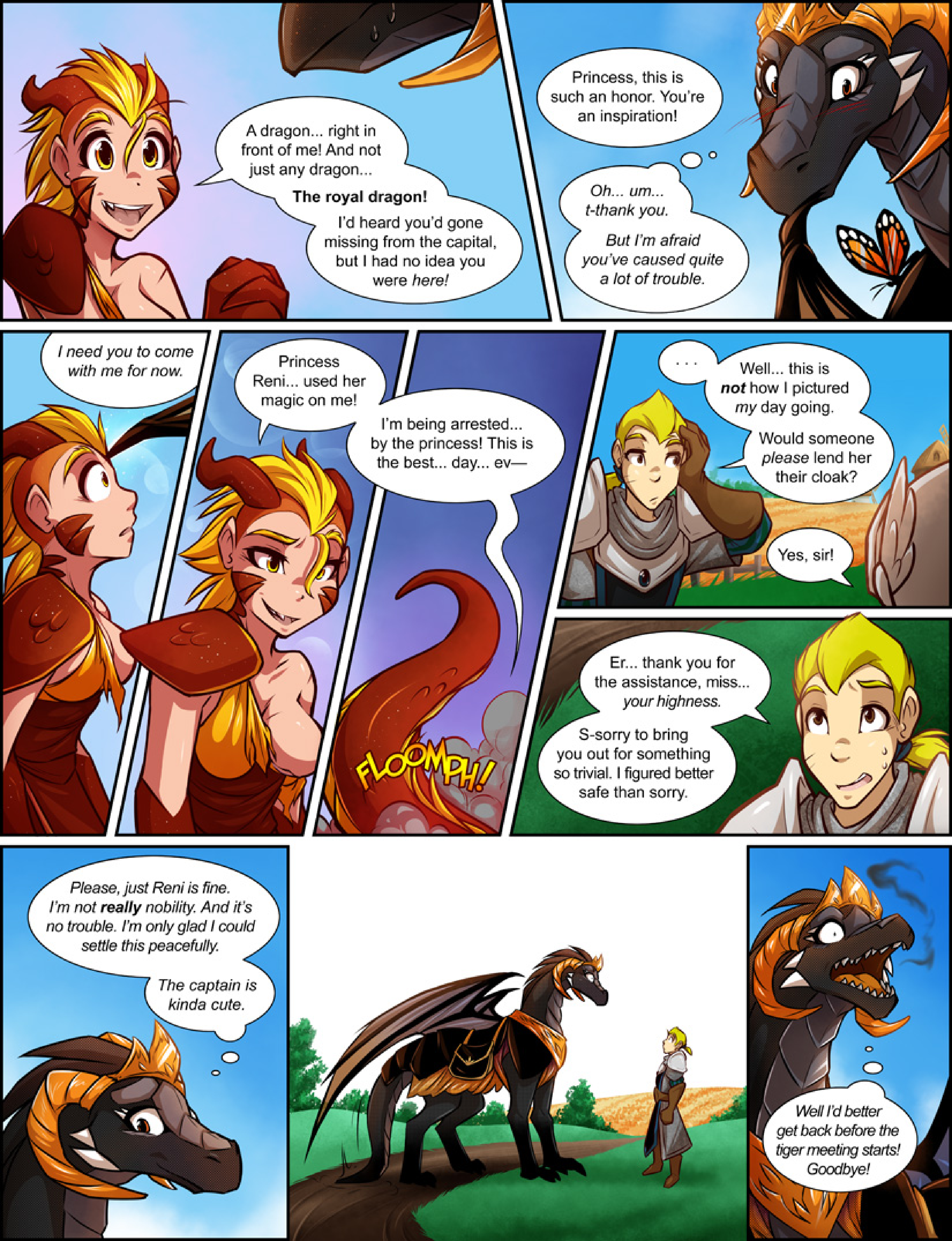

THUD!
PAFPH
TWITCH
TWITCH
I want these fires put out!
Reed! You, Travel, and anyone who knows basic water magic, get on it!
Yes, sir!
And you!
I need answers! What's going on?
I believe I can help with that one.
You see, we are a basitin envoy here on a diplomatic mission.
It seems we ran into a bit of a... miscommunication with your people.
Hey, wait! Wasn't that burned?
Oh please, my dear. I'm a **bureaucrat**.
All my documents are in triplicate, naturally.

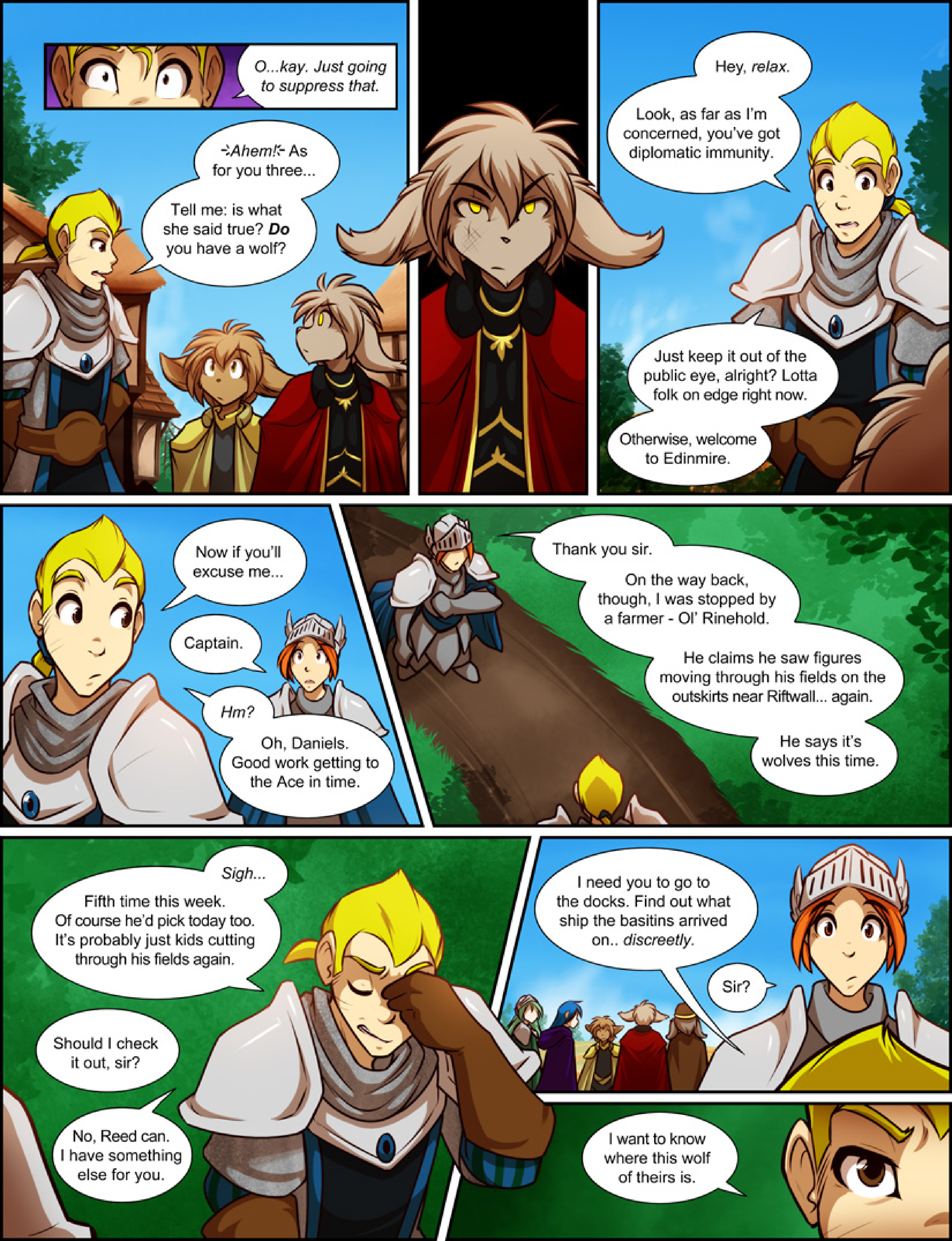

Basitin diplomats?
Yes. It'd be unfortunate if your city was found to be responsible for a...
Diplomatic incident between our nations.
"D...diplomatic incident"?
After all...
We basitins ***are*** still allies of your kind, correct? Or is this Edinmire's way of declaring war—
W-wait! Now hold on just a minute!
I'm sure this is all just some kind of misunderstanding!
E-Edinmire of course welcomes our... esteemed island friends. We were simply not aware that the basitin king was sending an envoy!
I can assure you, this Adrakist was **not** acting on Edinmire's behalf.
We will hold her until this can all be sorted out.
Ngaaah!!! What?! Me?
How can she still get up after that?!
It appears her hide is as tough as her scales.
Huh. So that's what a human's looks like.
Neat.
They're the ones who should be arrested!
They're hiding a ***wolf!***

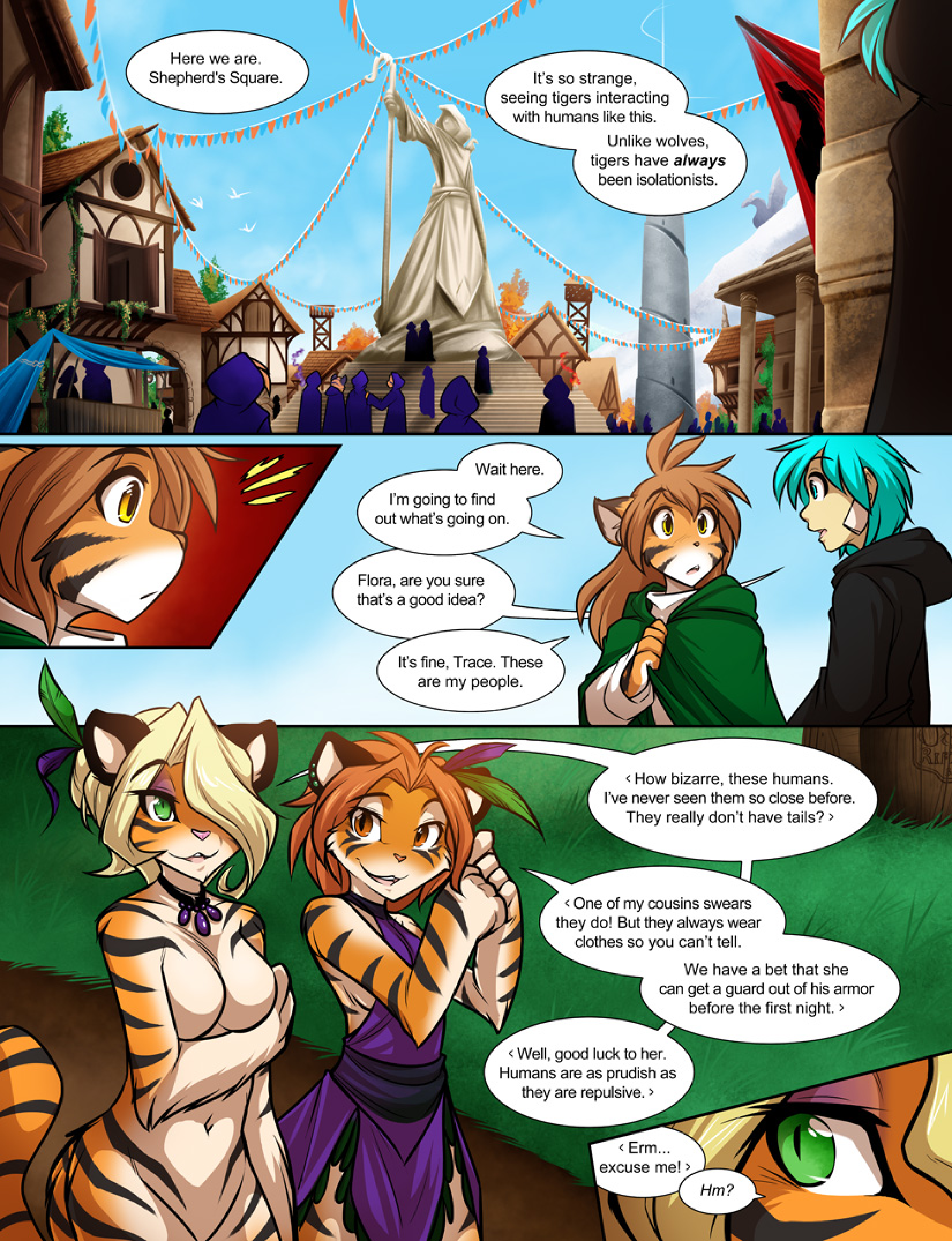

Sir, sir! The Ace–
That's irrelevant, Adrakist!
You've damaged city property and endangered innocent lives.
I'm taking you into custody. Surrender peacefully, lizard!
L-L-Lizard?!
I am Seraphina! Adrakist of Fire!
I don't answer to you, or anyone else in this hick town!
You should be listening to ***me!***
You should ***all*** be looking upon me with the reverence deserving of a goddess!
Because
I!
Am!
A!
D...
Dra...gon?

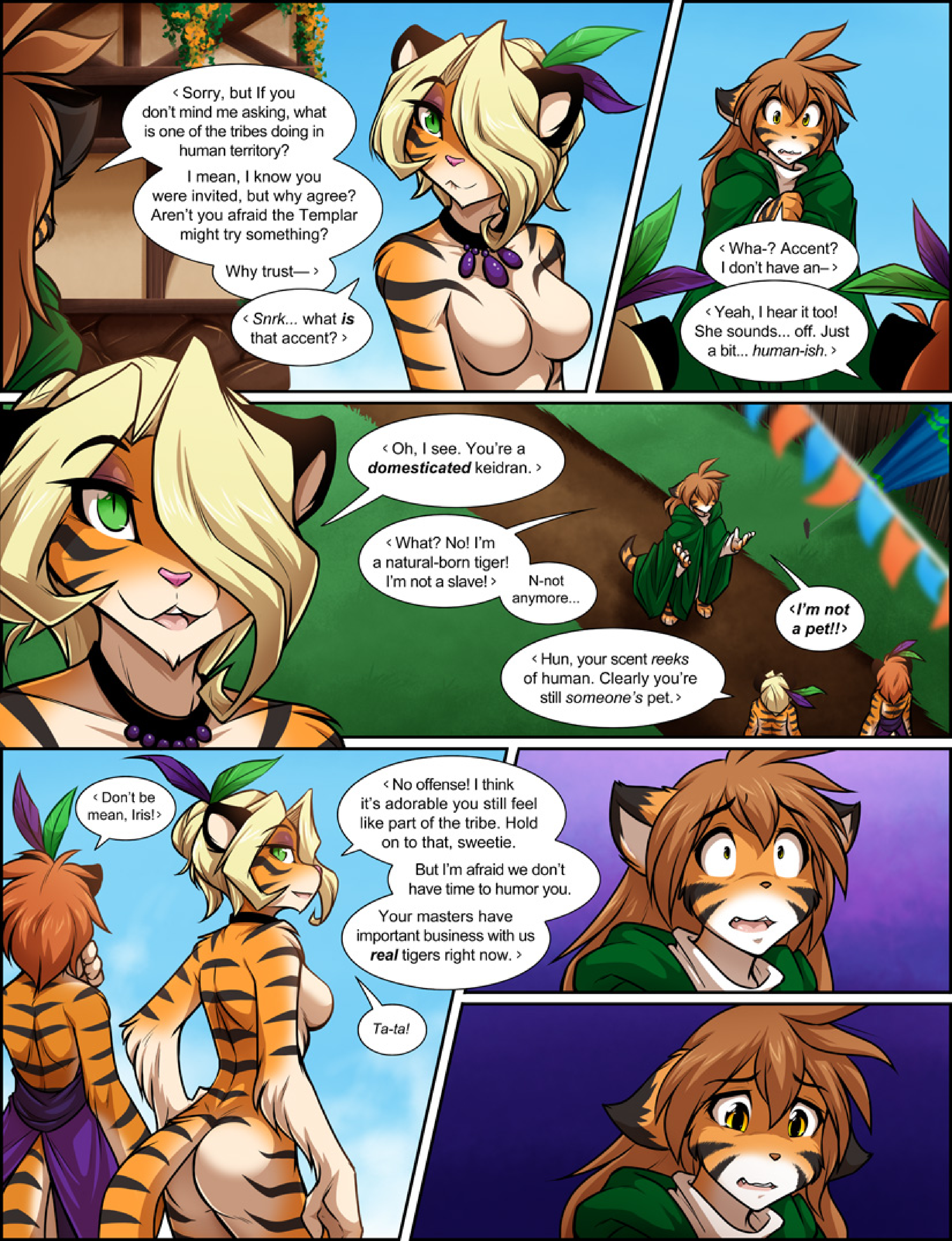

A dragon, hm? Well, Sarah, meet our *own* dragon:
Madam Reni.
Not feeling so smug now, are—
...you?
Oh... my...
goshohmygoshohmy
mygoshohmygoshohm
nygoshohmygoshoh
shohmygoshoh
WAG! WAG!
SHRUG

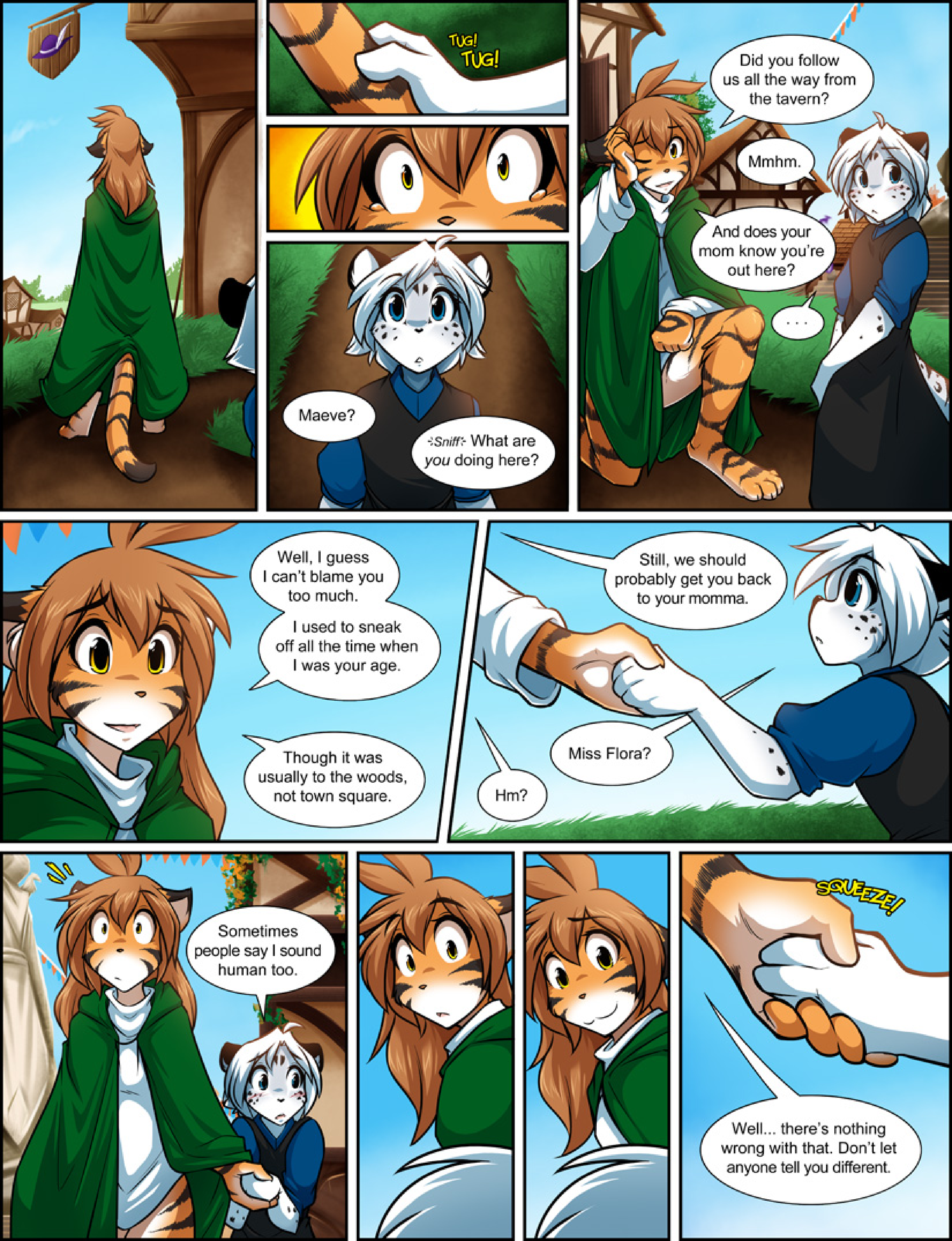

WHATCHA LOOKING FOR, FLORA?
COME ON! WHERE IS IT?
O-OH, HEY TRACE!
UH... WELL, YOU SEE... REMEMBER THAT ***ENCHANTED MISTLETOE?***
OH NO...
YOU'RE NOT THINKING ABOUT TRYING THAT TRICK AGAIN THIS YEAR?
AW, LIGHTEN UP, TRACE.
IT'S JUST A MAGIC KISS. WHAT'S THE HARM?
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME, WHEN YOU PUT IT—
WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT THE *BUTT INCIDENT!!!*
BESIDES! THAT WAS JUST A FLUKE! THIS TIME, NOTHING WILL GO—
HEY~ FLORA!
I GRABBED A FEW THINGS OUT OF THE HOLIDAY CHEST TO SPRUCE UP MY OUTFIT.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
FLORA?
FLORA, WHAT ARE YOU... ***EEK!***
YEAH... WE SHOULD PROBABLY PUT A WARNING ON THAT THING.

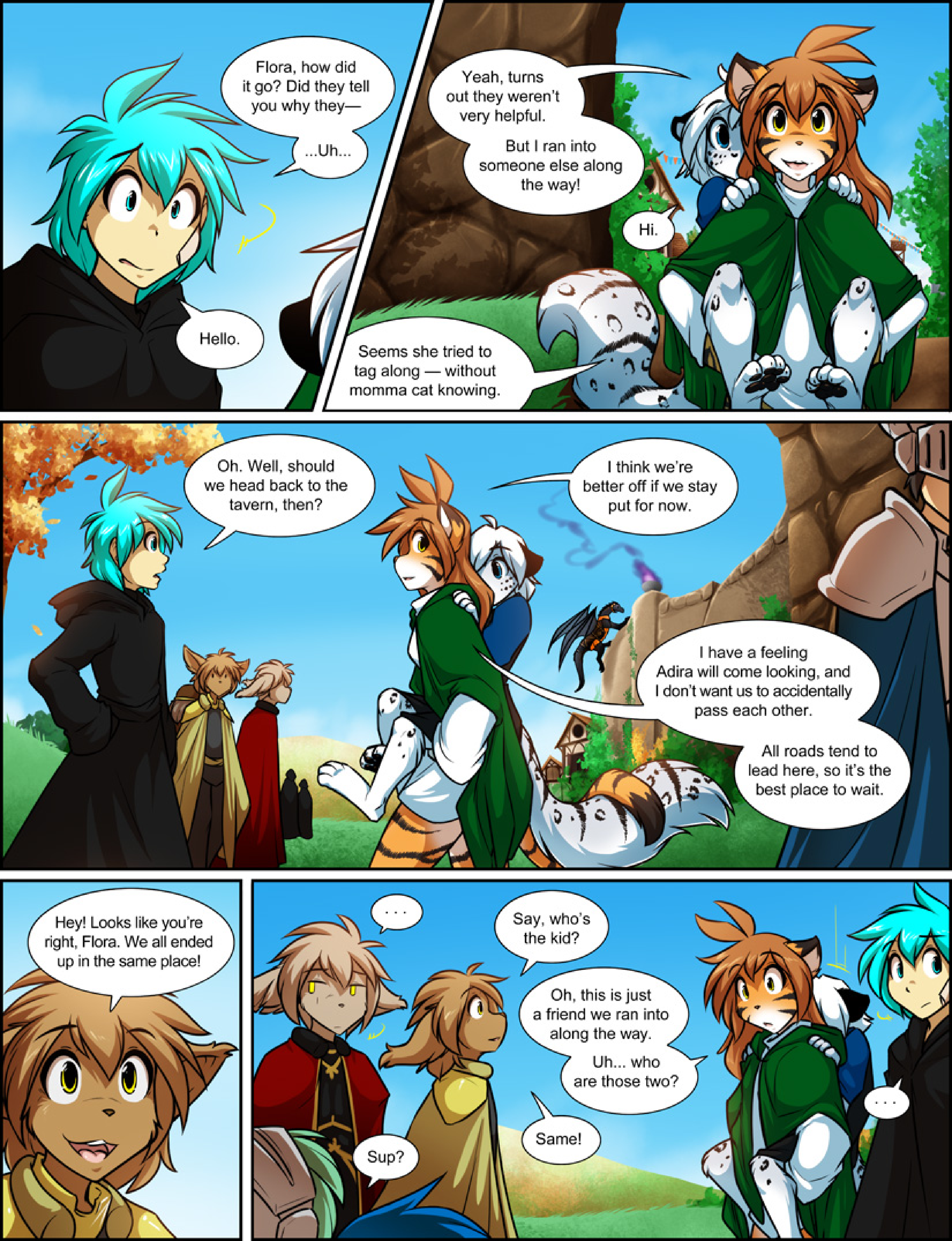

A dragon... right in front of me! And not just any dragon...
The royal dragon!
I'd heard you'd gone missing from the capital, but I had no idea you were *here!*
Princess, this is such an honor. You're an inspiration!
Oh... um... t-thank you.
But I'm afraid you've caused quite a lot of trouble.
I need you to come with me for now.
Princess Reni... used her magic on me!
I'm being arrested... by the princess! This is the best... day... ev—
FLOOMPH!
. . .
Well... this is ***not*** how I pictured *my* day going.
Would someone *please* lend her their cloak?
Yes, sir!
Er... thank you for the assistance, miss... *your highness.*
S-sorry to bring you out for something so trivial. I figured better safe than sorry.
*Please, just Reni is fine. I'm not **really** nobility. And it's no trouble. I'm only glad I could settle this peacefully.*
The captain is kinda cute.
Well I'd better get back before the tiger meeting starts! Goodbye!

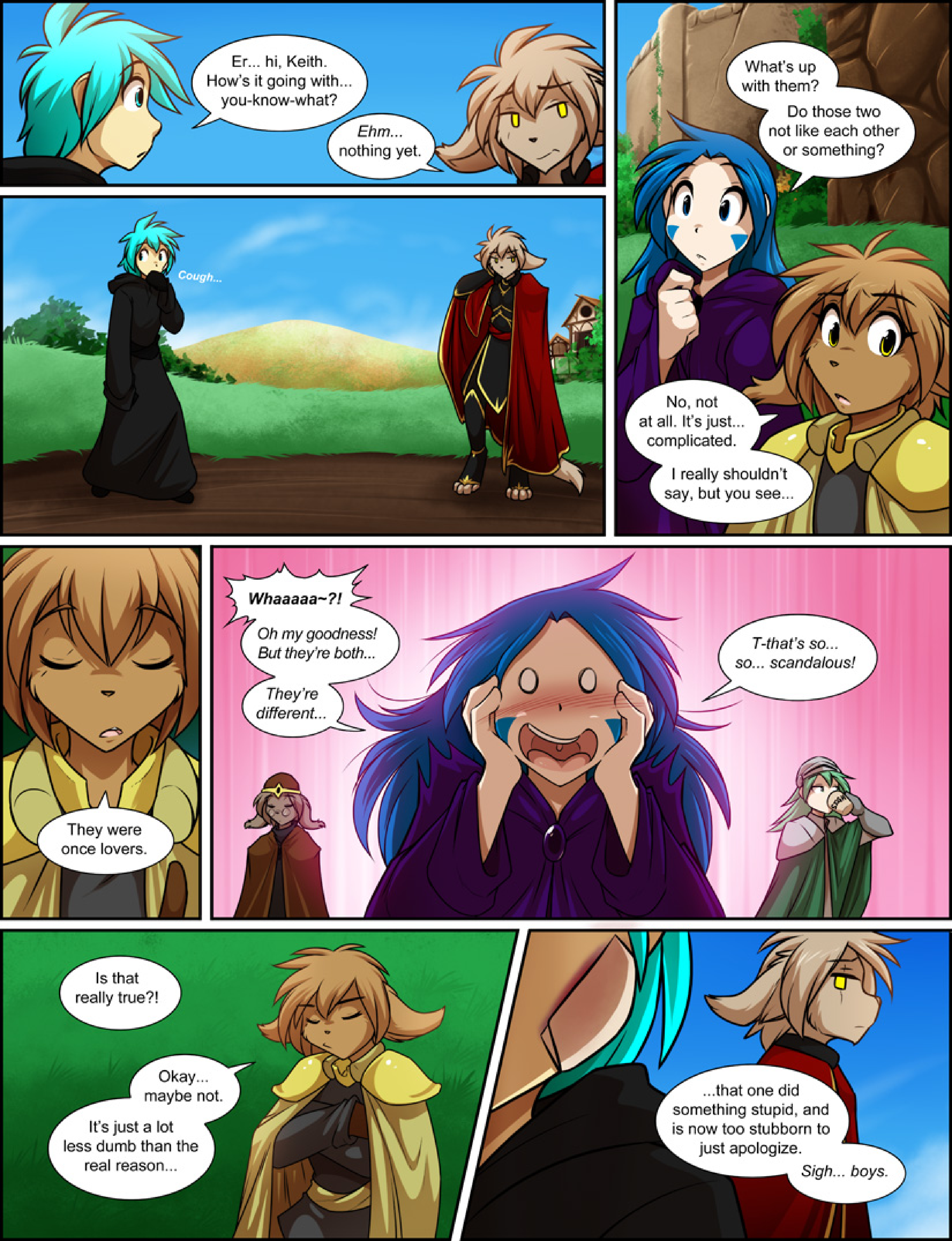

O...kay. Just going to suppress that.
-Ahem!- As for you three...
Tell me: is what she said true? Do you have a wolf?
Hey, relax.
Look, as far as I'm concerned, you've got diplomatic immunity.
Just keep it out of the public eye, alright? Lotta folk on edge right now.
Otherwise, welcome to Edinmire.
Now if you'll excuse me...
Captain.
Hm?
Oh, Daniels. Good work getting to the Ace in time.
Thank you sir.
On the way back, though, I was stopped by a farmer - Ol' Rinehold.
He claims he saw figures moving through his fields on the outskirts near Riftwall... again.
He says it's wolves this time.
Sigh...
Fifth time this week. Of course he'd pick today too. It's probably just kids cutting through his fields again.
Should I check it out, sir?
No, Reed can. I have something else for you.
I need you to go to the docks. Find out what ship the basitins arrived on.. discreetly.
Sir?
I want to know where this wolf of theirs is.

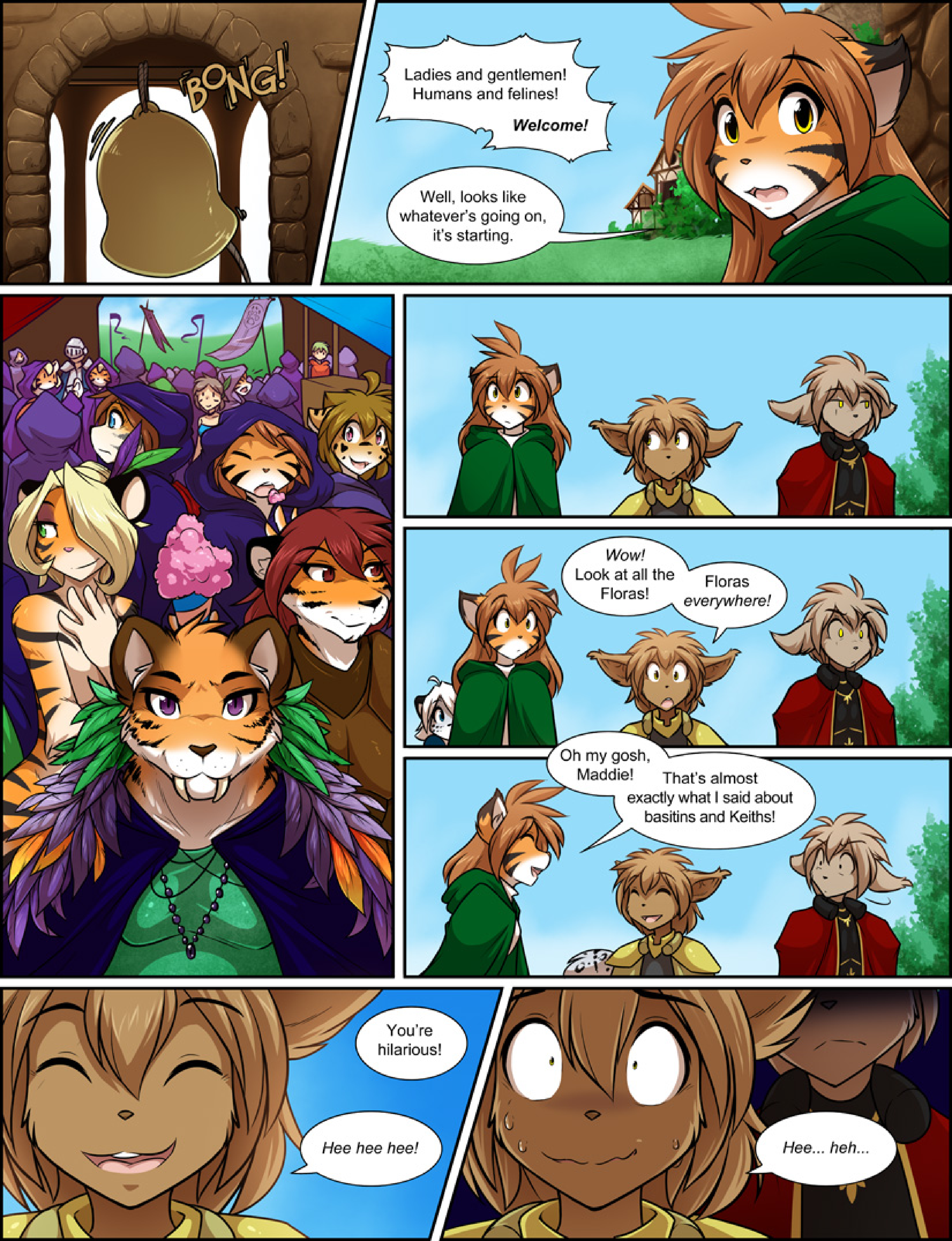

Here we are. Shepherd's Square.
It's so strange, seeing tigers interacting with humans like this.
Unlike wolves, tigers have ***always*** been isolationists.
Wait here.
I'm going to find out what's going on.
Flora, are you sure that's a good idea?
It's fine, Trace. These are my people.
‹ How bizarre, these humans. I've never seen them so close before. They really don't have tails? ›
‹ One of my cousins swears they do! But they always wear clothes so you can't tell.
We have a bet that she can get a guard out of his armor before the first night. ›
‹ Well, good luck to her. Humans are as prudish as they are repulsive. ›
‹ Erm... excuse me! ›
Hm?

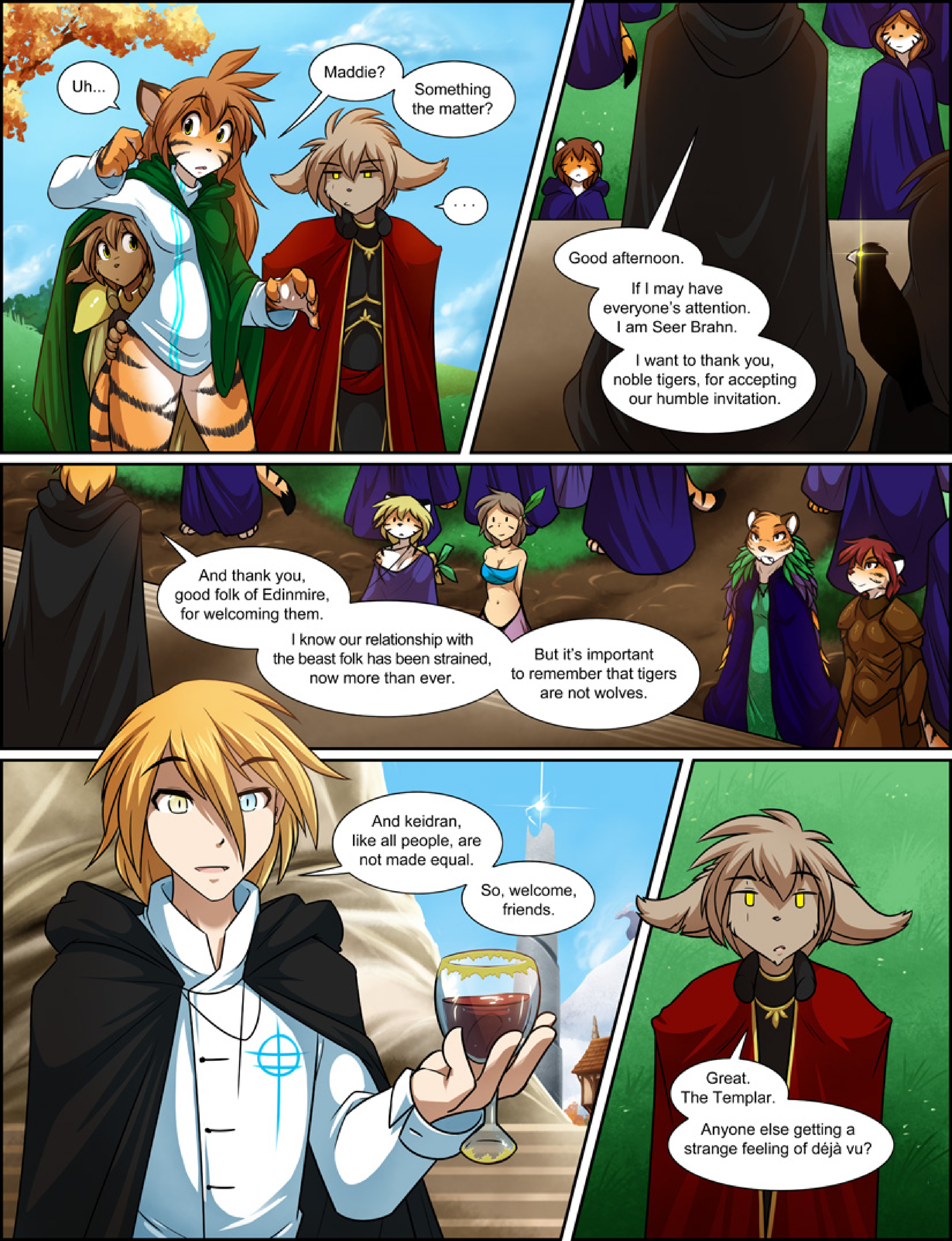

‹ Sorry, but If you don't mind me asking, what is one of the tribes doing in human territory?
I mean, I know you were invited, but why agree? Aren't you afraid the Templar might try something?
Why trust— ›
‹ *Snrk*... what ***is*** that accent? ›
‹ Wha-? Accent? I don't have an– ›
‹ Yeah, I hear it too! She sounds... off. Just a bit... *human-ish*. ›
‹ Oh, I see. You're a ***domesticated*** keidran. ›
‹ What? No! I'm a natural-born tiger! I'm not a slave! ›
N-not anymore...
‹*I'm not a pet!!*›
‹ Hun, your scent *reeks* of human. Clearly you're still *someone's* pet. ›
‹ Don't be mean, Iris!›
‹ No offense! I think it's adorable you still feel like part of the tribe. Hold on to that, sweetie.
But I'm afraid we don't have time to humor you.
Your masters have important business with us ***real*** tigers right now. ›
Ta-ta!

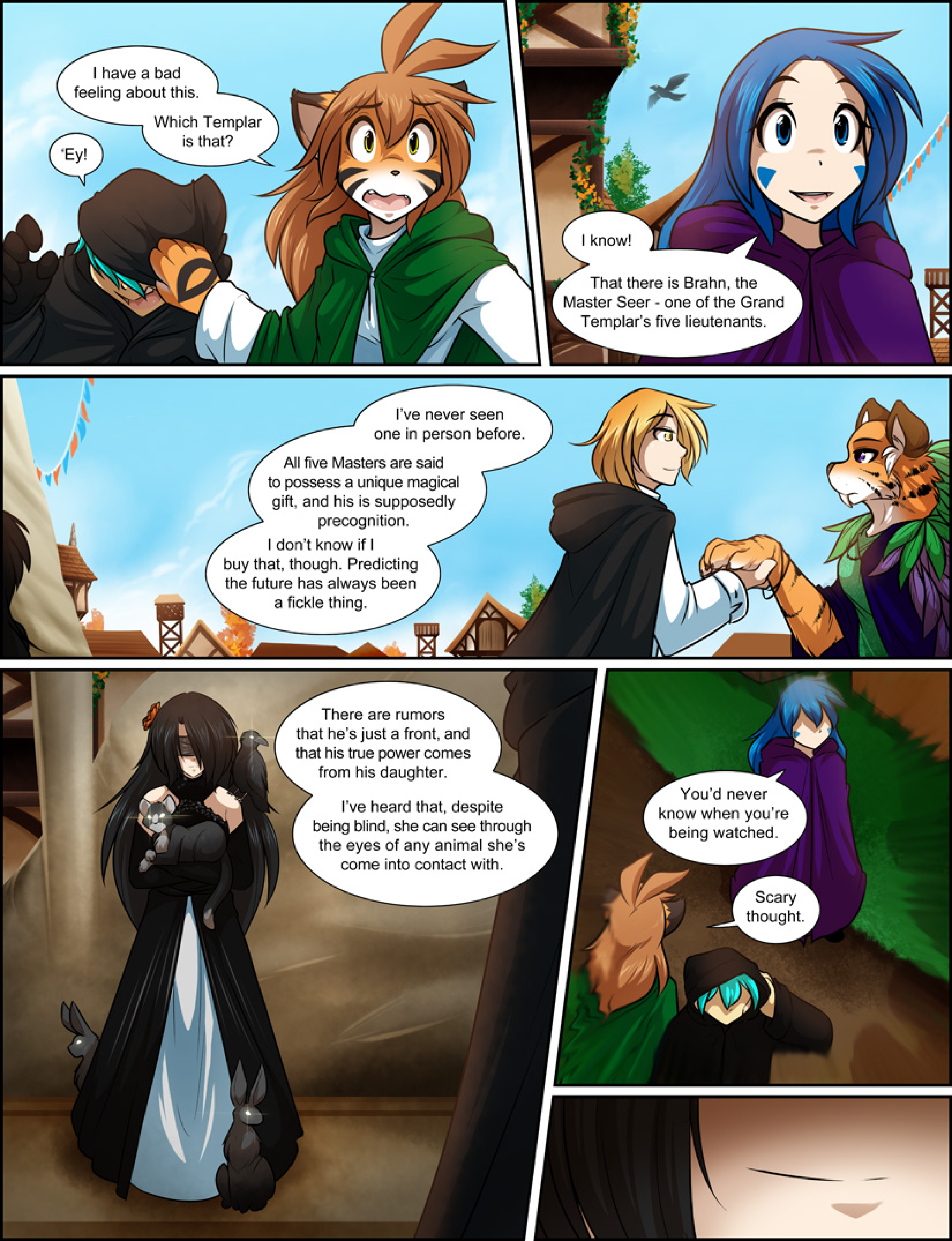

TUG! TUG!
Maeve?
·Sniff· What are *you* doing here?
Did you follow us all the way from the tavern?
Mmhm.
And does your mom know you're out here?
. . .
Well, I guess I can't blame you too much.
I used to sneak off all the time when I was my age.
Though it was usually to the woods, not town square.
Still, we should probably get you back to your momma.
Miss Flora?
Hm?
Sometimes people say I sound human too.
SQUEEZE!
Well... there's nothing wrong with that. Don't let anyone tell you different.

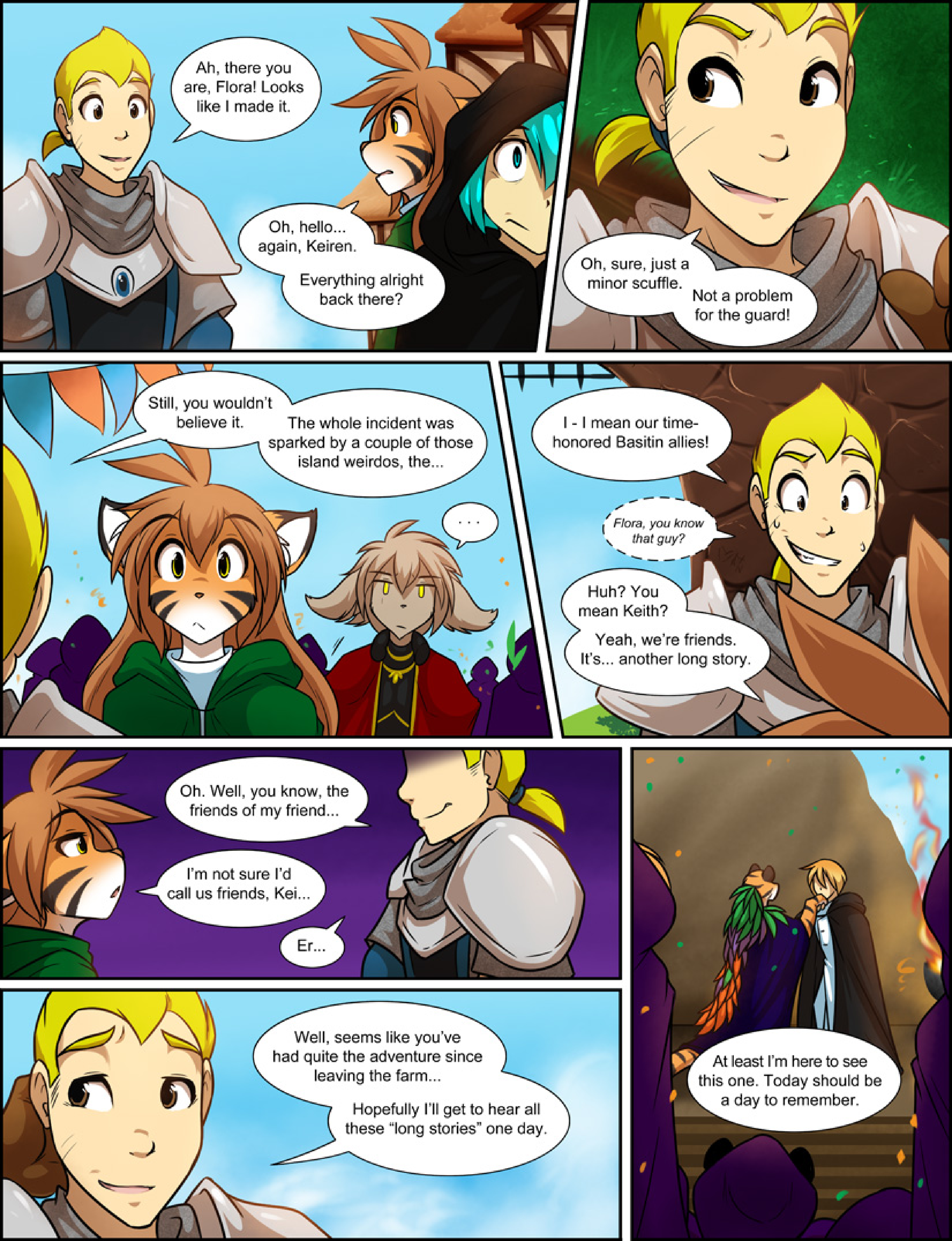

Flora, how did it go? Did they tell you why they—
...Uh...
Hello.
Yeah, turns out they weren't very helpful.
But I ran into someone else along the way!
Hi.
Seems she tried to tag along — without momma cat knowing.
Oh. Well, should we head back to the tavern, then?
I think we're better off if we stay put for now.
I have a feeling Adira will come looking, and I don't want us to accidentally pass each other.
All roads tend to lead here, so it's the best place to wait.
Hey! Looks like you're right, Flora. We all ended up in the same place!
. . .
Say, who's the kid?
Oh, this is just a friend we ran into along the way.
Uh... who are those two?
Same!
Sup?
. . .

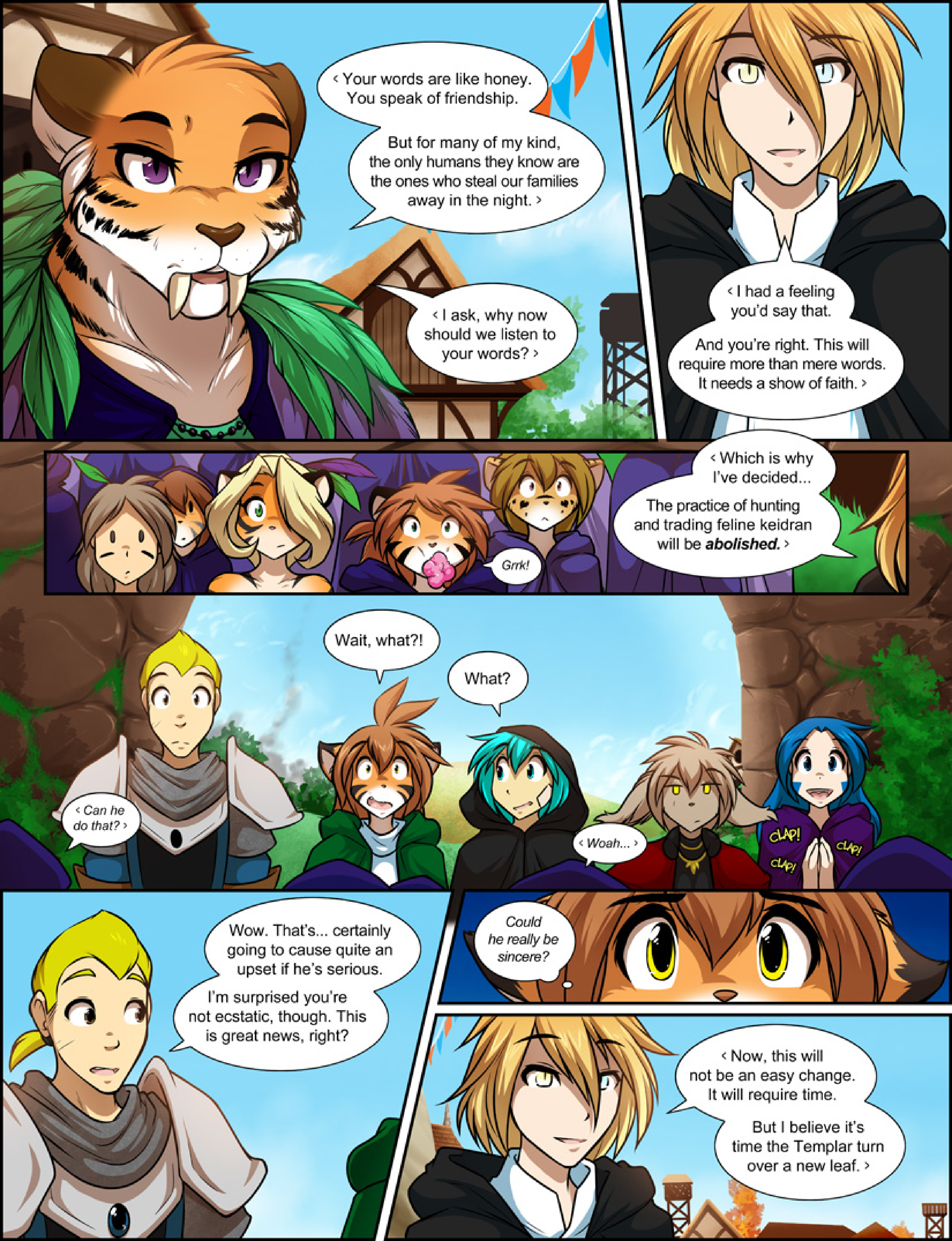

Er... hi, Keith. How's it going with... you-know-what?
Ehm... nothing yet.
Cough...
What's up with them?
Do those two not like each other or something?
No, not at all. It's just... complicated.
I really shouldn't say, but you see...
They were once lovers.
Whaaaaa~?!
Oh my goodness! But they're both...
They're different...
T-that's so... so... scandalous!
Is that really true?!
Okay... maybe not.
It's just a lot less dumb than the real reason...
...that one did something stupid, and is now too stubborn to just apologize.
Sigh... boys.

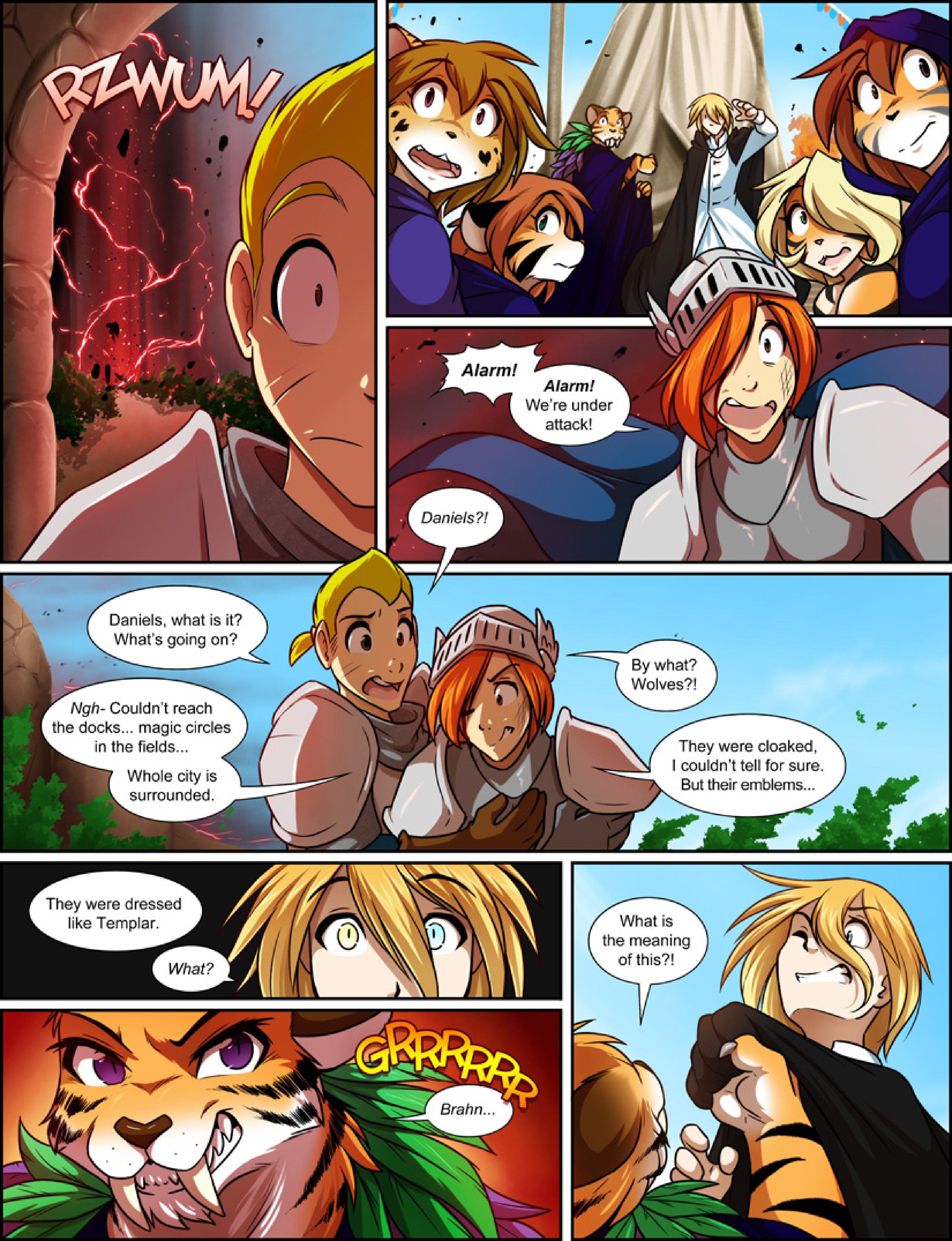

BONG!
Ladies and gentlemen! Humans and felines! *Welcome!*
Well, looks like whatever's going on, it's starting.
Wow! Look at all the Floras!
Floras *everywhere!*
Oh my gosh, Maddie!
That's almost exactly what I said about basitins and Keiths!
You're hilarious!
Hee hee hee!
Hee... heh...

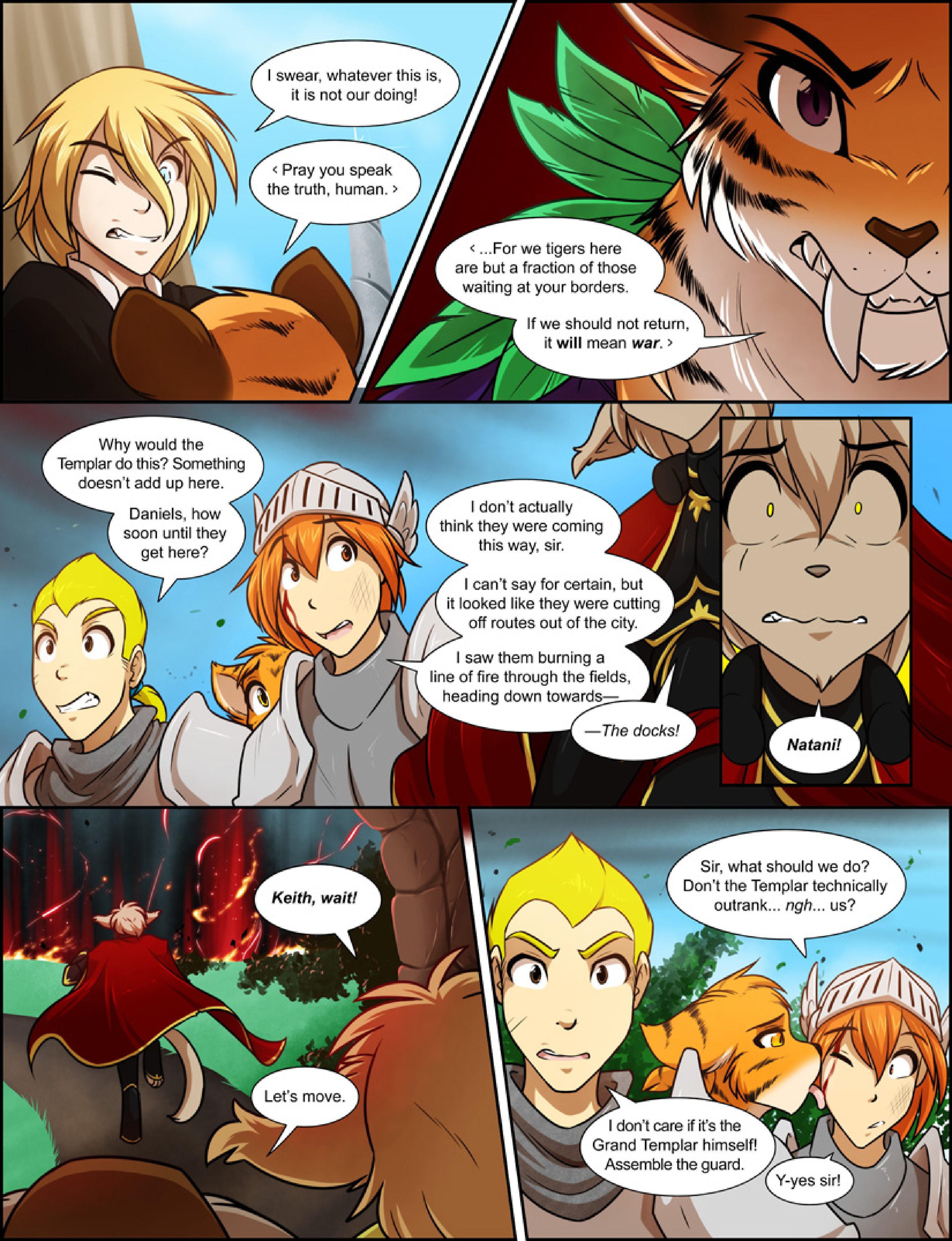

Uh...
Maddie?
Something the matter?
. . .
Good afternoon.
If I may have everyone's attention. I am Seer Brahn.
I want to thank you, noble tigers, for accepting our humble invitation.
And thank you, good folk of Edinmire, for welcoming them.
I know our relationship with the beast folk has been strained, now more than ever.
But it's important to remember that tigers are not wolves.
And keidran, like all people, are not made equal.
So, welcome, friends.
Great. The Templar.
Anyone else getting a strange feeling of déjà vu?

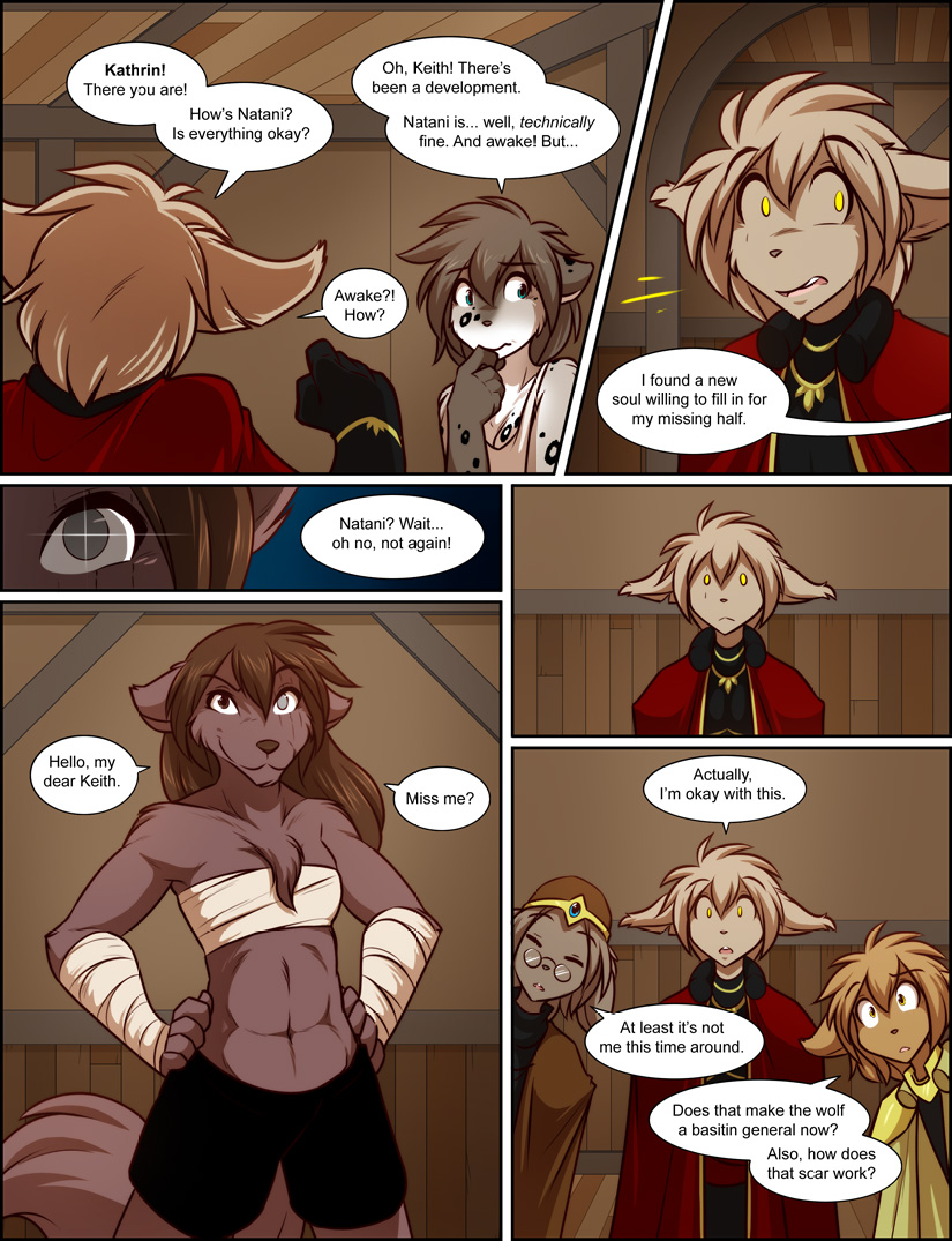

I have a bad feeling about this.
Which Templar is that?
'Ey!
I know!
That there is Brahn, the Master Seer - one of the Grand Templar's five lieutenants.
I've never seen one in person before.
All five Masters are said to possess a unique magical gift, and his is supposedly precognition.
I don't know if I buy that, though. Predicting the future has always been a fickle thing.
There are rumors that he's just a front, and that his true power comes from his daughter.
I've heard that, despite being blind, she can see through the eyes of any animal she's come into contact with.
You'd never know when you're being watched.
Scary thought.

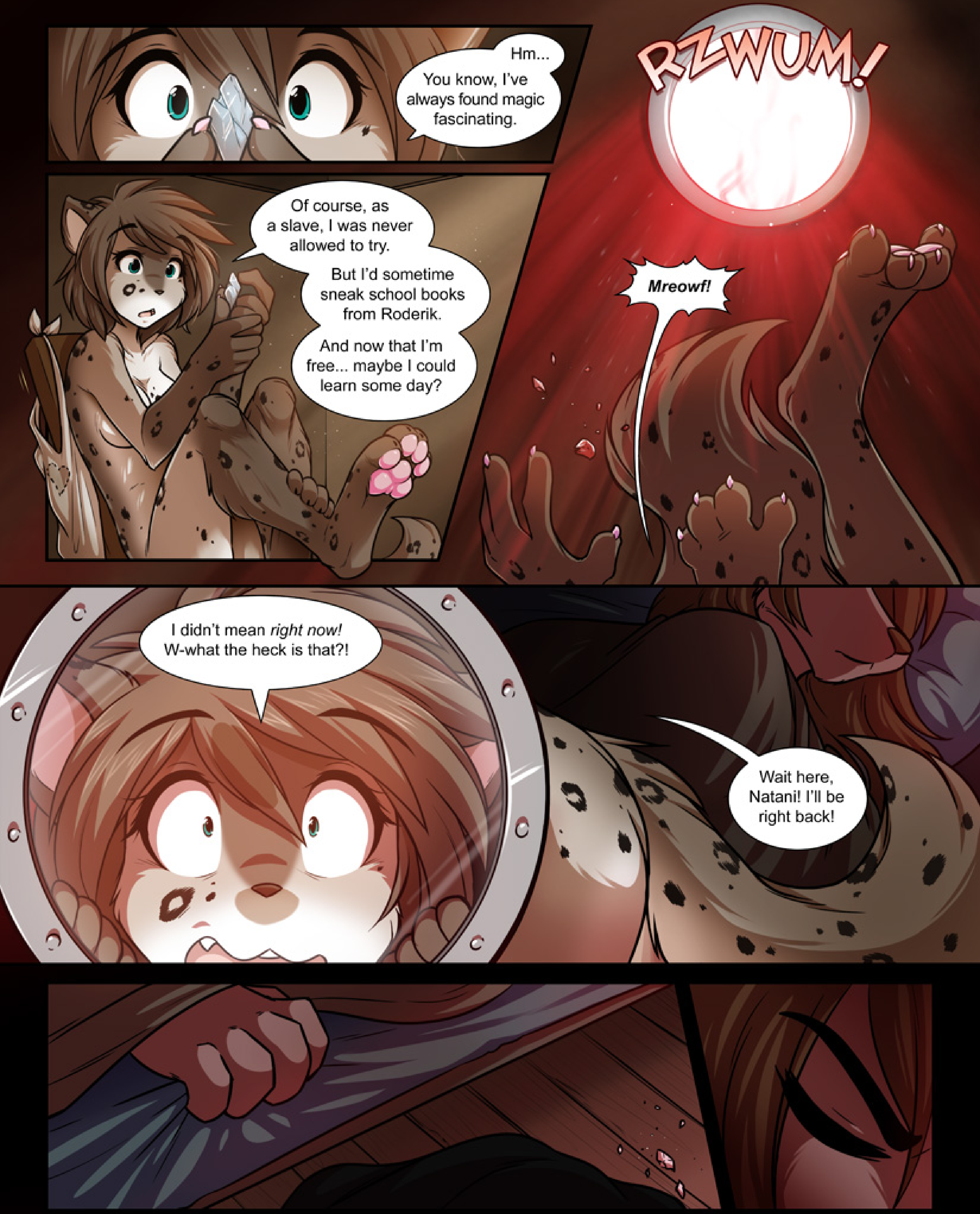

Ah, there you are, Flora! Looks like I made it.
Oh, hello... again, Keiren.
Everything alright back there?
Oh, sure, just a minor scuffle.
Not a problem for the guard!
Still, you wouldn't believe it.
The whole incident was sparked by a couple of those island weirdos, the...
. . .
I - I mean our time-honored Basitin allies!
Flora, you know that guy?
Huh? You mean Keith?
Yeah, we're friends. It's... another long story.
Oh. Well, you know, the friends of my friend...
I'm not sure I'd call us friends, Kei...
Er...
Well, seems like you've had quite the adventure since leaving the farm...
Hopefully I'll get to hear all these "long stories" one day.
At least I'm here to see this one. Today should be a day to remember.

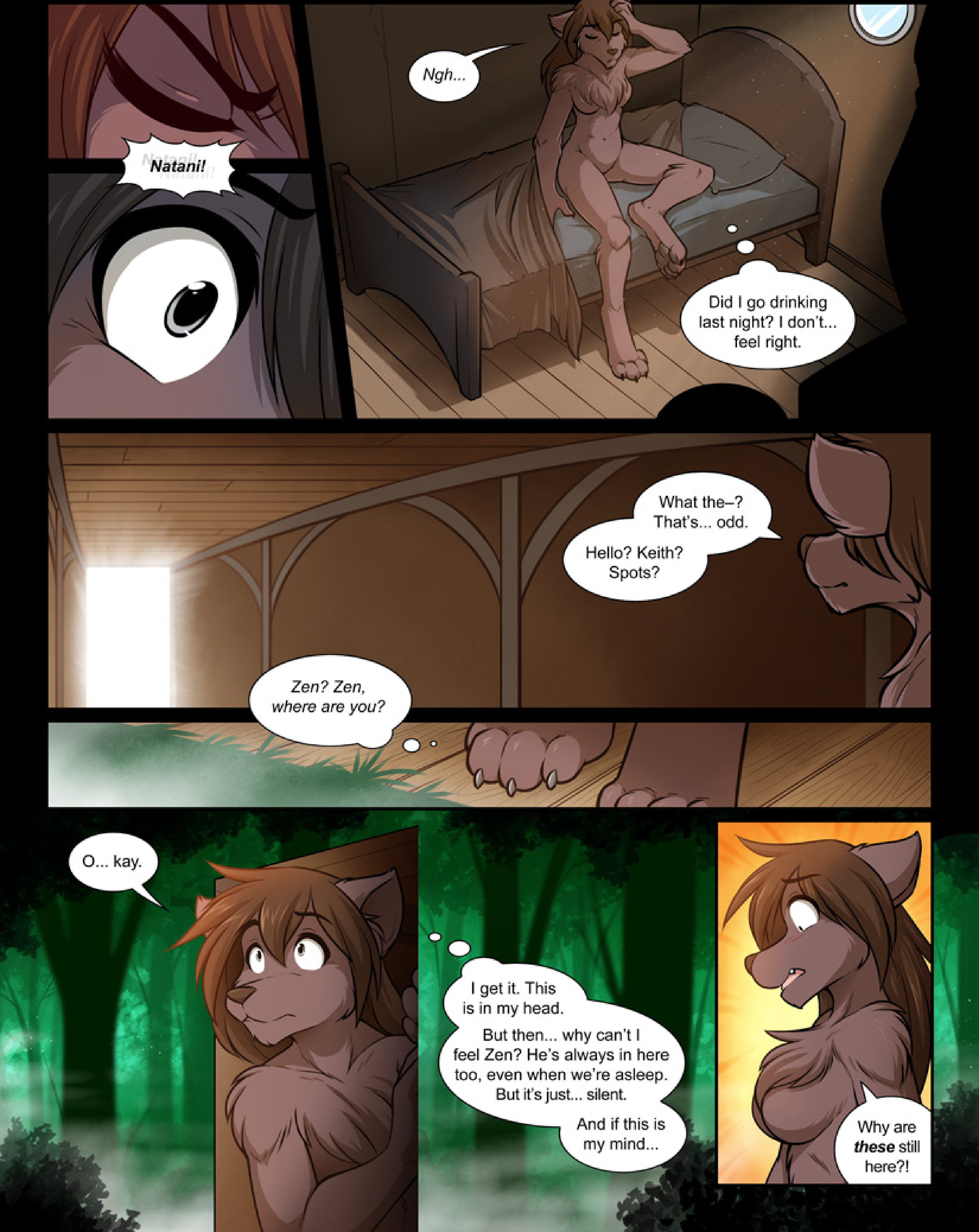

‹ Your words are like honey. You speak of friendship.
But for many of my kind, the only humans they know are the ones who steal our families away in the night. ›
‹ I ask, why now should we listen to your words? ›
‹ I had a feeling you'd say that.
And you're right. This will require more than mere words. It needs a show of faith. ›
‹ Which is why I've decided...
The practice of hunting and trading feline keidran will be ***abolished.*** ›
Grrk!
Wait, what?!
What?
‹ *Can he do that?* ›
‹ *Woah...* ›
CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!
Wow. That's... certainly going to cause quite an upset if he's serious.
I'm surprised you're not ecstatic, though. This is great news, right?
Could he really be sincere?
‹ Now, this will not be an easy change. It will require time.
But I believe it's time the Templar turn over a new leaf. ›

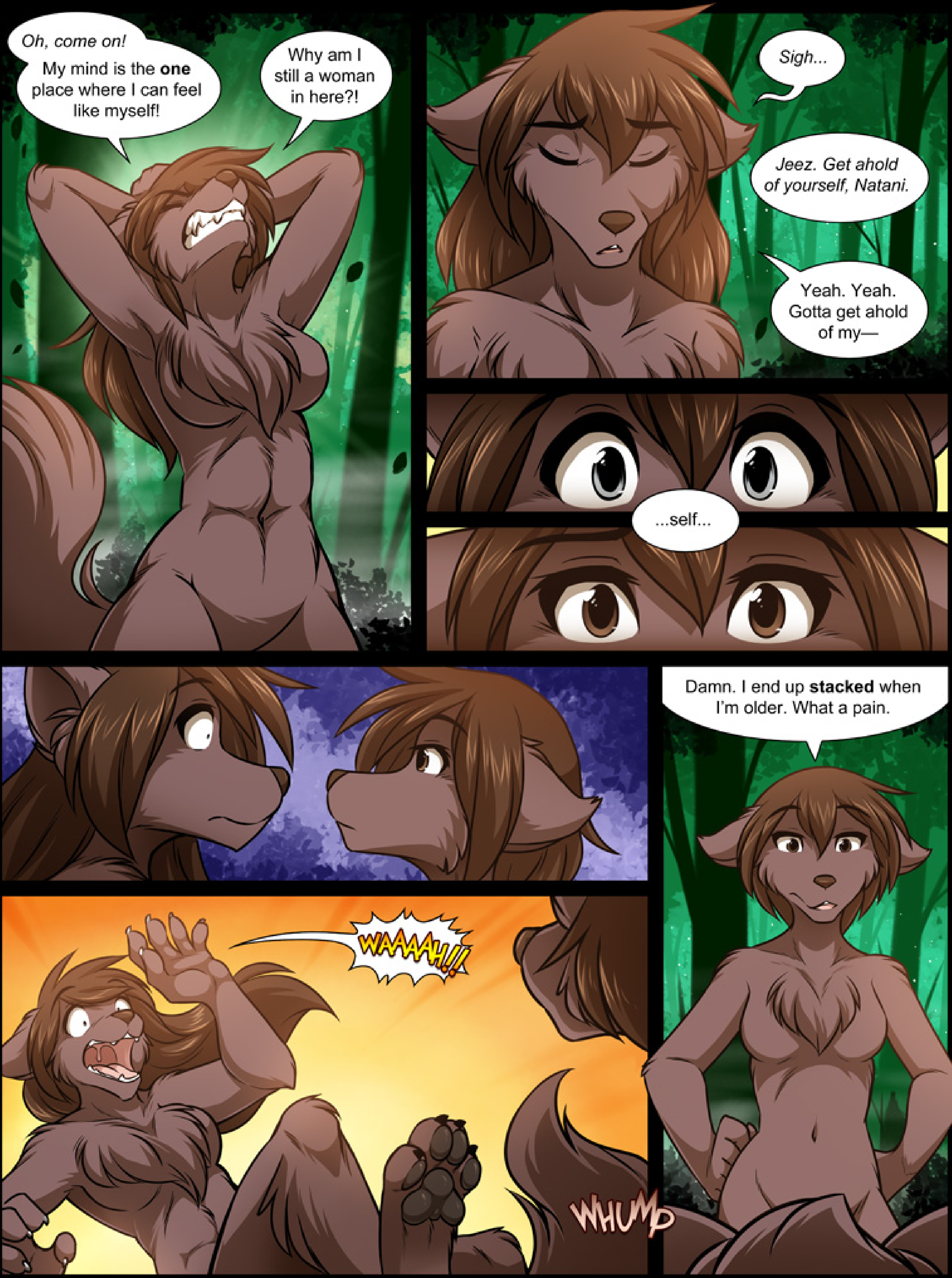

RZWUM!
Alarm!
Alarm! We're under attack!
Daniels?!
Daniels, what is it? What's going on?
Ngh- Couldn't reach the docks... magic circles in the fields...
Whole city is surrounded.
By what? Wolves?!
They were cloaked, I couldn't tell for sure. But their emblems...
They were dressed like Templar.
What?
GRRRRRR
Brahn...
What is the meaning of this?!

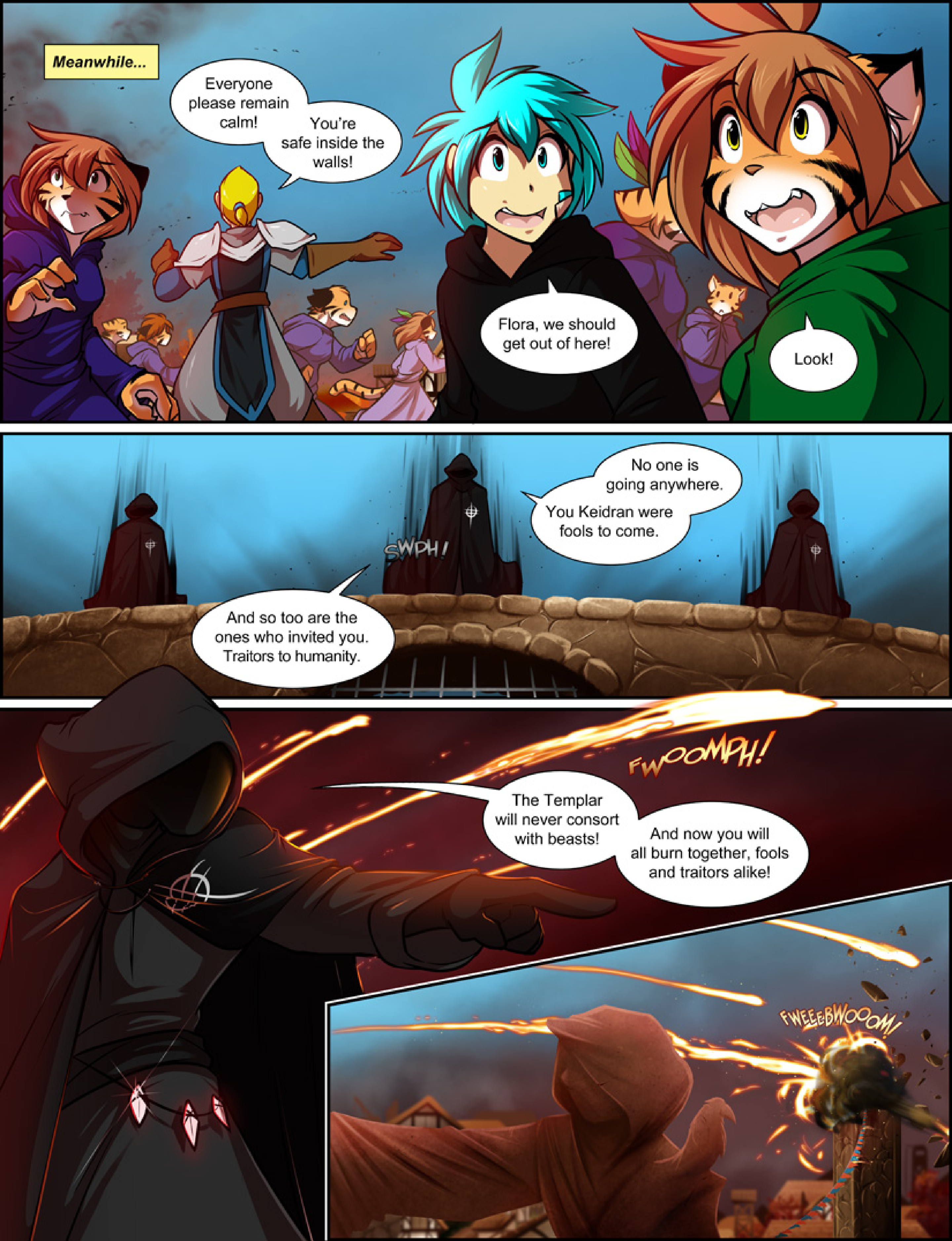

I swear, whatever this is, it is not our doing!
‹ Pray you speak the truth, human. ›
‹ ...For we tigers here are but a fraction of those waiting at your borders.
If we should not return, it **will** mean ***war***. ›
Why would the Templar do this? Something doesn't add up here.
Daniels, how soon until they get here?
I don't actually think they were coming this way, sir.
I can't say for certain, but it looked like they were cutting off routes out of the city.
I saw them burning a line of fire through the fields, heading down towards—
—The docks!
Natani!
Keith, wait!
Let's move.
Sir, what should we do? Don't the Templar technically outrank... *ngh*... us?
I don't care if it's the Grand Templar himself! Assemble the guard.
Y-yes sir!

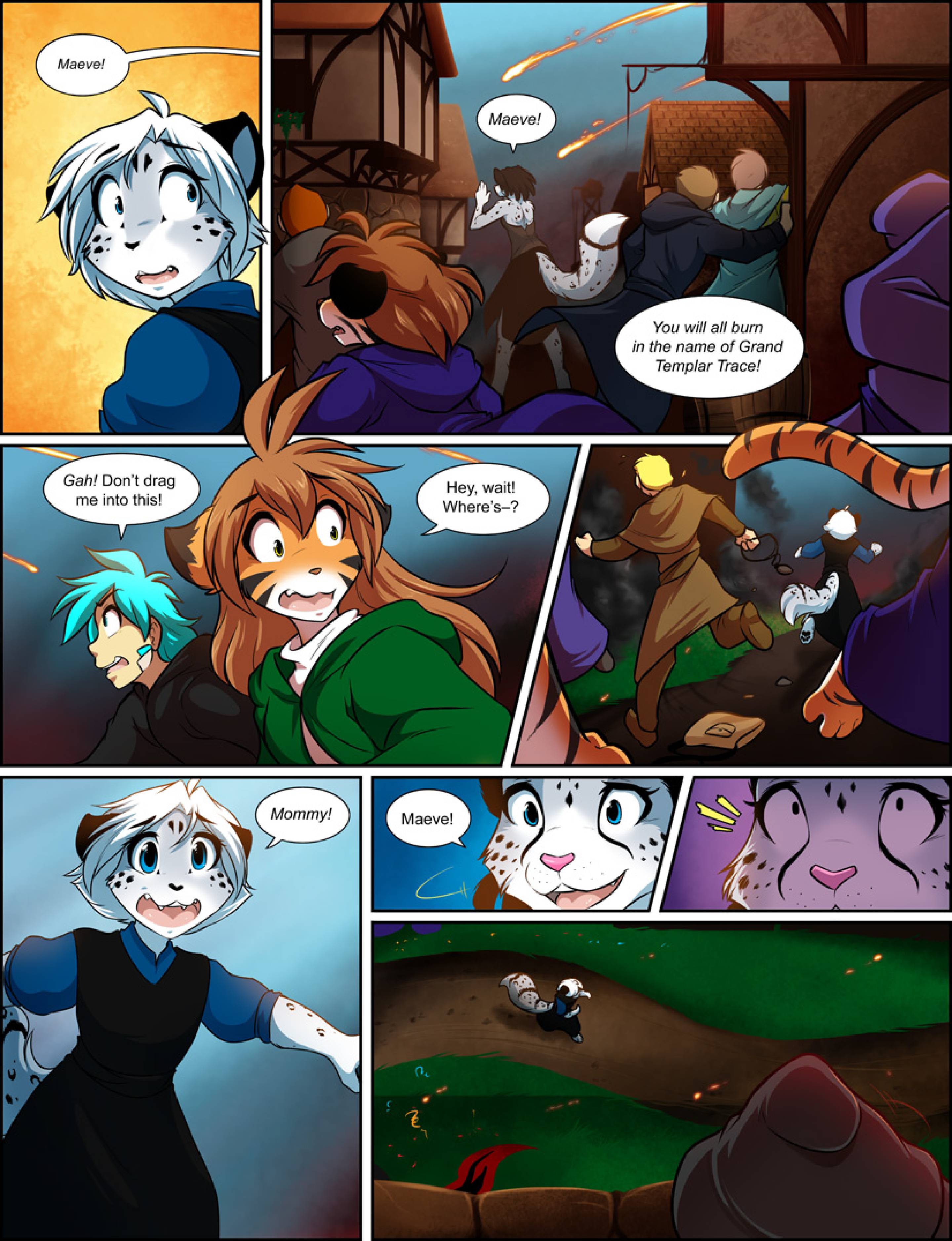

Kathrin! There you are!
How's Natani? Is everything okay?
Oh, Keith! There's been a development.
Natani is... well, *technically* fine. And awake! But...
Awake?! How?
I found a new soul willing to fill in for my missing half.
Natani? Wait... oh no, not again!
Hello, my dear Keith.
Miss me?
Actually, I'm okay with this.
At least it's not me this time around.
Does that make the wolf a basitin general now?
Also, how does that scar work?

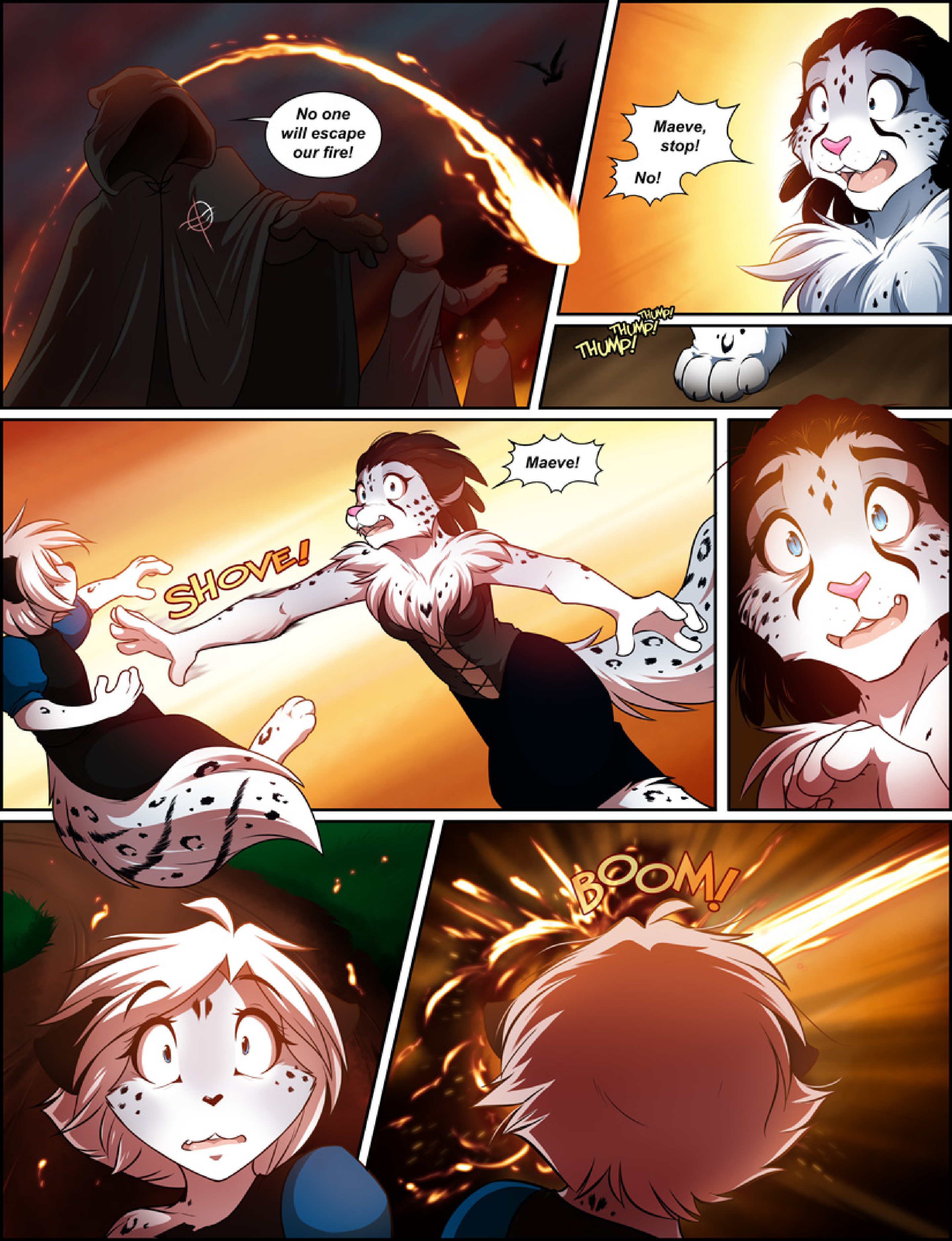

Hm...
You know, I've always found magic fascinating.
Of course, as a slave, I was never allowed to try.
But I'd sometime sneak school books from Roderik.
And now that I'm free... maybe I could learn some day?
RZWUM!
Mreowf!
I didn't mean *right now!* W-what the heck is that?!
Wait here, Natani! I'll be right back!

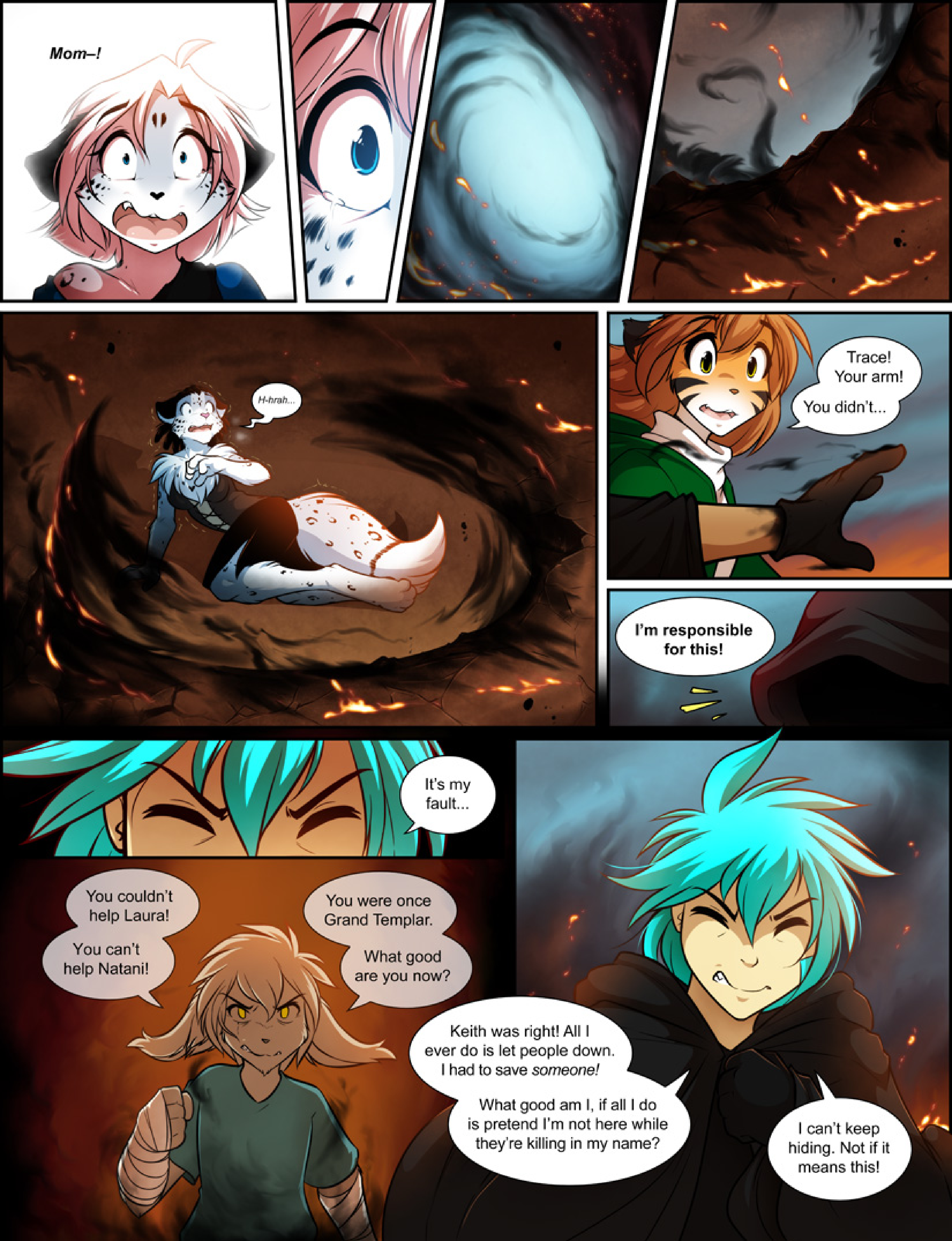

Natani!
Ngh...
Did I go drinking last night? I don't... feel right.
What the–? That's... odd.
Hello? Keith? Spots?
Zen? Zen, where are you?
O... kay.
I get it. This is in my head.
But then... why can't I feel Zen? He's always in here too, even when we're asleep. But it's just... silent.
And if this is my mind...
Why are *these* still here?!

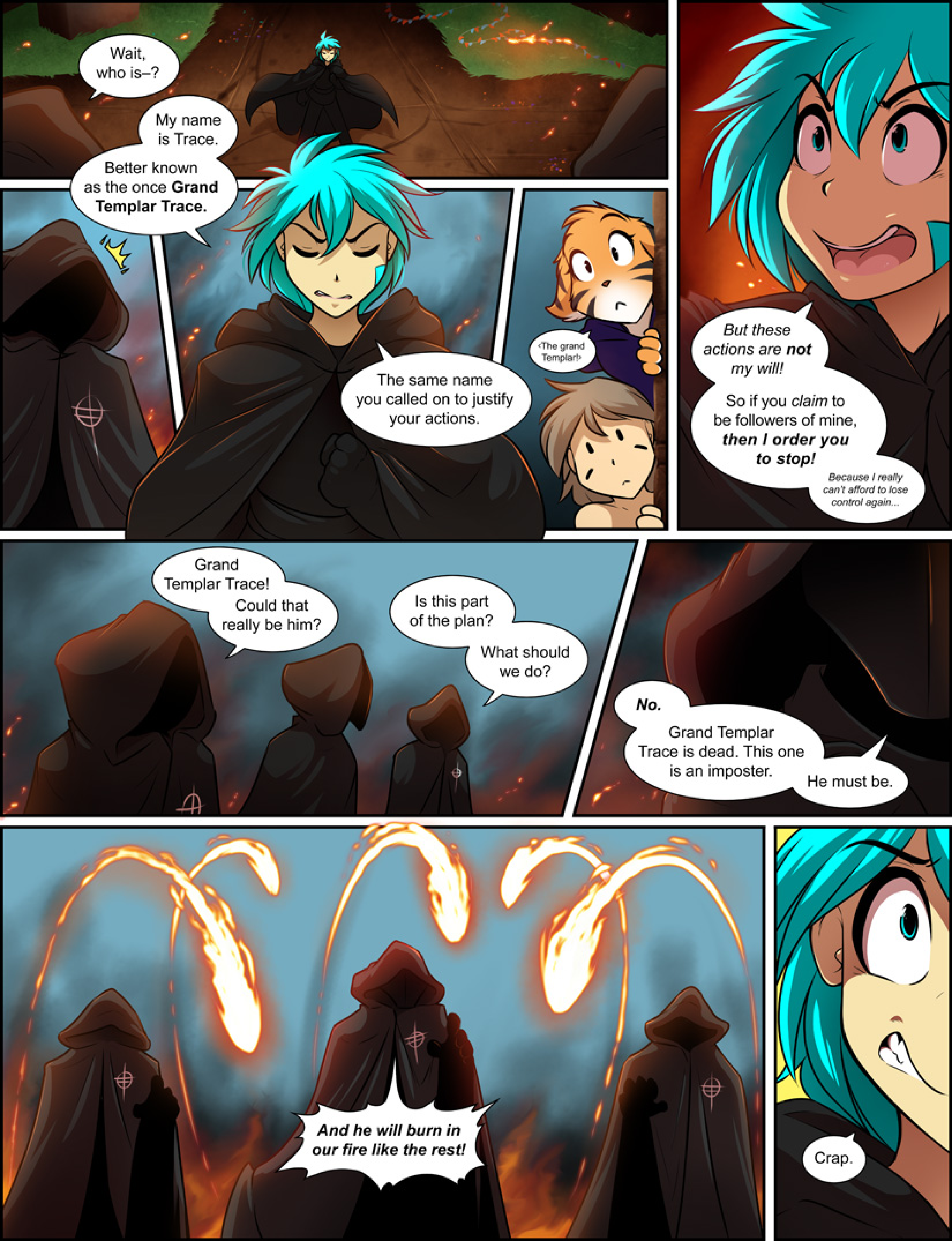

Oh, come on! My mind is the **one** place where I can feel like myself!
Why am I still a woman in here?!
Sigh...
Jeez. Get ahold of yourself, Natani.
Yeah. Yeah. Gotta get ahold of my—
...self...
Damn. I end up **stacked** when I'm older. What a pain.
WAAAAH!!!
WHUMP

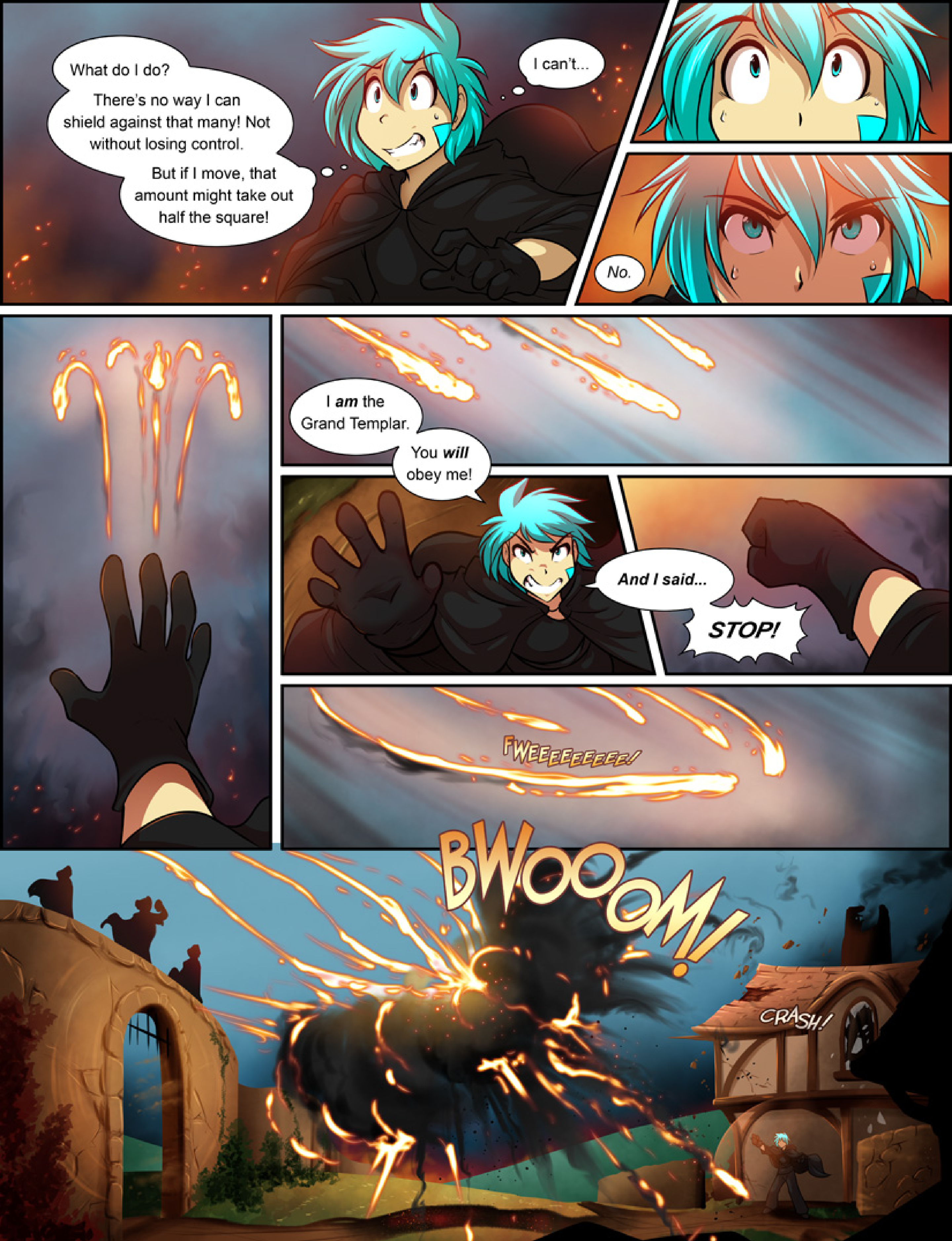

Meanwhile...
Everyone please remain calm!
You're safe inside the walls!
Flora, we should get out of here!
Look!
No one is going anywhere.
You Keidran were fools to come.
SWPH!
And so too are the ones who invited you. Traitors to humanity.
FWOOMPH!
The Templar will never consort with beasts!
And now you will all burn together, fools and traitors alike!
FWEEEBWOOOM!

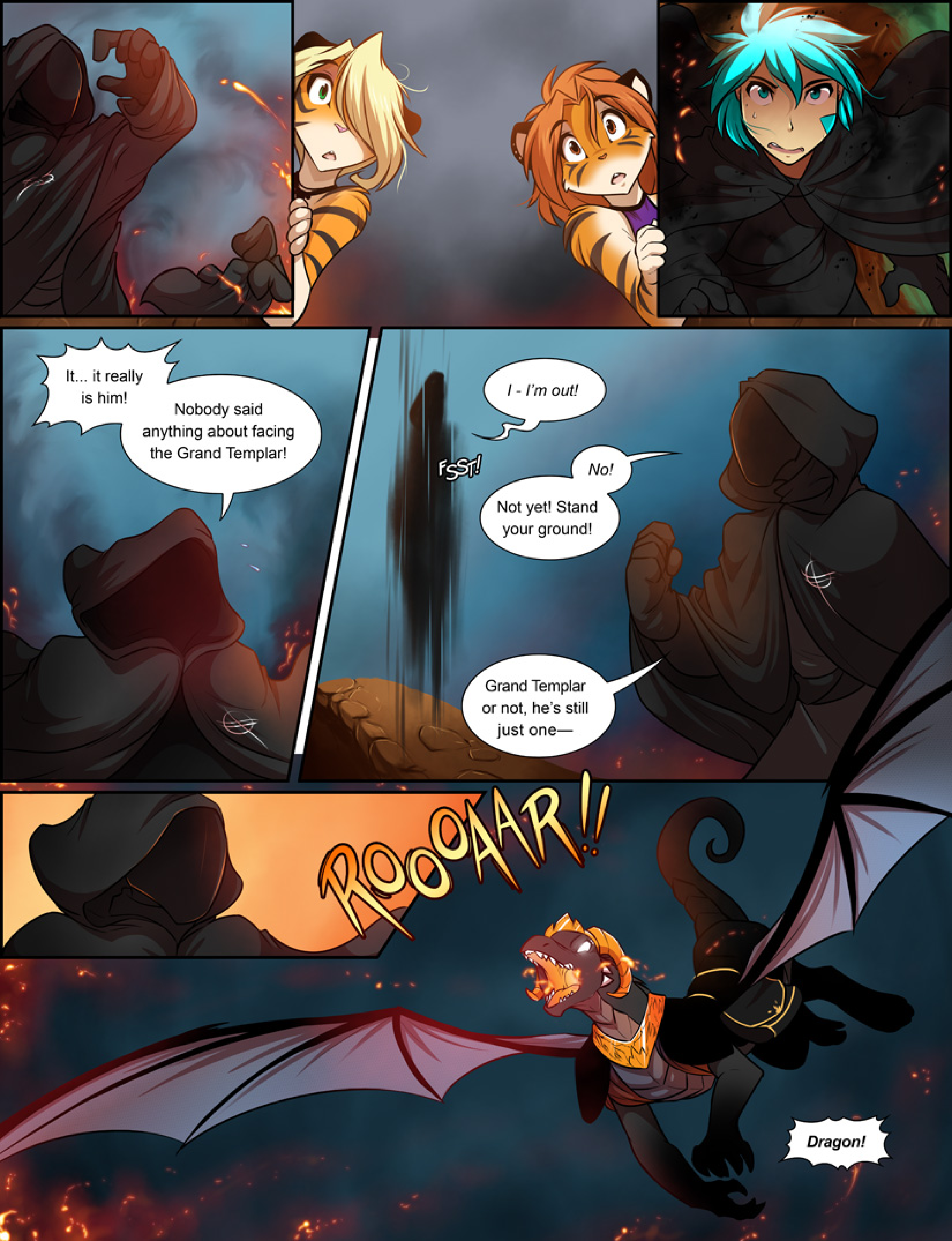

Maeve!
Maeve!
You will all burn in the name of Grand Templar Trace!
Gah! Don't drag me into this!
Hey, wait! Where's–?
Mommy!
Maeve!

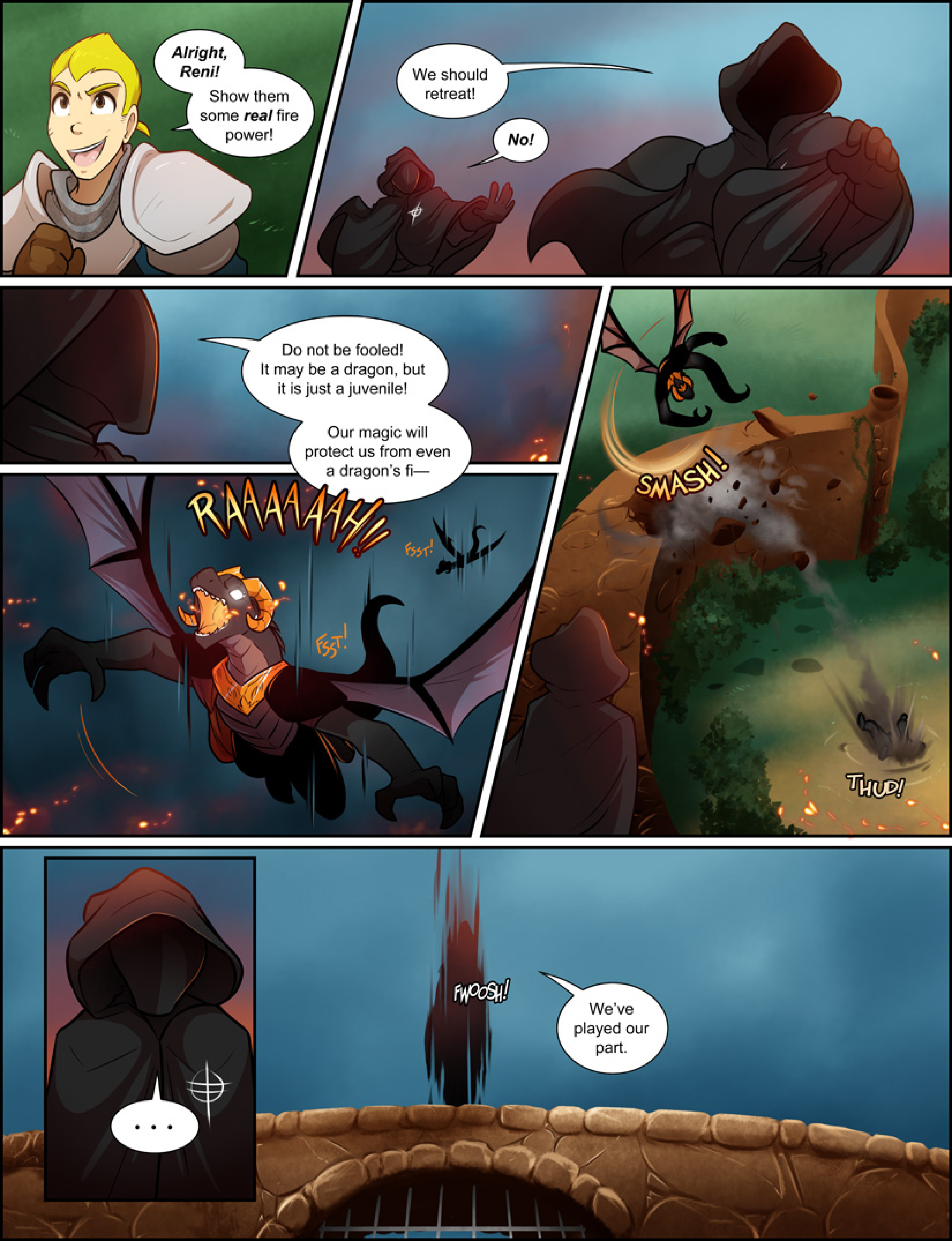

No one will escape our fire!
Maeve, stop!
No!
THUMP!
THUMP!
THUMP!
Maeve!
SHOVE!
BOOM!

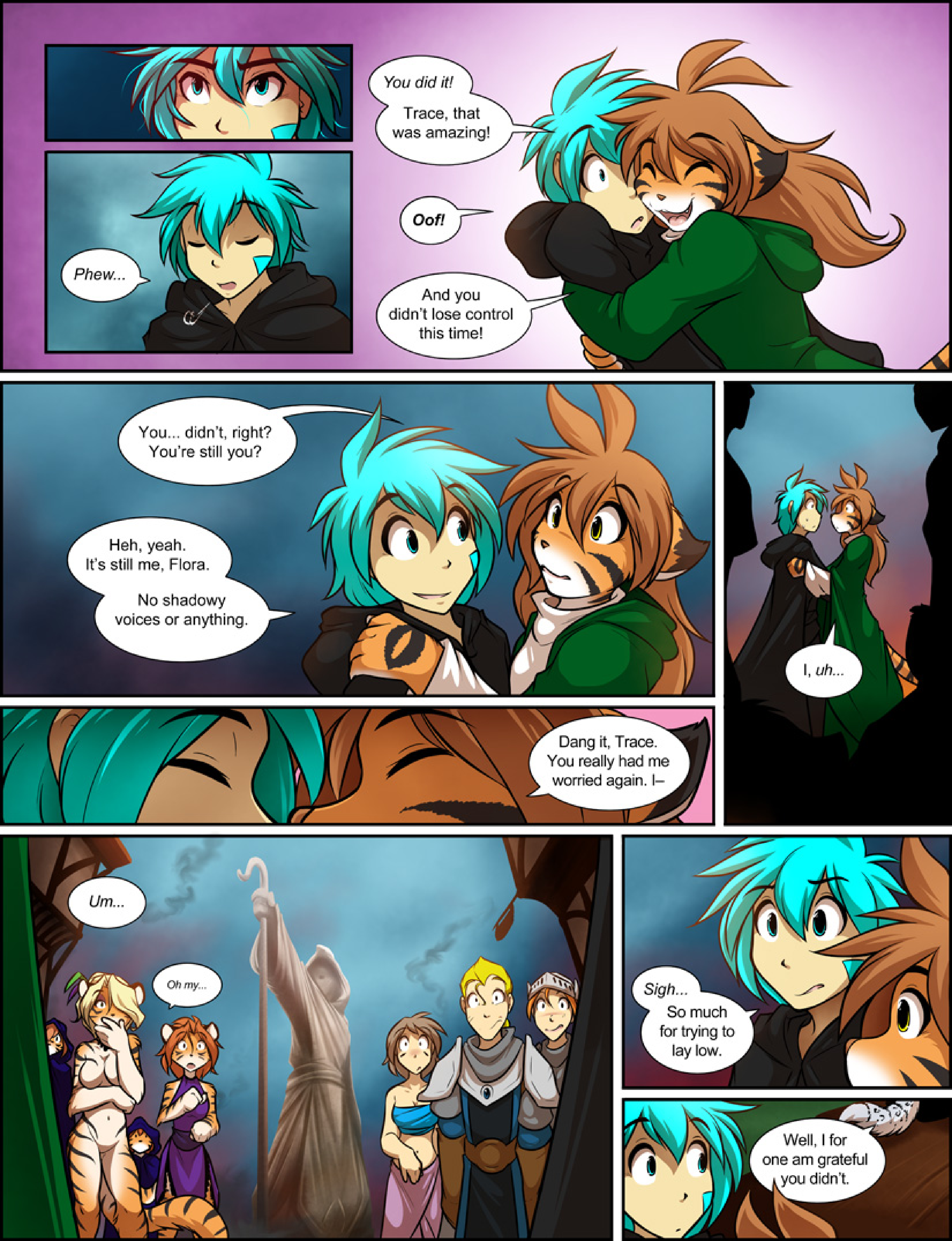

Mom–!
H-hrah...
Trace! Your arm!
You didn't...
I'm responsible for this!
It's my fault...
You couldn't help Laura!
You can't help Natani!
You were once Grand Templar.
What good are you now?
Keith was right! All I ever do is let people down. I had to save *someone!*
What good am I, if all I do is pretend I'm not here while they're killing in my name?
I can't keep hiding. Not if it means this!

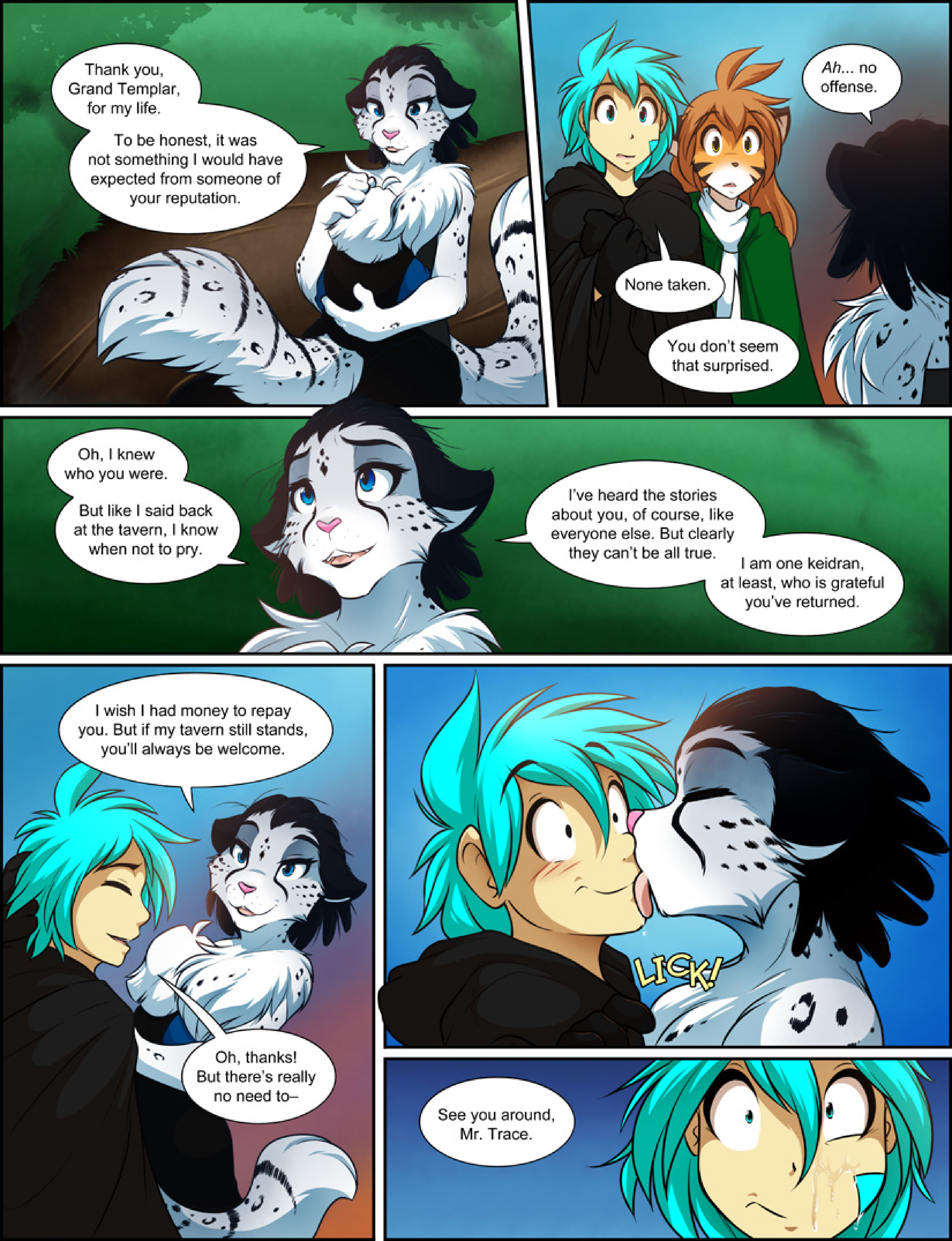

Wait, who is–?
My name is Trace.
Better known as the once **Grand Templar Trace.**
The same name you called on to justify your actions.
‹The grand Templar!›
*But these actions are **not** my will!*
So if you *claim* to be followers of mine, ***then I order you to stop!***
Because I really can't afford to lose control again...
Grand Templar Trace!
Could that really be him?
Is this part of the plan?
What should we do?
No.
Grand Templar Trace is dead. This one is an imposter.
He must be.
And he will burn in our fire like the rest!
Crap.

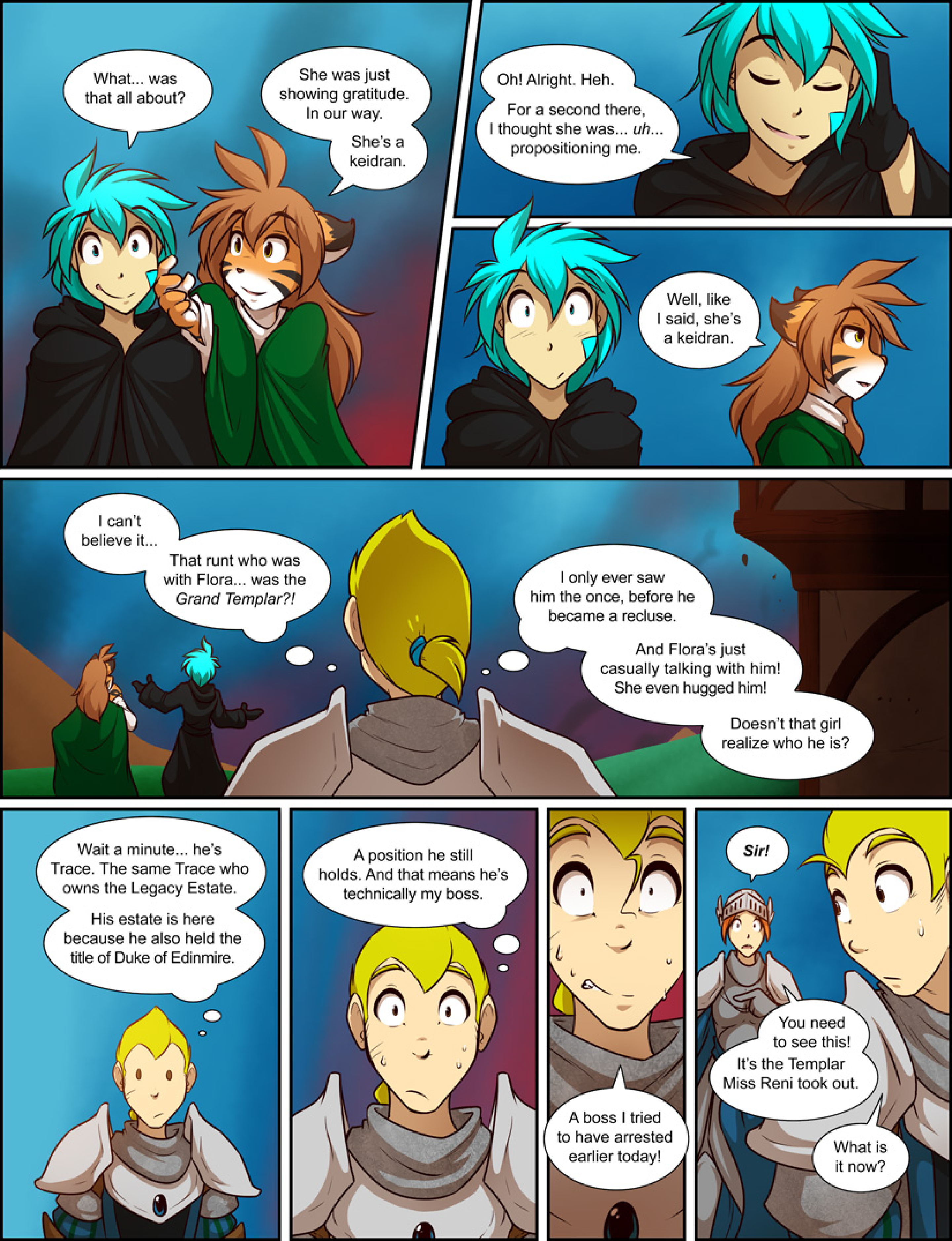

What do I do?
There's no way I can shield against that many! Not without losing control.
But if I move, that amount might take out half the square!
I can't...
No.
I **am** the Grand Templar.
You **will** obey me!
And I said...
STOP!
FWEEEEEEEEE!
BWOOOM!
CRASH!

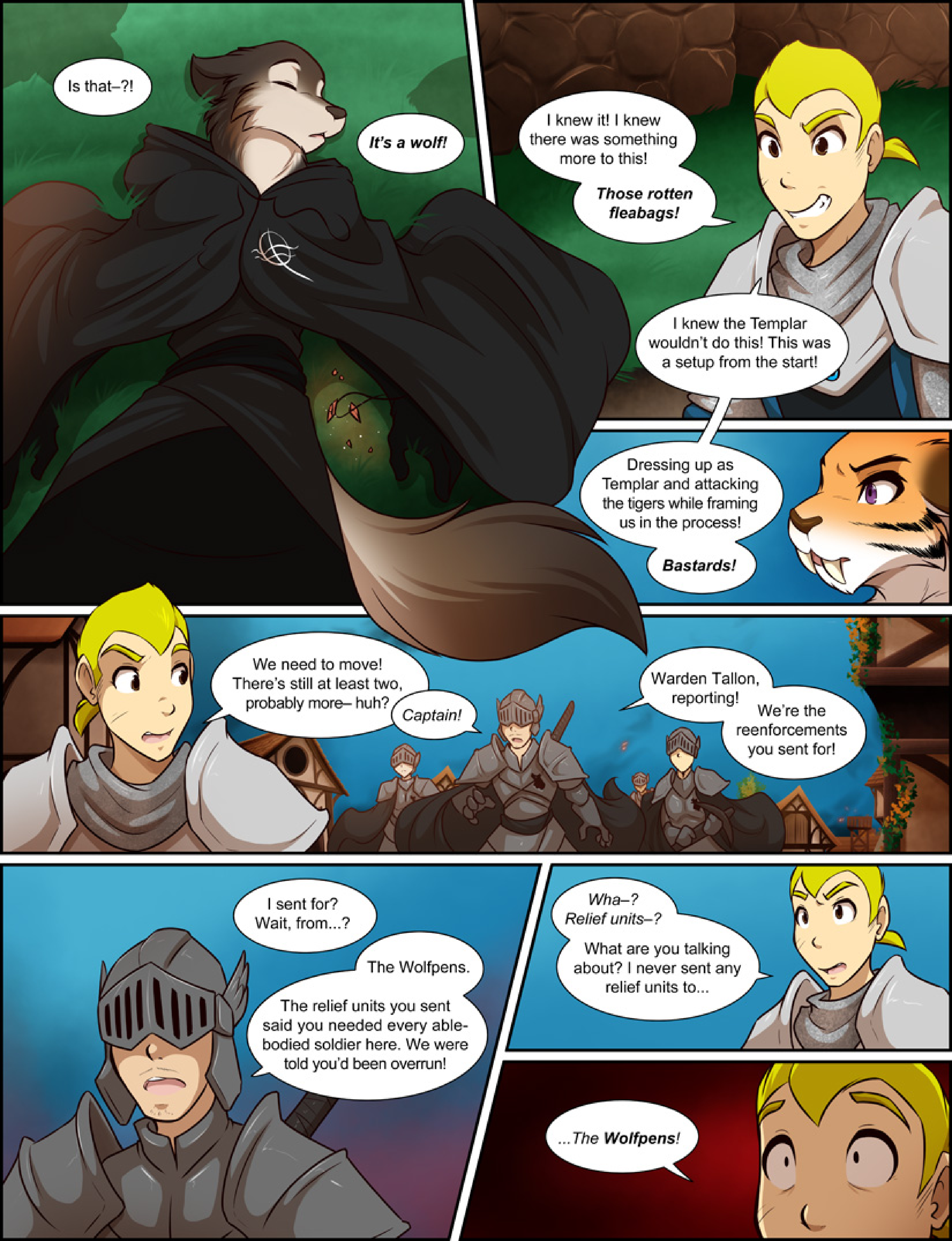

It... it really is him!
Nobody said anything about facing the Grand Templar!
I - I'm out!
FSST!
No!
Not yet! Stand your ground!
Grand Templar or not, he's still just one—
ROOOAAR!!
Dragon!

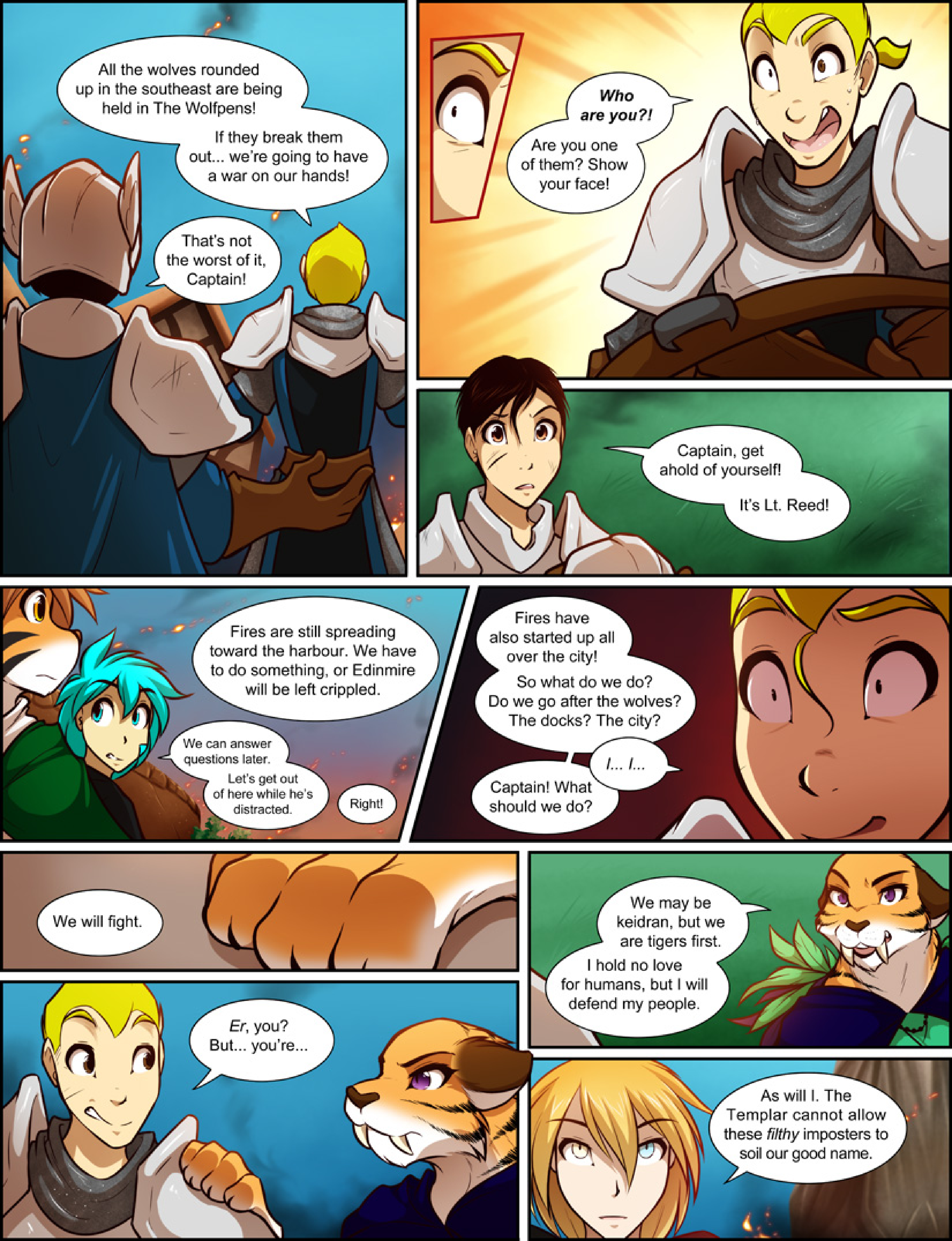

Alright, Reni!
Show them some ***real*** fire power!
We should retreat!
No!
Do not be fooled! It may be a dragon, but it is just a juvenile!
Our magic will protect us from even a dragon's fi—
RAAAAAAH!!
FSST!
FSST!
SMASH!
THUD!
FWOOSH!
We've played our part.
. . .

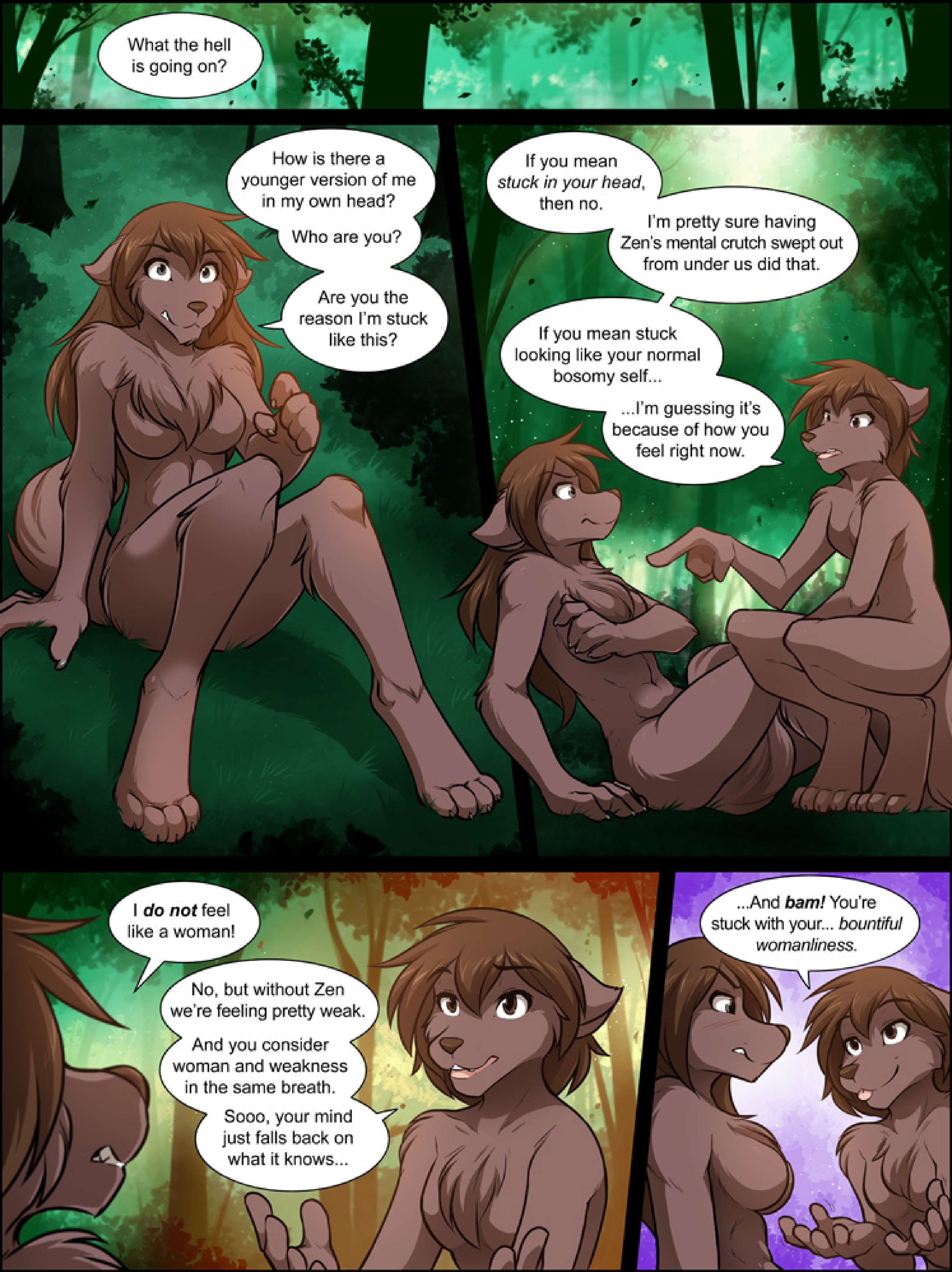

You did it!
Trace, that was amazing!
Oof!
And you didn't lose control this time!
Phew...
You... didn't, right? You're still you?
Heh, yeah. It's still me, Flora.
No shadowy voices or anything.
I, uh...
Dang it, Trace. You really had me worried again. I–
Um...
Oh my...
Sigh... So much for trying to lay low.
Well, I for one am grateful you didn't.

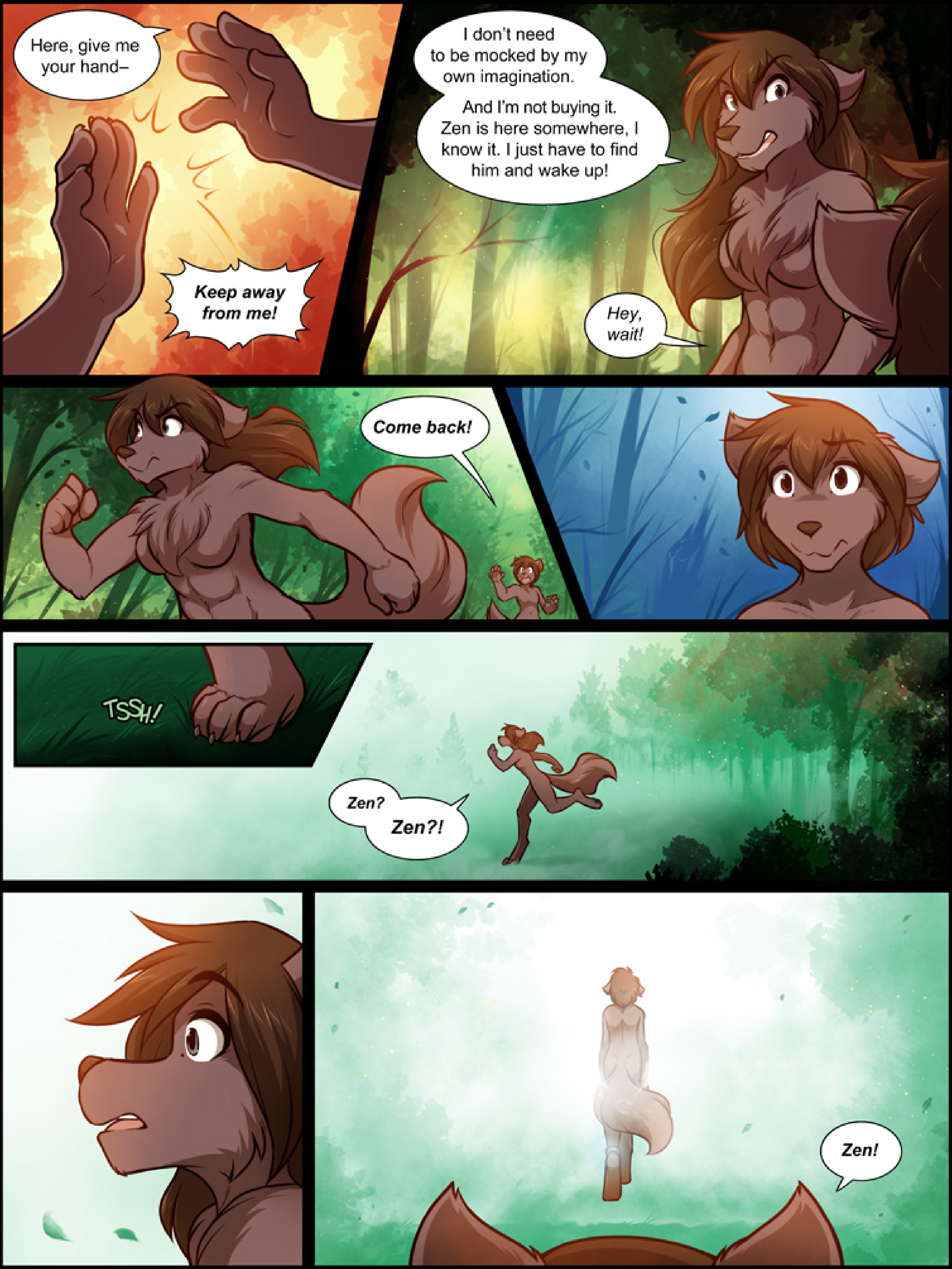

Thank you, Grand Templar, for my life.
To be honest, it was not something I would have expected from someone of your reputation.
Ah... no offense.
None taken.
You don't seem that surprised.
Oh, I knew who you were.
But like I said back at the tavern, I know when not to pry.
I've heard the stories about you, of course, like everyone else. But clearly they can't be all true.
I am one keidran, at least, who is grateful you've returned.
I wish I had money to repay you. But if my tavern still stands, you'll always be welcome.
Oh, thanks! But there's really no need to–
LICK!
See you around, Mr. Trace.

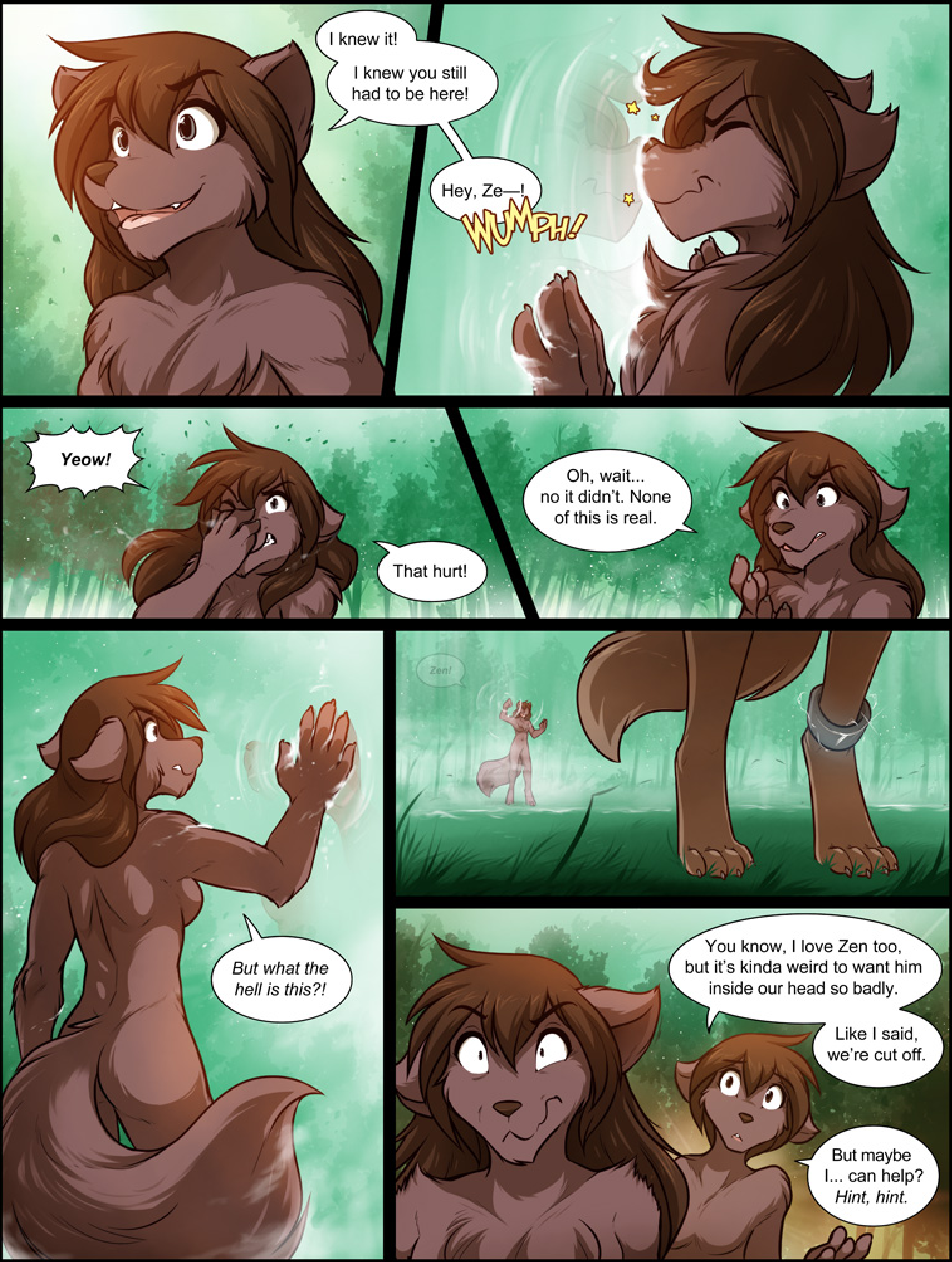

What... was that all about?
She was just showing gratitude. In our way.
She's a keidran.
Oh! Alright. Heh.
For a second there, I thought she was... *uh*... propositioning me.
Well, like I said, she's a keidran.
I can't believe it...
That runt who was with Flora... was the *Grand Templar?!*
I only ever saw him the once, before he became a recluse.
And Flora's just casually talking with him! She even hugged him!
Doesn't that girl realize who he is?
Wait a minute... he's Trace. The same Trace who owns the Legacy Estate.
His estate is here because he also held the title of Duke of Edinmire.
A position he still holds. And that means he's technically my boss.
A boss I tried to have arrested earlier today!
Sir!
You need to see this! It's the Templar Miss Reni took out.
What is it now?

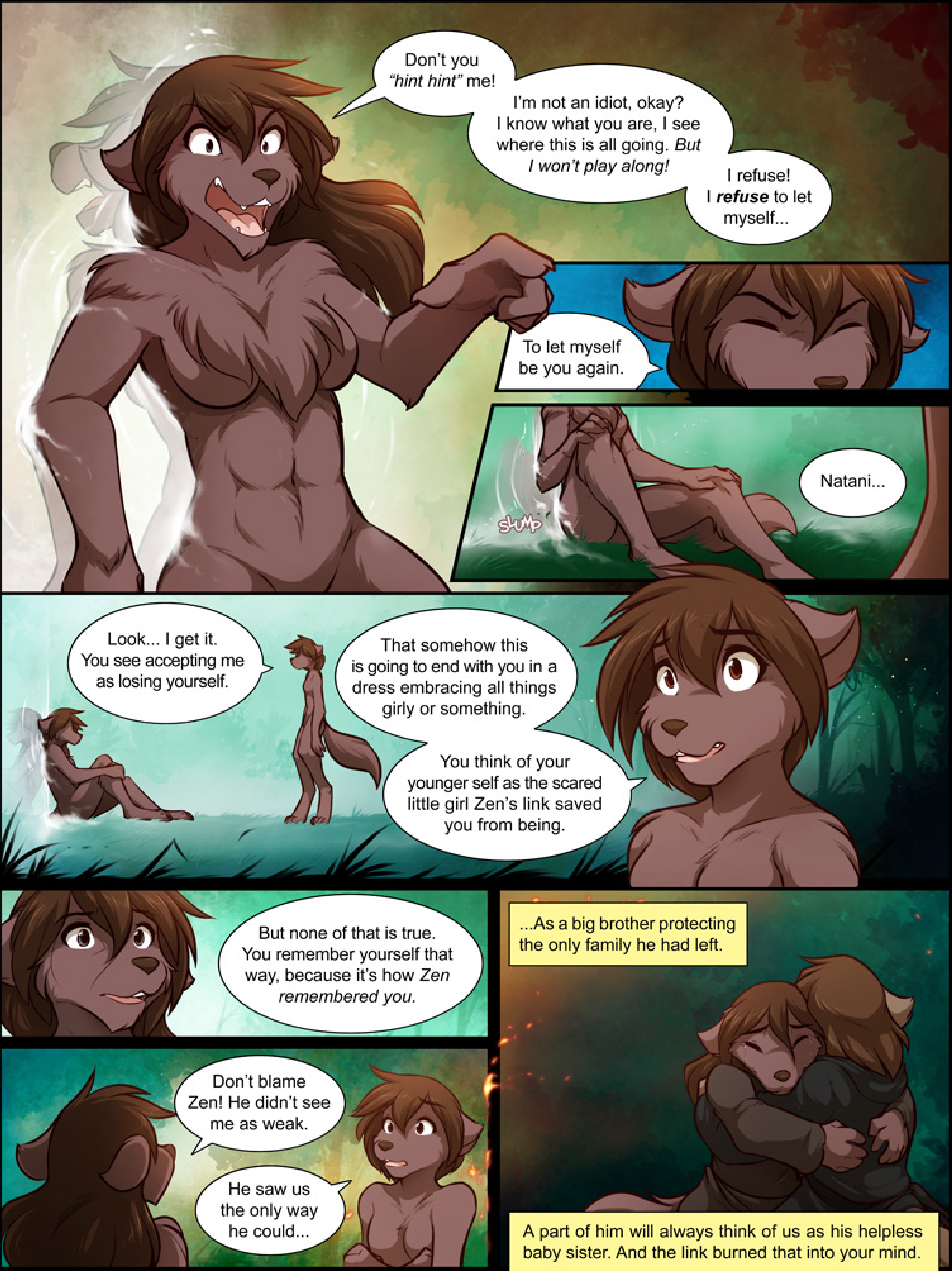

Is that–?!
It's a wolf!
I knew it! I knew there was something more to this!
Those rotten fleabags!
I knew the Templar wouldn't do this! This was a setup from the start!
Dressing up as Templar and attacking the tigers while framing us in the process!
Bastards!
We need to move! There's still at least two, probably more– huh?
Captain!
Warden Tallon, reporting!
We're the reenforcements you sent for!
I sent for? Wait, from...?
The Wolfpens.
The relief units you sent said you needed every able-bodied soldier here. We were told you'd been overrun!
Wha–? Relief units–?
What are you talking about? I never sent any relief units to...
*...The **Wolfpens**!*

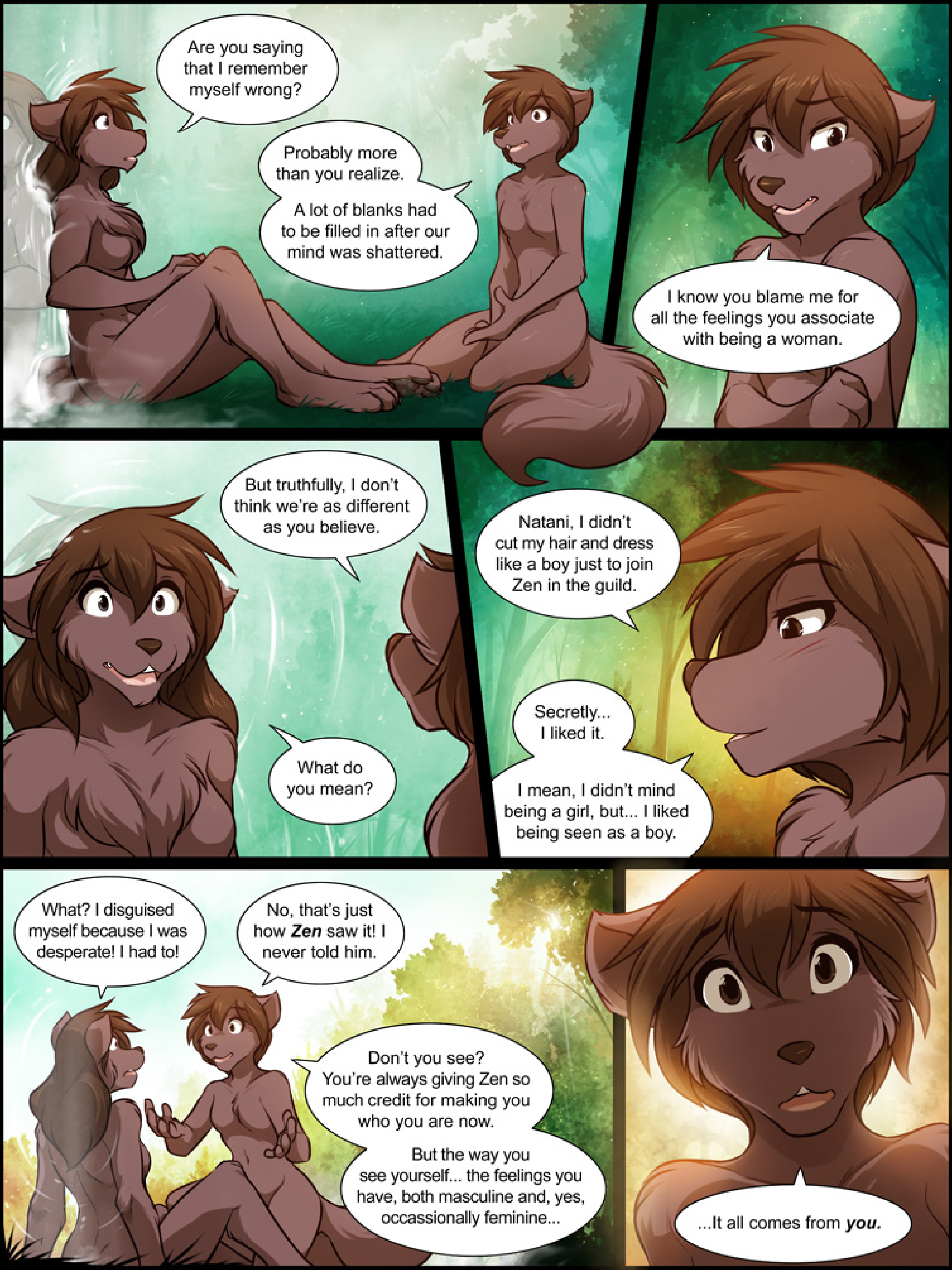

All the wolves rounded up in the southeast are being held in The Wolfpens!
If they break them out... we're going to have a war on our hands!
That's not the worst of it, Captain!
Who are you?!
Are you one of them? Show your face!
Captain, get ahold of yourself!
It's Lt. Reed!
Fires are still spreading toward the harbour. We have to do something, or Edinmire will be left crippled.
We can answer questions later.
Let's get out of here while he's distracted.
Right!
Fires have also started up all over the city!
So what do we do? Do we go after the wolves? The docks? The city?
Captain! What should we do?
I... I...
We will fight.
We may be keidran, but we are tigers first.
I hold no love for humans, but I will defend my people.
Er, you? But... you're...
As will I. The Templar cannot allow these *filthy* imposters to soil our good name.

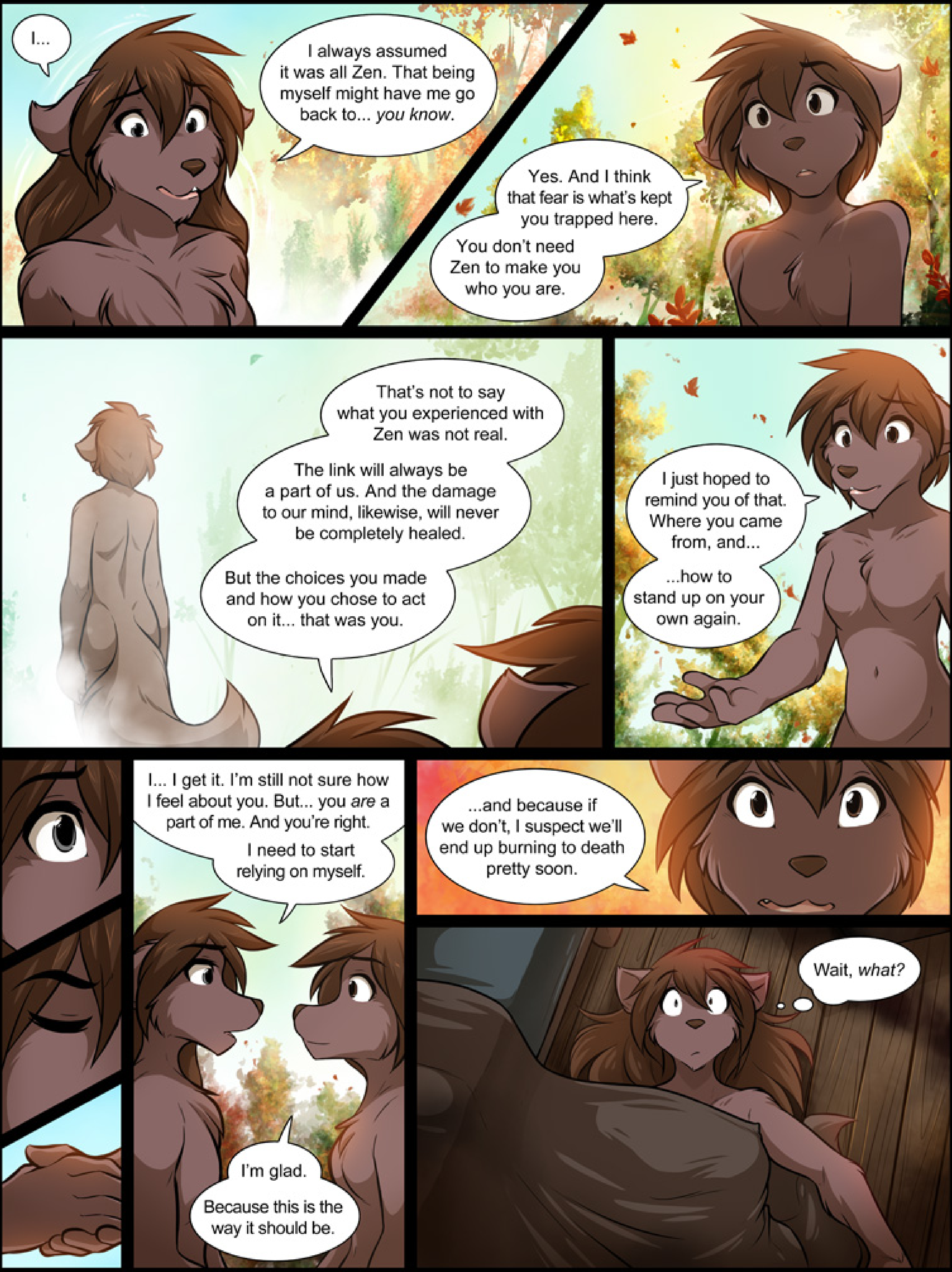

What the hell is going on?
How is there a younger version of me in my own head?
Who are you?
Are you the reason I'm stuck like this?
If you mean *stuck in your head*, then no.
I'm pretty sure having Zen's mental crutch swept out from under us did that.
If you mean stuck looking like your normal bosomy self...
...I'm guessing it's because of how you feel right now.
I ***do not*** feel like a woman!
No, but without Zen we're feeling pretty weak.
And you consider woman and weakness in the same breath.
Sooo, your mind just falls back on what it knows...
...And ***bam!*** You're stuck with your... *bountiful womanliness.*

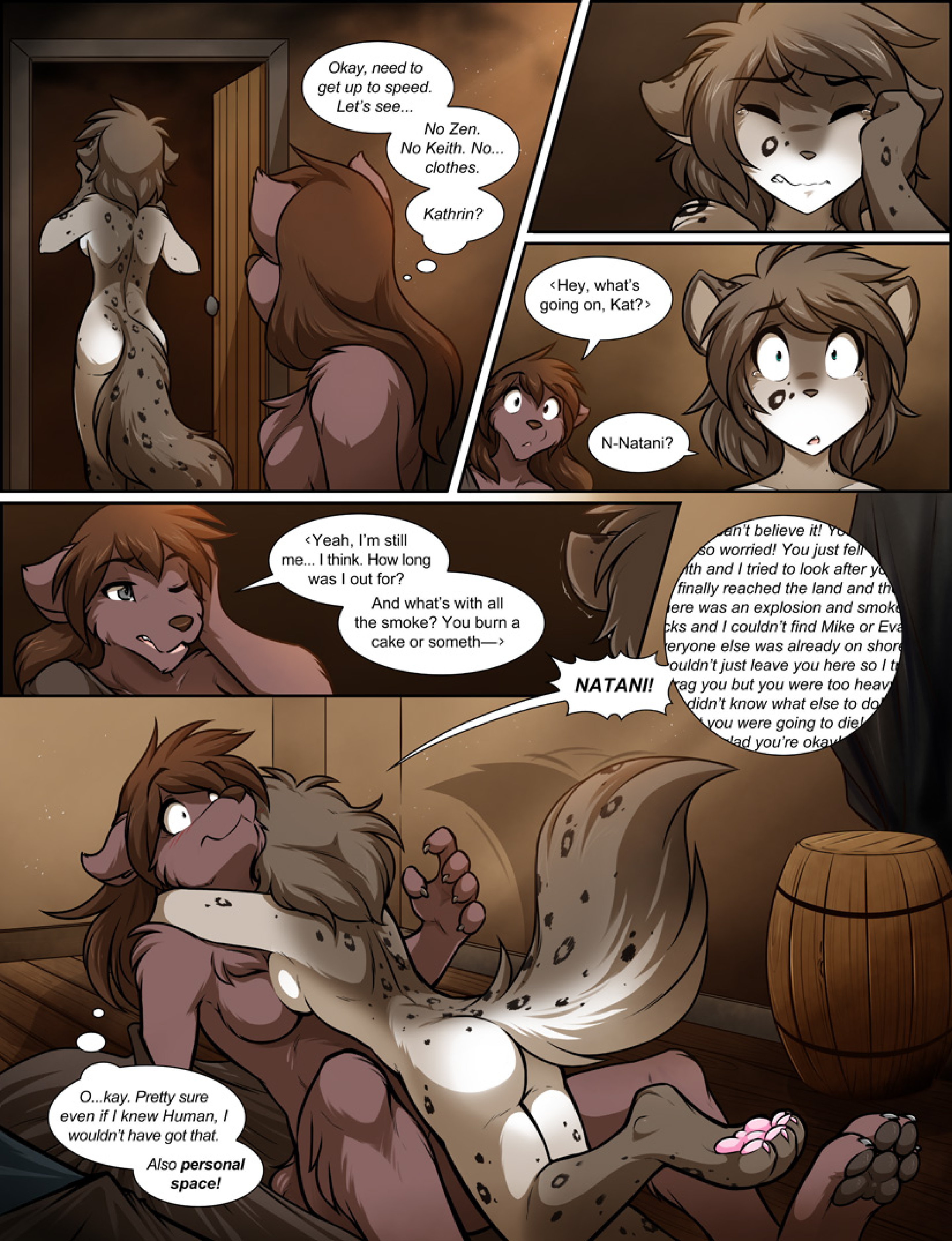

Here, give me your hand–
Keep away from me!
I don't need to be mocked by my own imagination.
And I'm not buying it. Zen is here somewhere, I know it. I just have to find him and wake up!
Hey, wait!
Come back!
TSSH!
Zen? Zen?!
Zen!

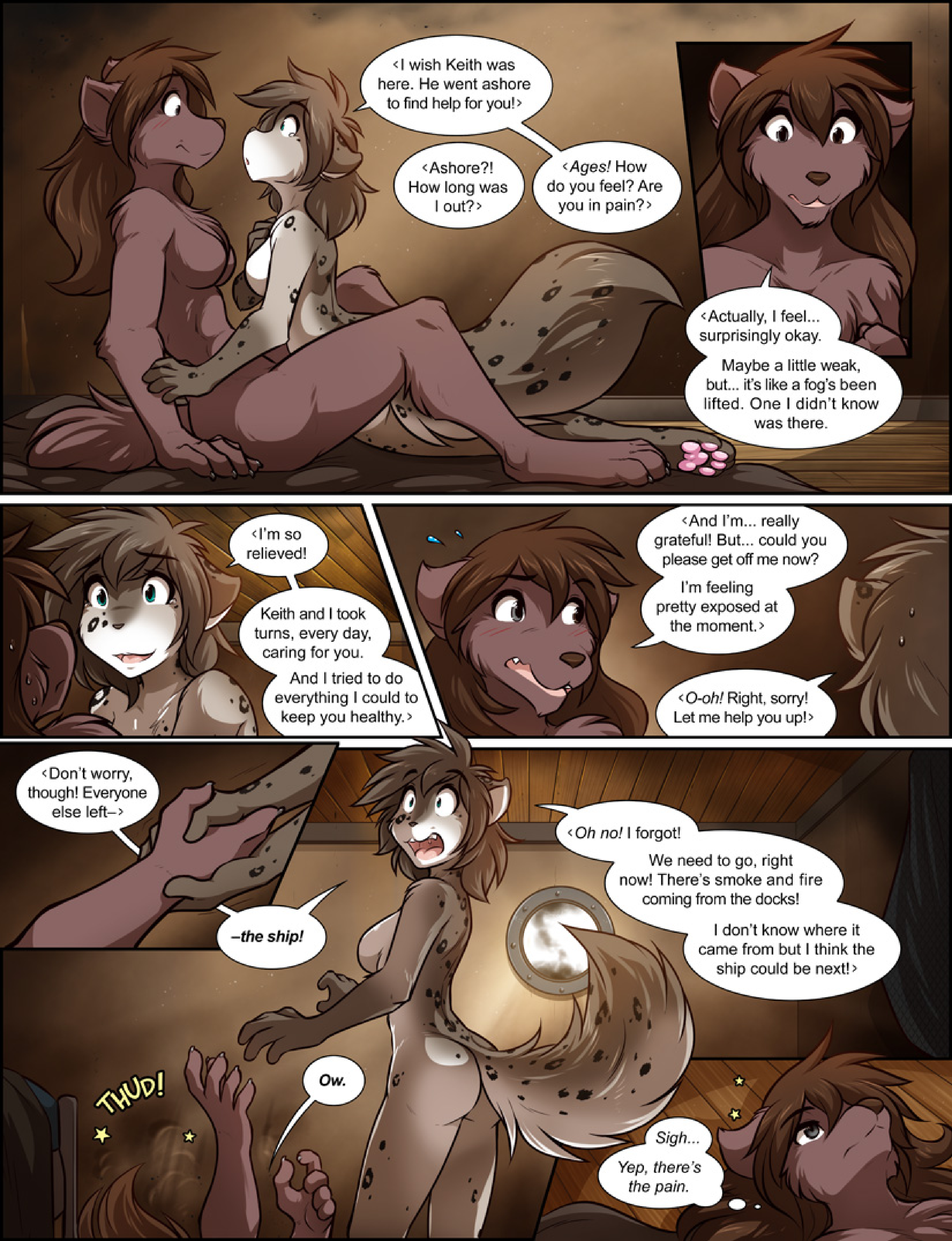

I knew it!
I knew you still had to be here!
Hey, Ze—!
WUMPH!
Yeow!
That hurt!
Oh, wait... no it didn't. None of this is real.
But what the hell is this?!
Zen!
You know, I love Zen too, but it's kinda weird to want him inside our head so badly.
Like I said, we're cut off.
But maybe I... can help? *Hint, hint.*

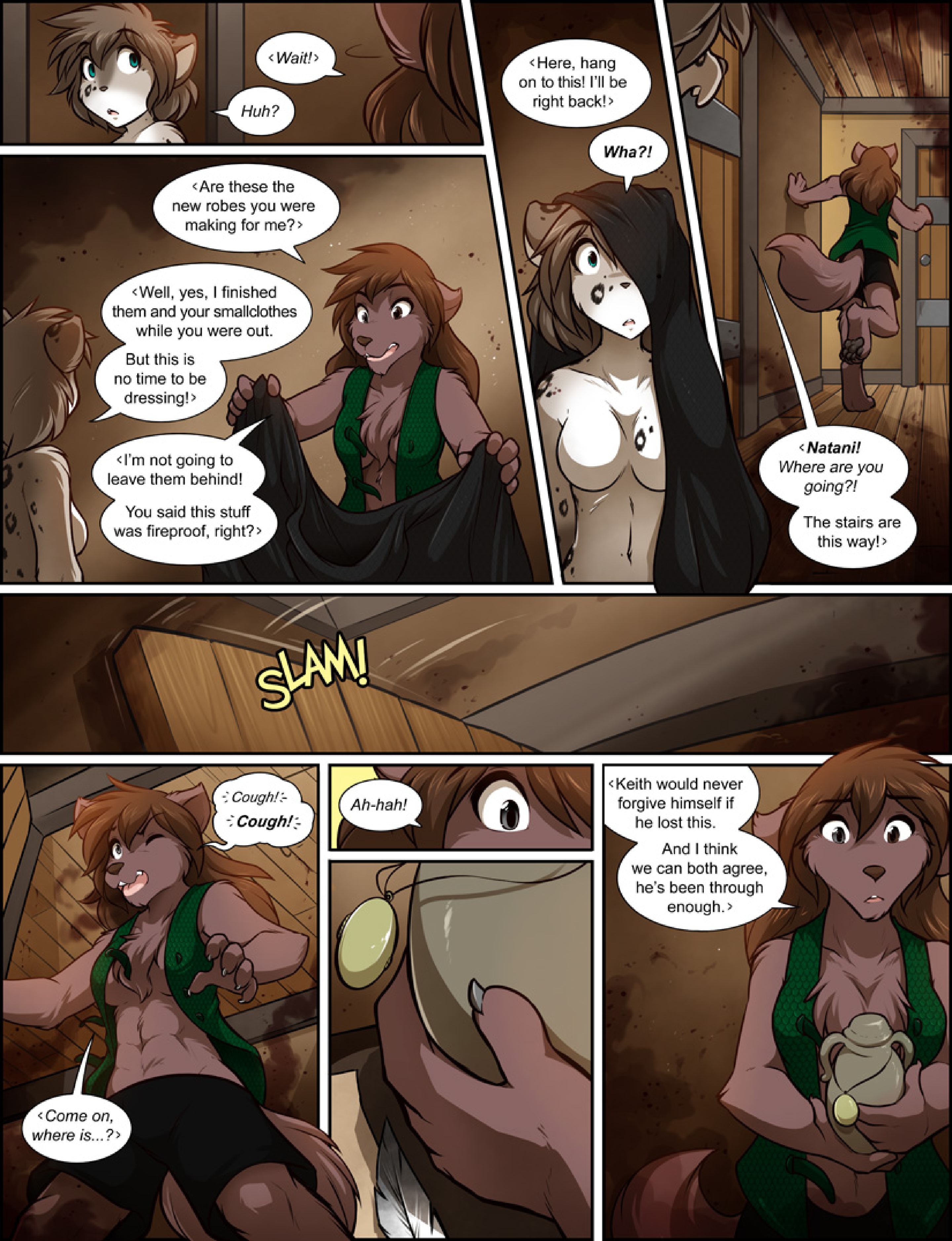

Don't you *"hint hint"* me!
I'm not an idiot, okay? I know what you are, I see where this is all going. *But I won't play along!*
I refuse! I ***refuse*** to let myself...
To let myself be you again.
SHUMP
Natani...
Look... I get it. You see accepting me as losing yourself.
That somehow this is going to end with you in a dress embracing all things girly or something.
You think of your younger self as the scared little girl Zen's link saved you from being.
But none of that is true. You remember yourself that way, because it's how *Zen remembered you*.
Don't blame Zen! He didn't see me as weak.
He saw us the only way he could...
...As a big brother protecting the only family he had left.
A part of him will always think of us as his helpless baby sister. And the link burned that into your mind.

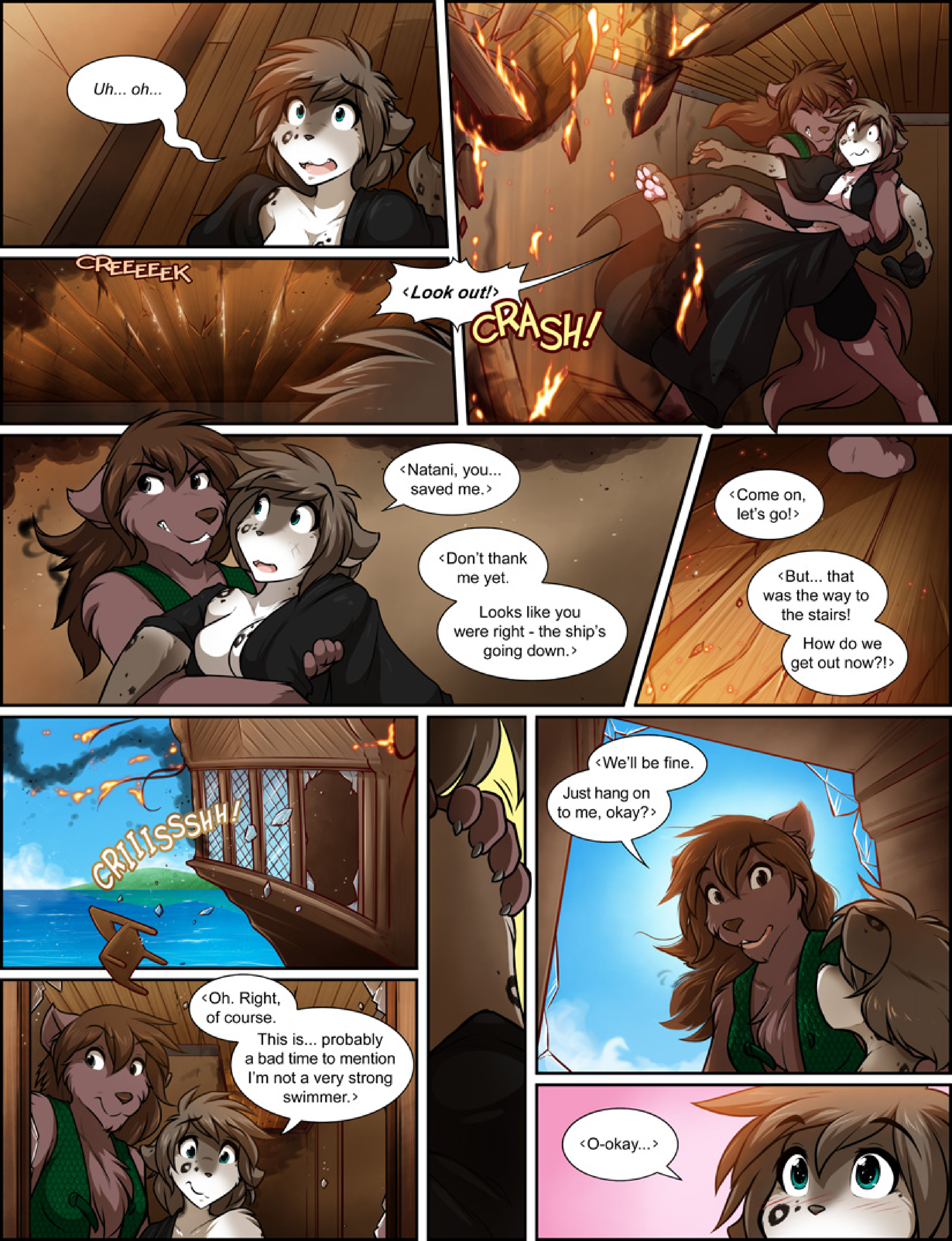

Are you saying that I remember myself wrong?
Probably more than you realize.
A lot of blanks had to be filled in after our mind was shattered.
I know you blame me for all the feelings you associate with being a woman.
But truthfully, I don't think we're as different as you believe.
What do you mean?
Natani, I didn't cut my hair and dress like a boy just to join Zen in the guild.
Secretly... I liked it.
I mean, I didn't mind being a girl, but... I liked being seen as a boy.
What? I disguised myself because I was desperate! I had to!
No, that's just how ***Zen*** saw it! I never told him.
Don't you see? You're always giving Zen so much credit for making you who you are now.
But the way you see yourself... the feelings you have, both masculine and, yes, occassionally feminine...
...It all comes from ***you.***

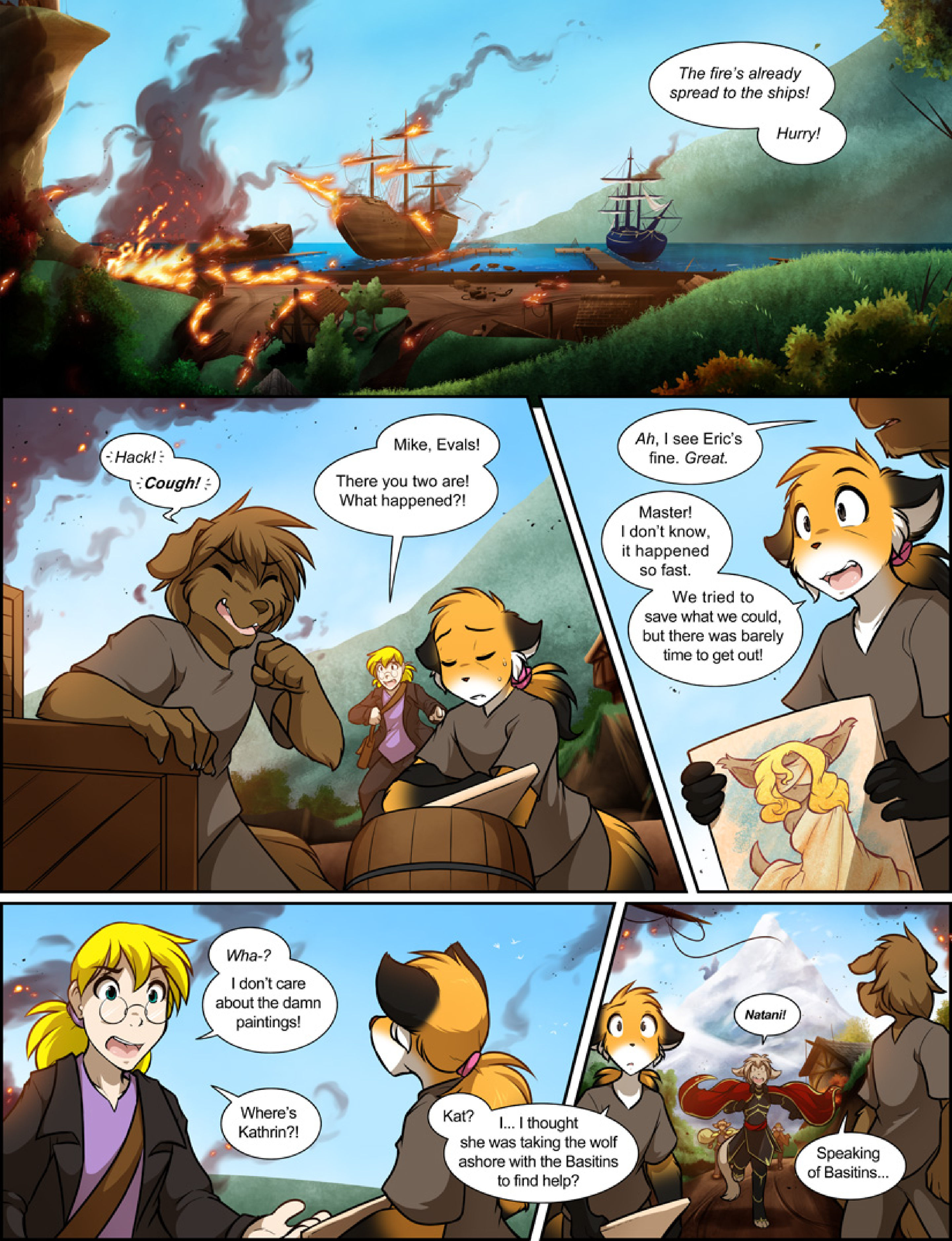

I...
I always assumed it was all Zen. That being myself might have me go back to... *you know*.
Yes. And I think that fear is what's kept you trapped here.
You don't need Zen to make you who you are.
That's not to say what you experienced with Zen was not real.
The link will always be a part of us. And the damage to our mind, likewise, will never be completely healed.
But the choices you made and how you chose to act on it... that was you.
I just hoped to remind you of that. Where you came from, and...
...how to stand up on your own again.
I... I get it. I'm still not sure how I feel about you. But... you *are* a part of me. And you're right.
I need to start relying on myself.
I'm glad.
Because this is the way it should be.
...and because if we don't, I suspect we'll end up burning to death pretty soon.
Wait, *what?*

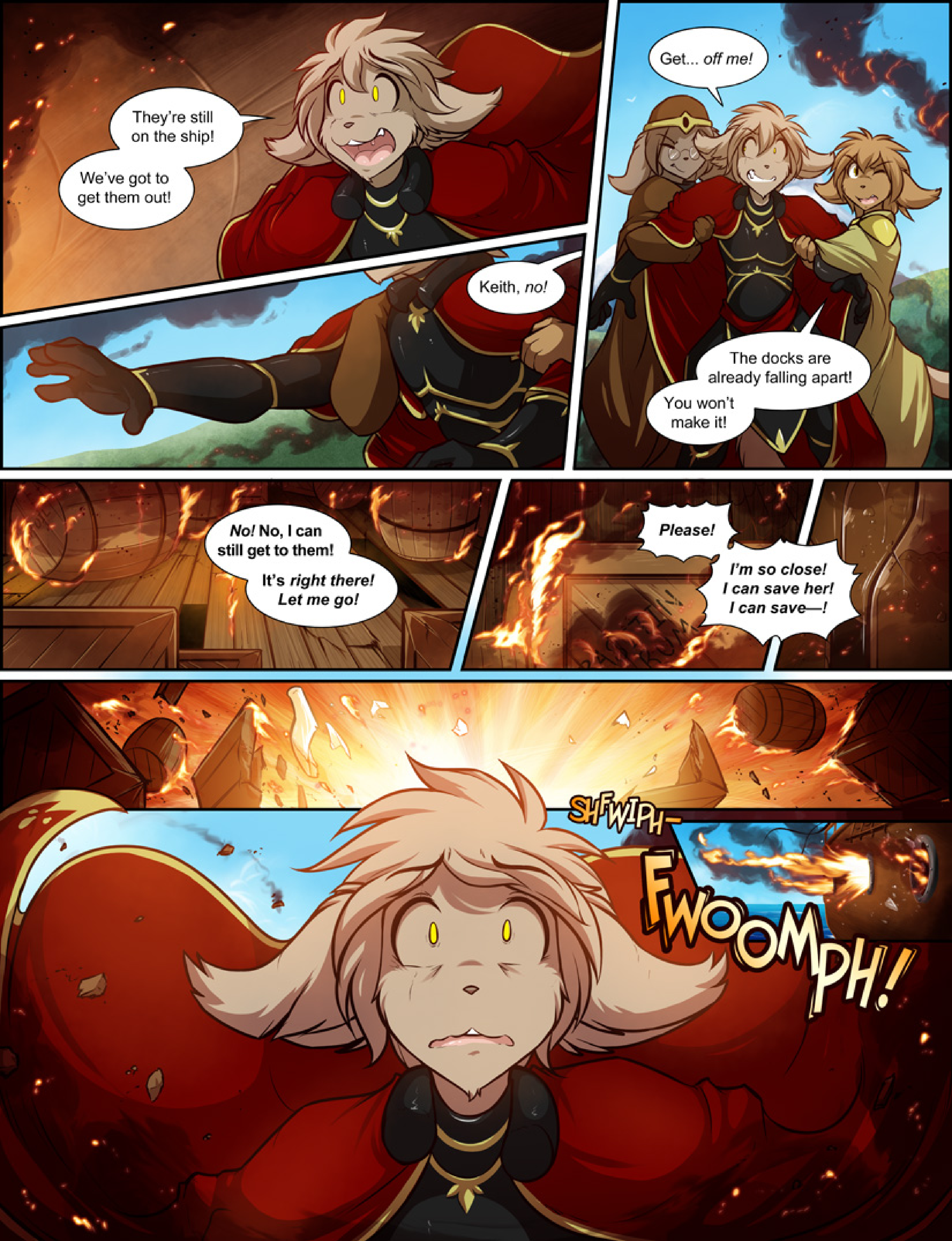

Okay, need to get up to speed. Let's see...
No Zen. No Keith. No... clothes.
Kathrin?
<Hey, what's going on, Kat?>
N-Natani?
<Yeah, I'm still me... I think. How long was I out for?
And what's with all the smoke? You burn a cake or someth—>
NATANI!
an't believe it! Yo
so worried! You just fell
ith and I tried to look after yo
finally reached the land and th
ere was an explosion and smoke
cks and I couldn't find Mike or Eva
eryone else was already on shore
ouldn't just leave you here so I t
ag you but you were too heav
didn't know what else to do
you were going to die!
lad you're okay!
O...kay. Pretty sure even if I knew Human, I wouldn't have got that.
Also **personal space!**

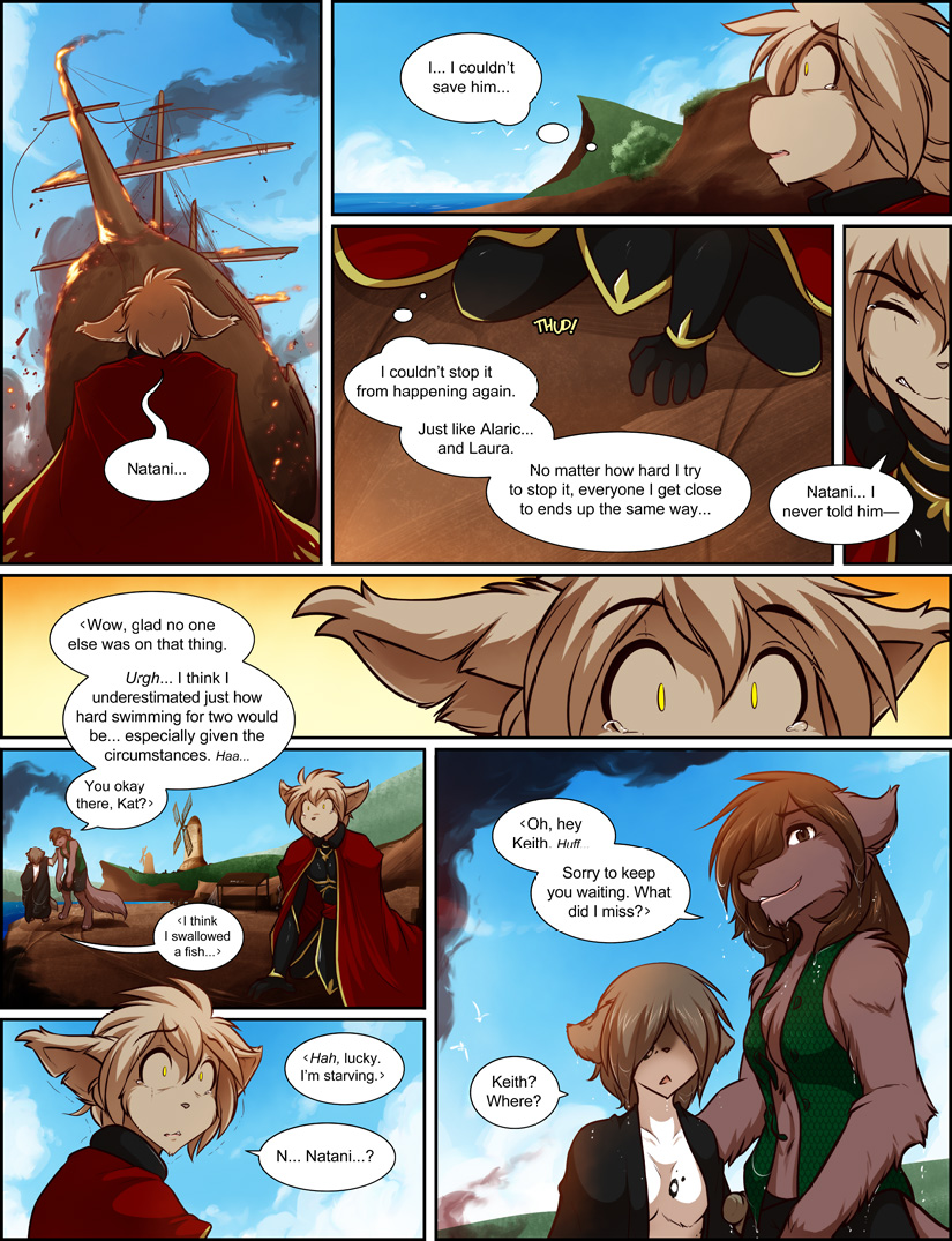

<I wish Keith was here. He went ashore to find help for you!>
<Ashore?! How long was I out?>
<*Ages!* How do you feel? Are you in pain?>
<Actually, I feel... surprisingly okay.
Maybe a little weak, but... it's like a fog's been lifted. One I didn't know was there.
<I'm so relieved!
Keith and I took turns, every day, caring for you.
And I tried to do everything I could to keep you healthy.>
<And I'm... really grateful! But... could you please get off me now?
I'm feeling pretty exposed at the moment.>
<*O-oh!* Right, sorry! Let me help you up!>
<Don't worry, though! Everyone else left–>
–the ship!
<*Oh no!* I forgot!
We need to go, right now! There's smoke and fire coming from the docks!
I don't know where it came from but I think the ship could be next!>
THUD!
Ow.
Sigh...
Yep, there's the pain.

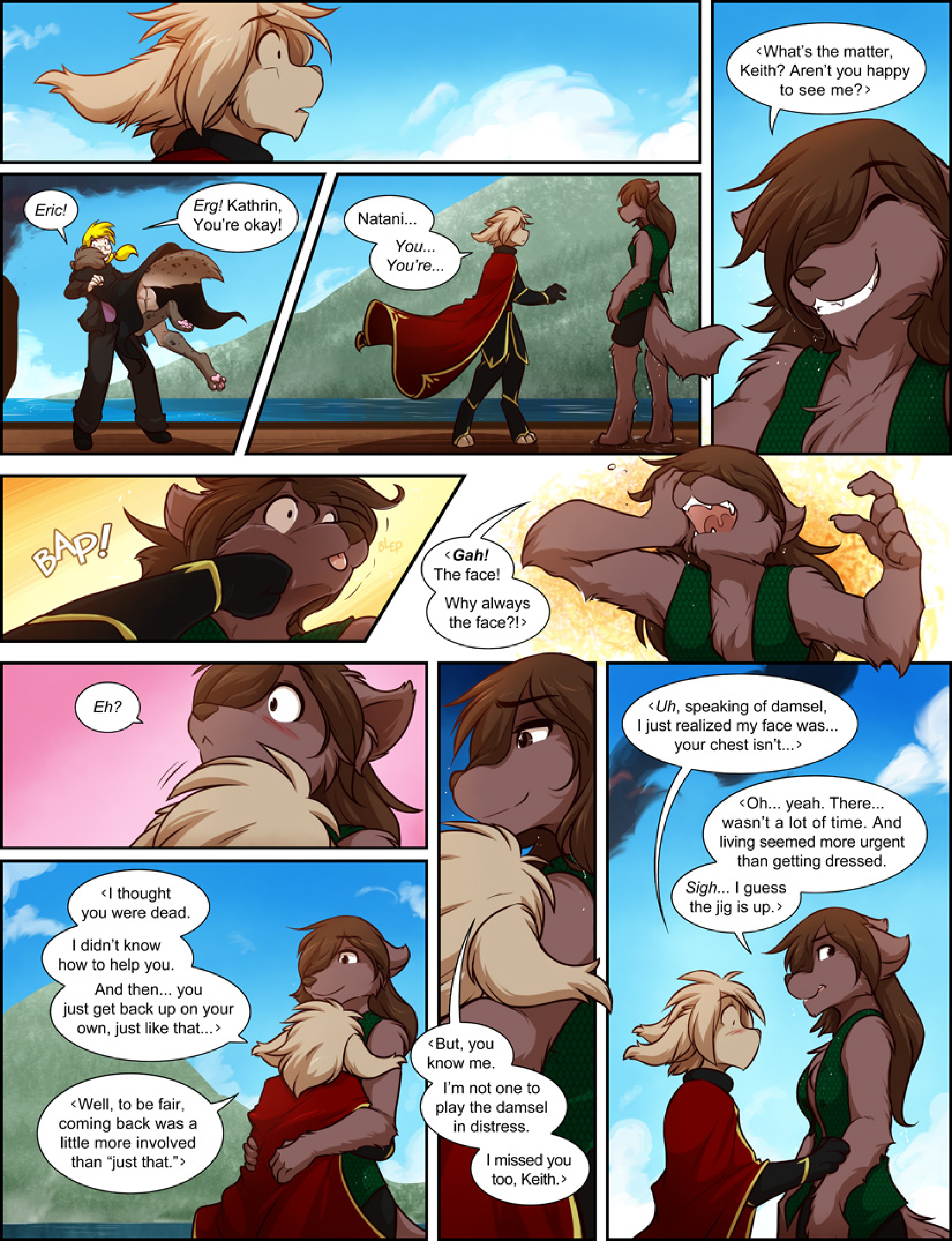

‹Wait!›
Huh?
‹Here, hang on to this! I'll be right back!›
Wha?!
‹Are these the new robes you were making for me?›
‹Well, yes, I finished them and your smallclothes while you were out.
But this is no time to be dressing!›
‹I'm not going to leave them behind!
You said this stuff was fireproof, right?›
‹Natani! Where are you going?!
The stairs are this way!›
SLAM!
‹Cough!›
‹Cough!›
‹Come on, where is...?›
Ah-hah!
‹Keith would never forgive himself if he lost this.
And I think we can both agree, he's been through enough.›

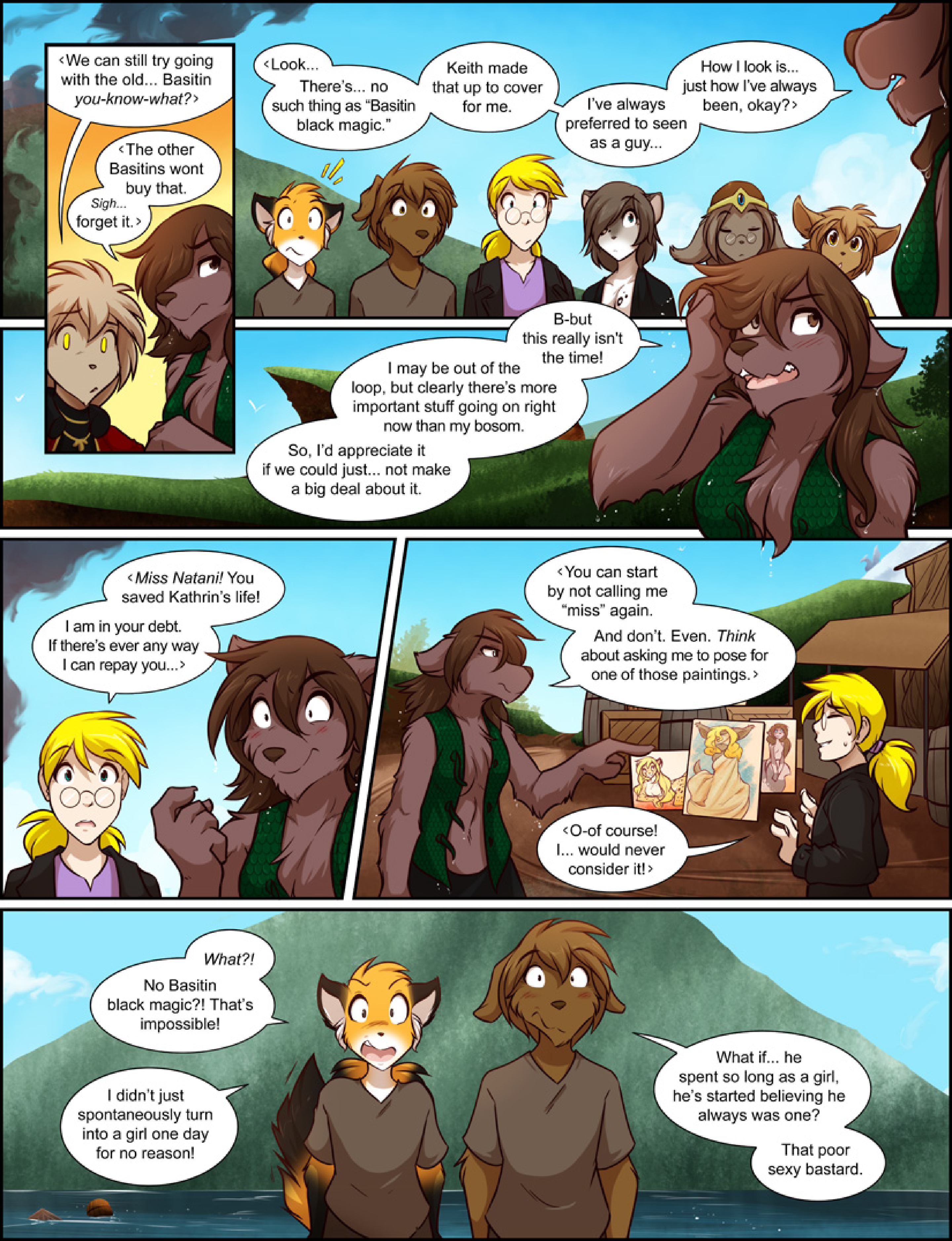

Uh... oh...
CREEEEEK
<Look out!>
CRASH!
<Natani, you... saved me.>
<Don't thank me yet.
Looks like you were right - the ship's going down.>
<Come on, let's go!>
<But... that was the way to the stairs!
How do we get out now?!>
CRIIISSSHH!
<We'll be fine.
Just hang on to me, okay?>
<Oh. Right, of course.
This is... probably a bad time to mention I'm not a very strong swimmer.>
<O-okay...>

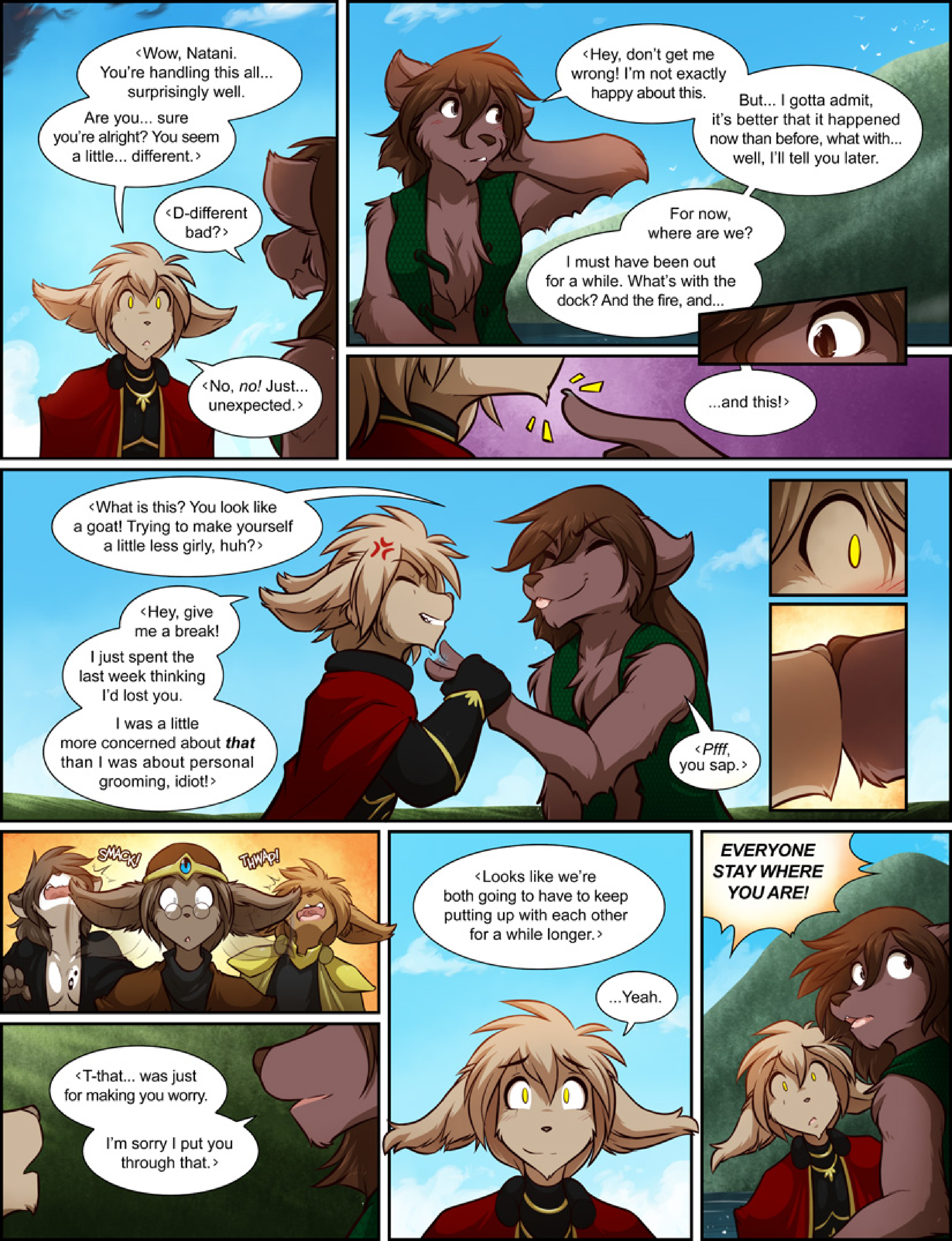

The fire's already spread to the ships!
Hurry!
-Hack!- ***-Cough!-***
Mike, Evals!
There you two are! What happened?!
Ah, I see Eric's fine. *Great.*
Master! I don't know, it happened so fast.
We tried to save what we could, but there was barely time to get out!
Wha-?
I don't care about the damn paintings!
Where's Kathrin?!
Kat?
I... I thought she was taking the wolf ashore with the Basitins to find help?
Natani!
Speaking of Basitins...


They're still on the ship!
We've got to get them out!
Keith, *no!*
Get... *off me!*
The docks are already falling apart!
You won't make it!
***No!* No, I can still get to them!**
It's *right there! Let me go!*
Please!
I'm so close! I can save her! I can save—!
SHFWIPH—
FWOOMPH!


Natani...
I... I couldn't save him...
THUD!
I couldn't stop it from happening again.
Just like Alaric... and Laura.
No matter how hard I try to stop it, everyone I get close to ends up the same way...
Natani... I never told him—
<Wow, glad no one else was on that thing.
Urgh... I think I underestimated just how hard swimming for two would be... especially given the circumstances. *Haa...*
You okay there, Kat?>
<I think I swallowed a fish...>
<*Hah,* lucky. I'm starving.>
N... Natani...?
<Oh, hey Keith. *Huff...*
Sorry to keep you waiting. What did I miss?>
Keith? Where?


Eric!
Erg! Kathrin, You're okay!
Natani...
You... You're...
<What's the matter, Keith? Aren't you happy to see me?>
BAP!
BLEP
<***Gah!*** The face!
Why always the face?!>
Eh?
<I thought you were dead.
I didn't know how to help you.
And then... you just get back up on your own, just like that...>
<Well, to be fair, coming back was a little more involved than "just that.">
<But, you know me.
I'm not one to play the damsel in distress.
I missed you too, Keith.>
<*Uh*, speaking of damsel, I just realized my face was... your chest isn't...>
<Oh... yeah. There... wasn't a lot of time. And living seemed more urgent than getting dressed.
Sigh... I guess the jig is up.>


<We can still try going with the old... Basitin *you-know-what?*>
<The other Basitins wont buy that.
Sigh... forget it.>
<Look... There's... no such thing as "Basitin black magic."
Keith made that up to cover for me.
I've always preferred to seen as a guy...
How I look is... just how I've always been, okay?>
B-but this really isn't the time!
I may be out of the loop, but clearly there's more important stuff going on right now than my bosom.
So, I'd appreciate it if we could just... not make a big deal about it.
<*Miss Natani!* You saved Kathrin's life!
I am in your debt. If there's ever any way I can repay you...>
<You can start by not calling me "miss" again.
And don't. Even. *Think* about asking me to pose for one of those paintings.>
<O-of course! I... would never consider it!>
What?!
No Basitin black magic?! That's impossible!
I didn't just spontaneously turn into a girl one day for no reason!
What if... he spent so long as a girl, he's started believing he always was one?
That poor sexy bastard.


‹Wow, Natani. You're handling this all... surprisingly well.
Are you... sure you're alright? You seem a little... different.›
‹D-different bad?›
‹No, *no!* Just... unexpected.›
‹Hey, don't get me wrong! I'm not exactly happy about this.
But... I gotta admit, it's better that it happened now than before, what with... well, I'll tell you later.
For now, where are we?
I must have been out for a while. What's with the dock? And the fire, and...
...and this!›
‹What is this? You look like a goat! Trying to make yourself a little less girly, huh?›
‹Hey, give me a break!
I just spent the last week thinking I'd lost you.
I was a little more concerned about ***that*** than I was about personal grooming, idiot!›
‹*Pfff*, you sap.›
SMACK!
THWAP!
‹T-that... was just for making you worry.
I'm sorry I put you through that.›
‹Looks like we're both going to have to keep putting up with each other for a while longer.›
...Yeah.
EVERYONE STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

TwoKinds
13th Anniversary

VOLUME 3 PREORDERS NOW OPEN!

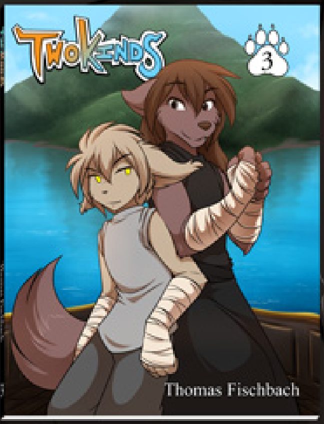
SHIPPING DECEMBER 2016

Yes, finally, after four years, the new book is ready! And you'll be glad to know Keenspot will be handling distribution this time, so I can't bumble it up. ;) Without further ado...

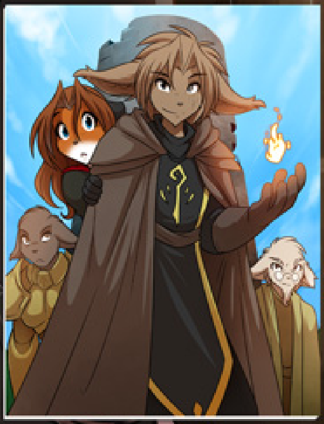
Celebrate the Twokinds 13th anniversary by revisiting the past with Twokinds Vol 3! Featuring the first half of the Basitin Isles saga (with part two coming next year!) This volume includes 160 full-color pages, cleaned-up art, new chapter titles, and more!

Basically, it's the comic, but much more book-like than usual.

So if comics that are also books are your thing, or you just want to help support for Twokinds, click here!



Twokinds Vol 3 Front Cover



Back Cover

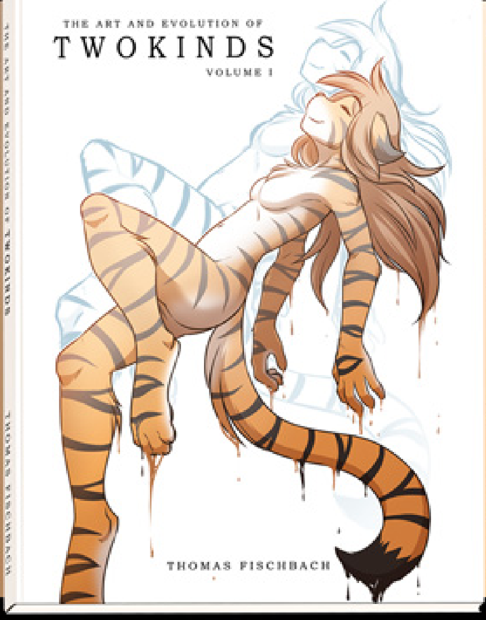
BONUSES

THE ART OF TWOKINDS VOL 1 ►
8.5x10 92-page Hardcover Artbook

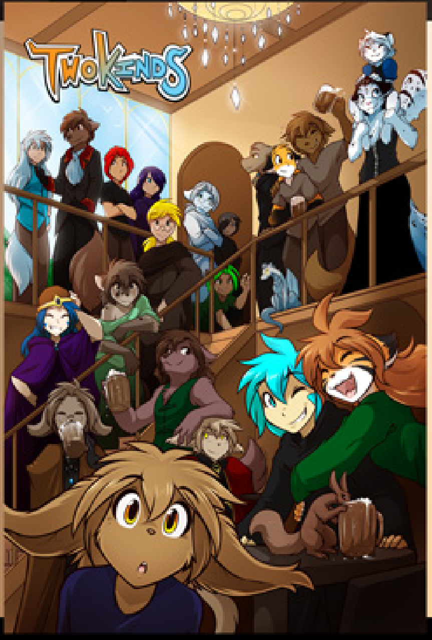
Also available for preorder, my very first artbook! Inside are high-quality prints of all-new artwork along with small exerpts about the thought process behind story and characters.

+ ANNIVERSARY CAST POSTER

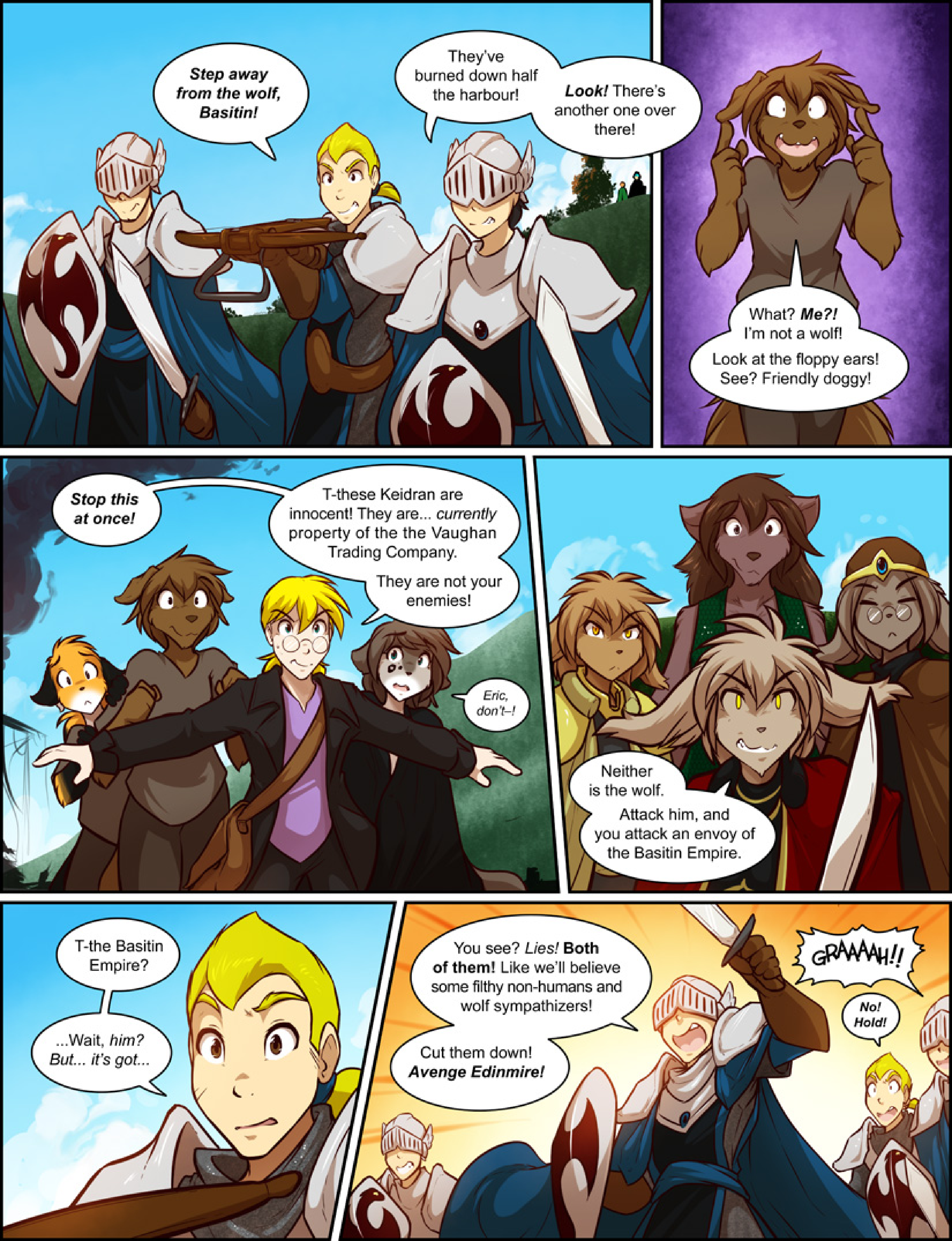
Included FREE to those who preorder any of the book bundles.

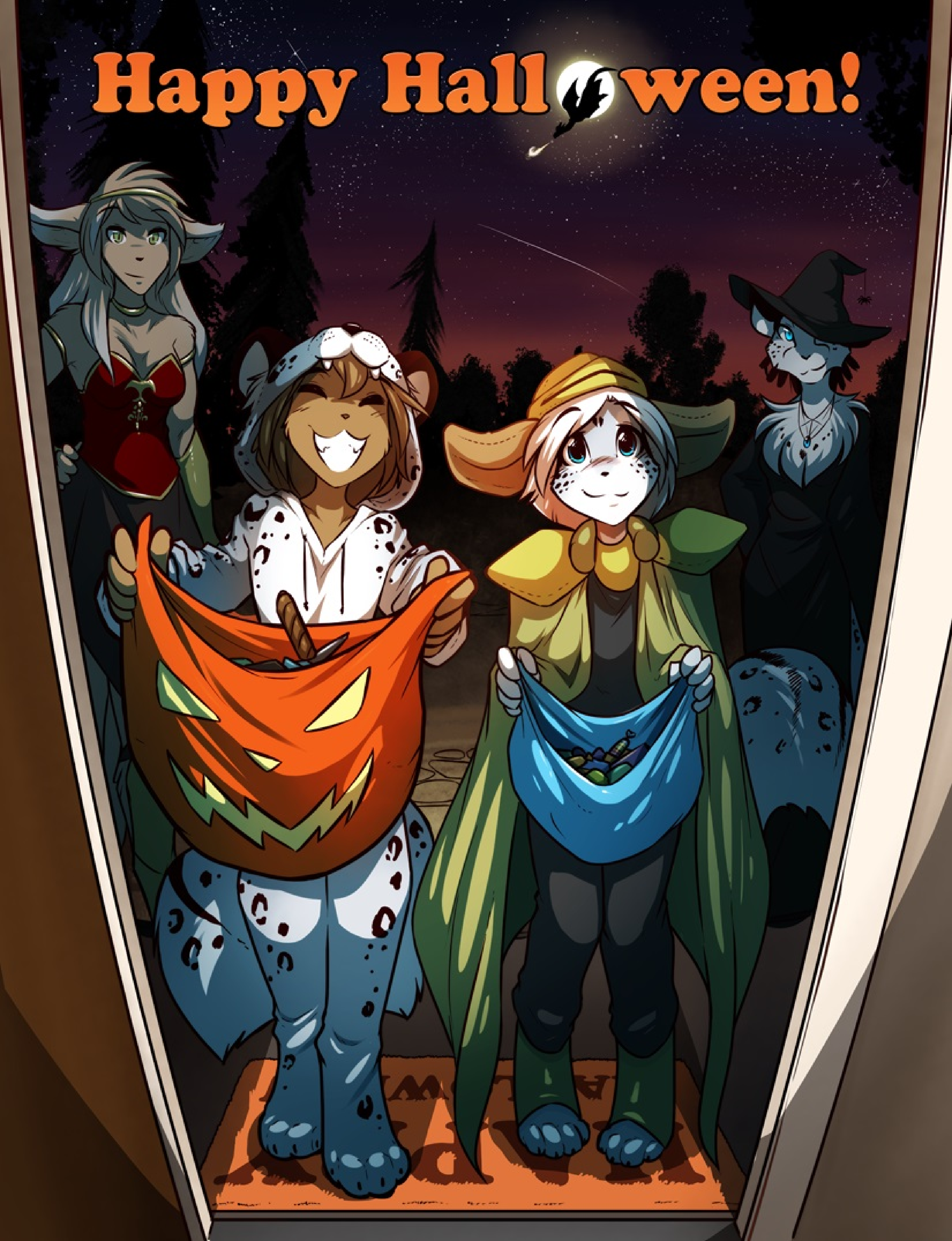


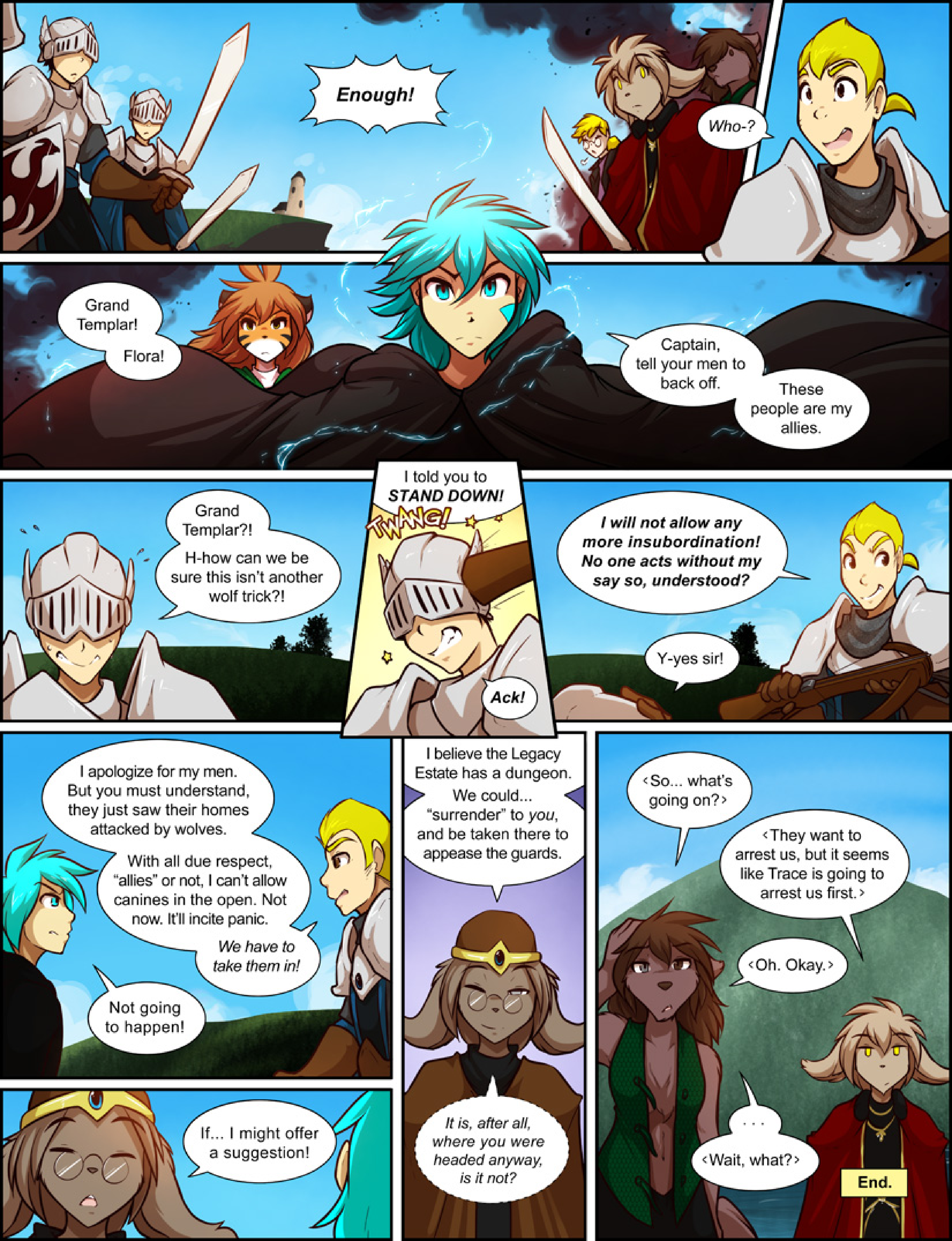
The Art of Twokinds Vol 1

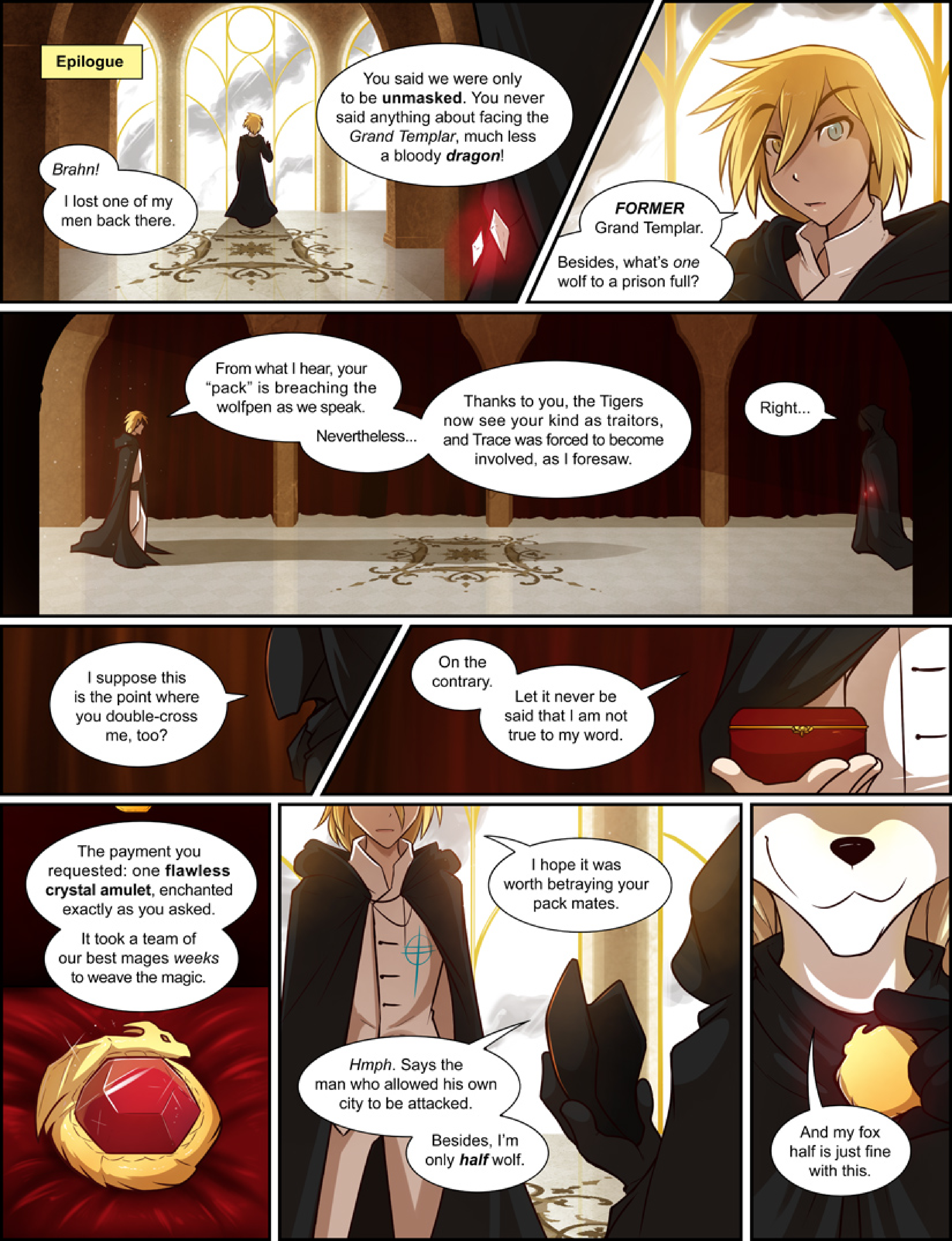


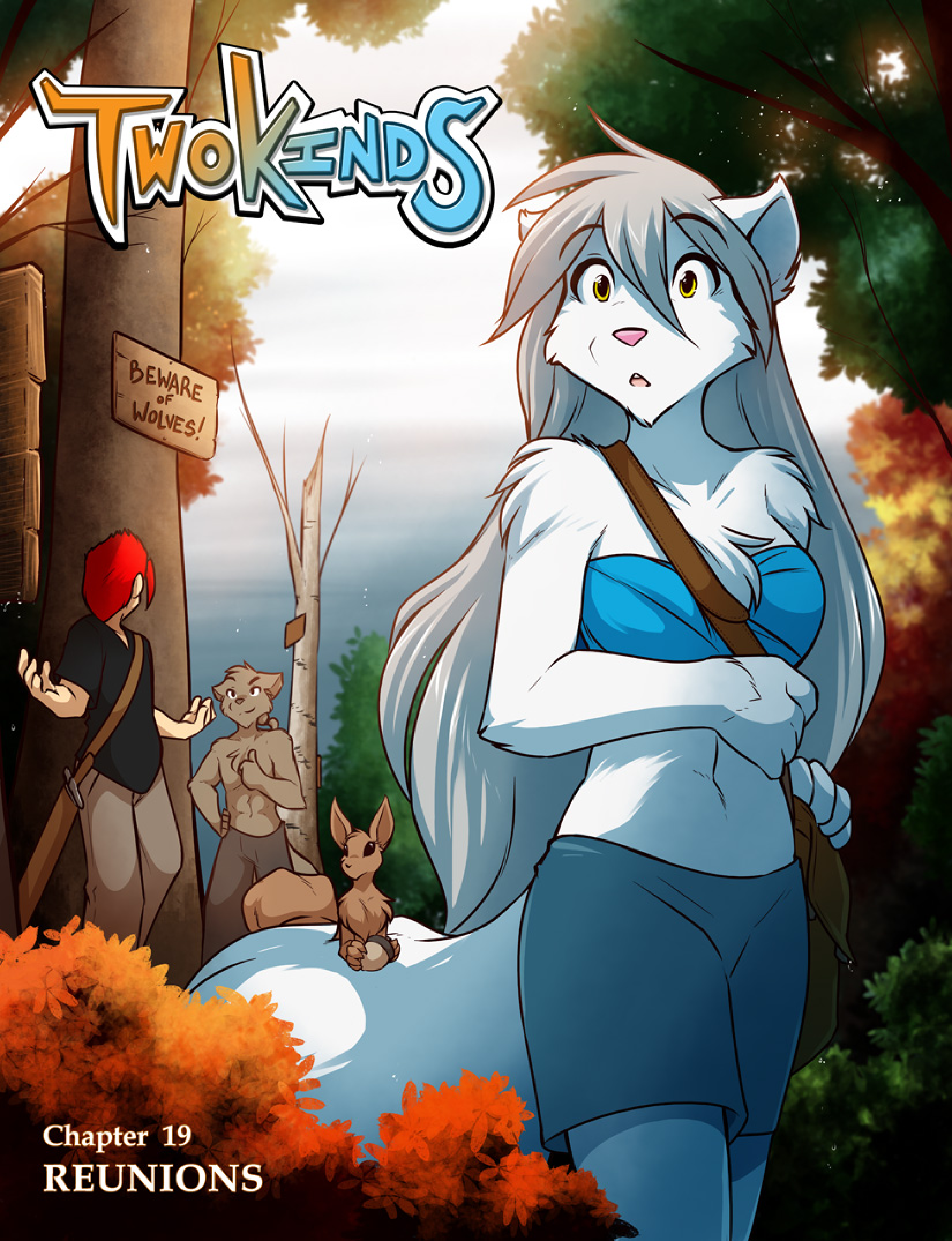
11x17 Cast Poster


Step away from the wolf, Basitin!
They've burned down half the harbour!
Look! There's another one over there!
What? ***Me?!*** I'm not a wolf!
Look at the floppy ears! See? Friendly doggy!
Stop this at once!
T-these Keidran are innocent! They are... *currently* property of the the Vaughan Trading Company.
They are not your enemies!
Eric, don't–!
Neither is the wolf.
Attack him, and you attack an envoy of the Basitin Empire.
T-the Basitin Empire?
...Wait, *him?* *But... it's got...*
You see? *Lies!* **Both of them!** Like we'll believe some filthy non-humans and wolf sympathizers!
Cut them down! ***Avenge Edinmire!***
GRAAAAH!!
No! Hold!

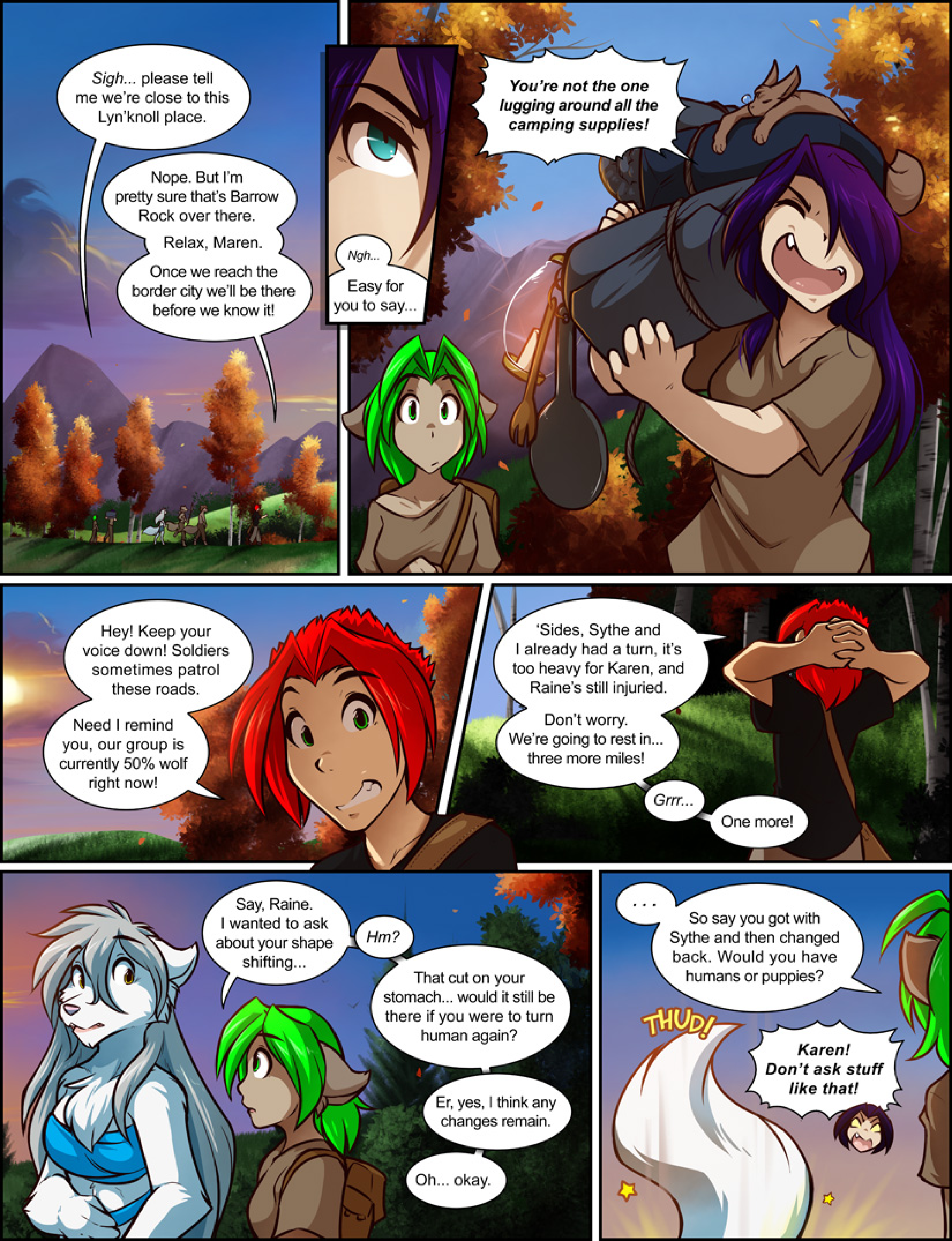

Happy Halloween!

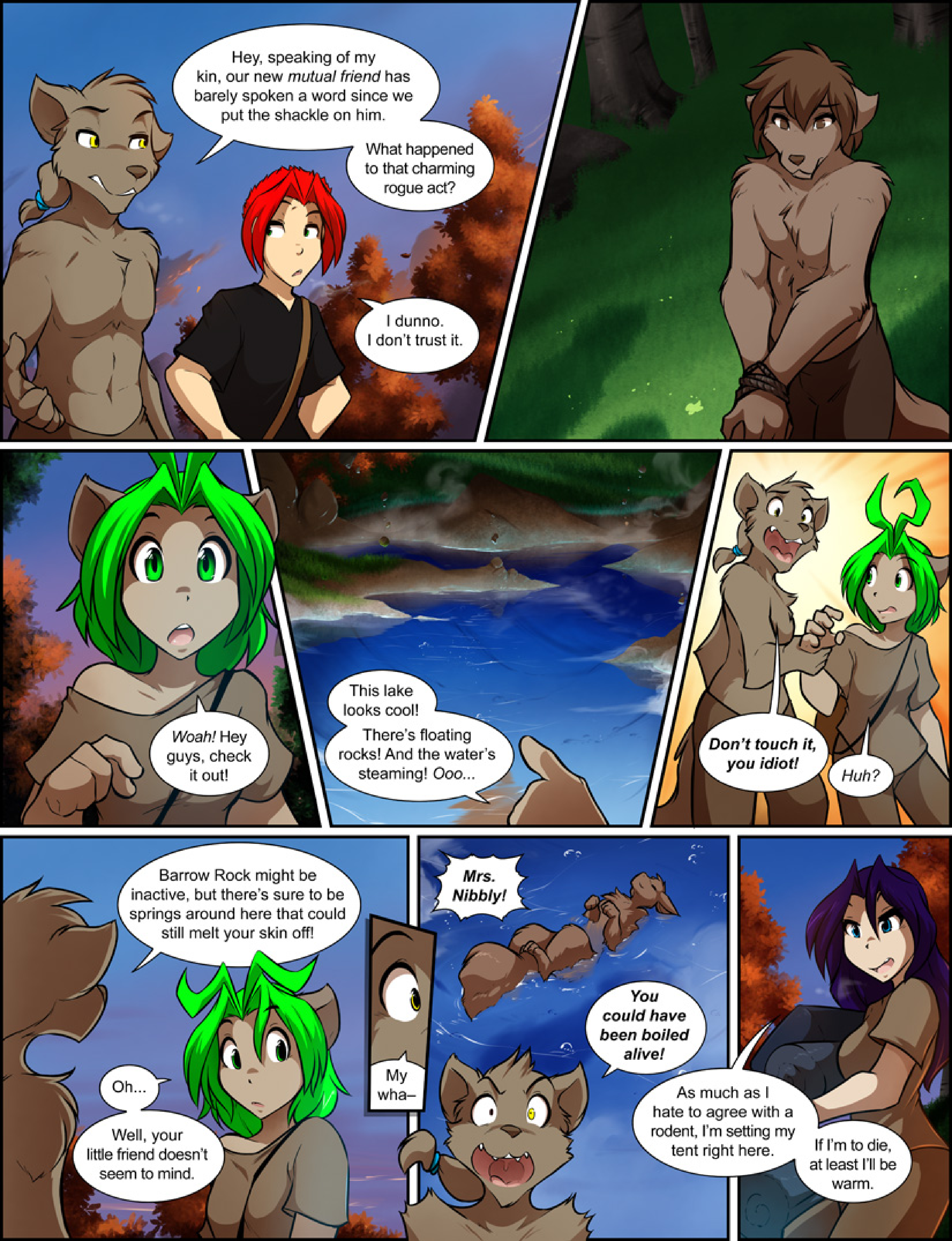

Enough!
Who-?
Grand Templar!
Flora!
Captain, tell your men to back off.
These people are my allies.
Grand Templar?!
H-how can we be sure this isn't another wolf trick?!
I told you to STAND DOWN!
TWANG!
Ack!
I will not allow any more insubordination! No one acts without my say so, understood?
Y-yes sir!
I apologize for my men. But you must understand, they just saw their homes attacked by wolves.
With all due respect, "allies" or not, I can't allow canines in the open. Not now. It'll incite panic.
We have to take them in!
Not going to happen!
If... I might offer a suggestion!
I believe the Legacy Estate has a dungeon.
We could... "surrender" to you, and be taken there to appease the guards.
It is, after all, where you were headed anyway, is it not?
‹So... what's going on?›
‹They want to arrest us, but it seems like Trace is going to arrest us first.›
‹Oh. Okay.›
. . .
‹Wait, what?›
End.

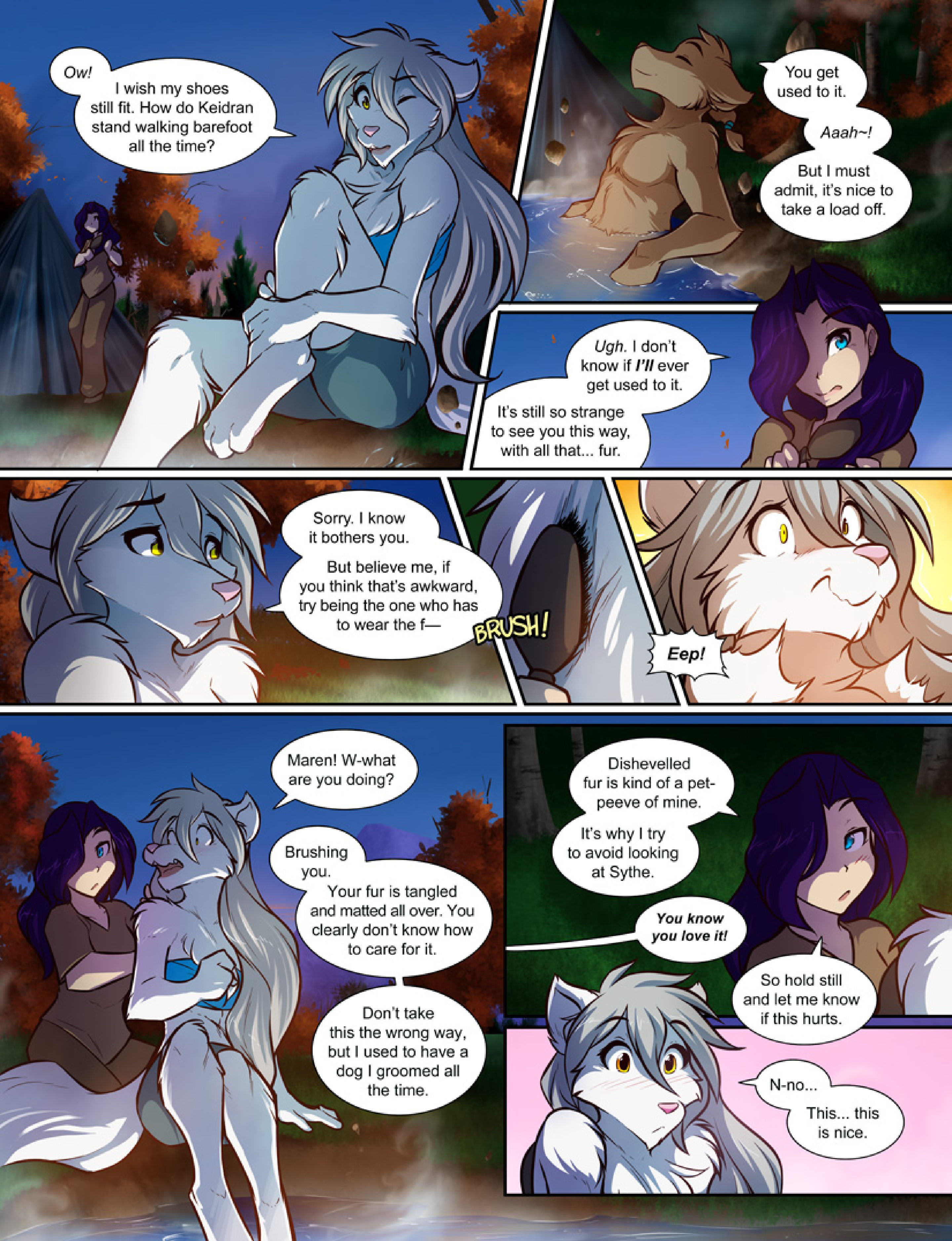

Epilogue
Brahn!
I lost one of my men back there.
You said we were only to be **unmasked**. You never said anything about facing the *Grand Templar*, much less a bloody ***dragon***!
FORMER Grand Templar.
Besides, what's *one* wolf to a prison full?
From what I hear, your "pack" is breaching the wolfpen as we speak.
Nevertheless...
Thanks to you, the Tigers now see your kind as traitors, and Trace was forced to become involved, as I foresaw.
Right...
I suppose this is the point where you double-cross me, too?
On the contrary.
Let it never be said that I am not true to my word.
The payment you requested: one **flawless crystal amulet**, enchanted exactly as you asked.
It took a team of our best mages *weeks* to weave the magic.
I hope it was worth betraying your pack mates.
Hmph. Says the man who allowed his own city to be attacked.
Besides, I'm only ***half*** wolf.
And my fox half is just fine with this.

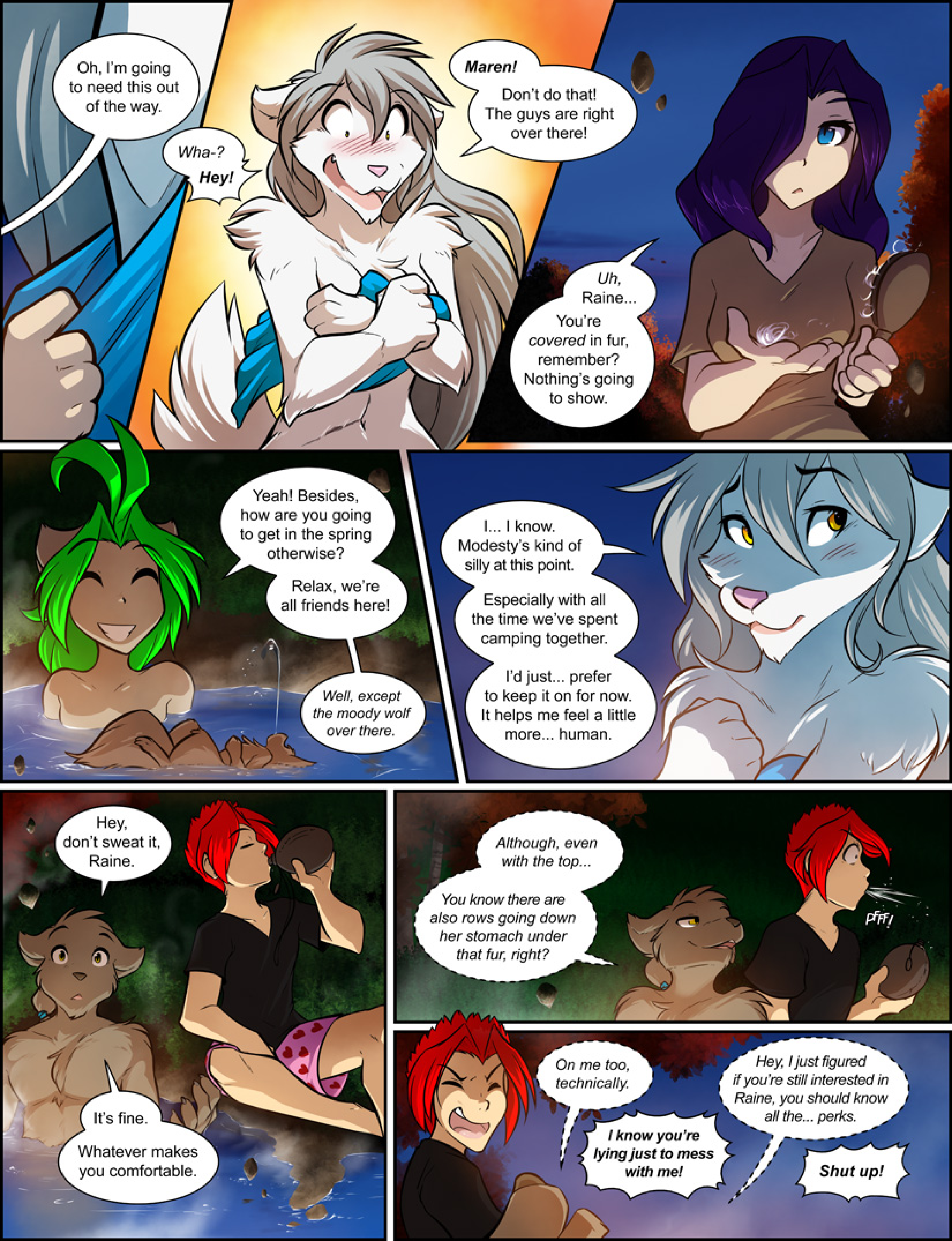

TwoKinds
BEWARE of WOLVES!

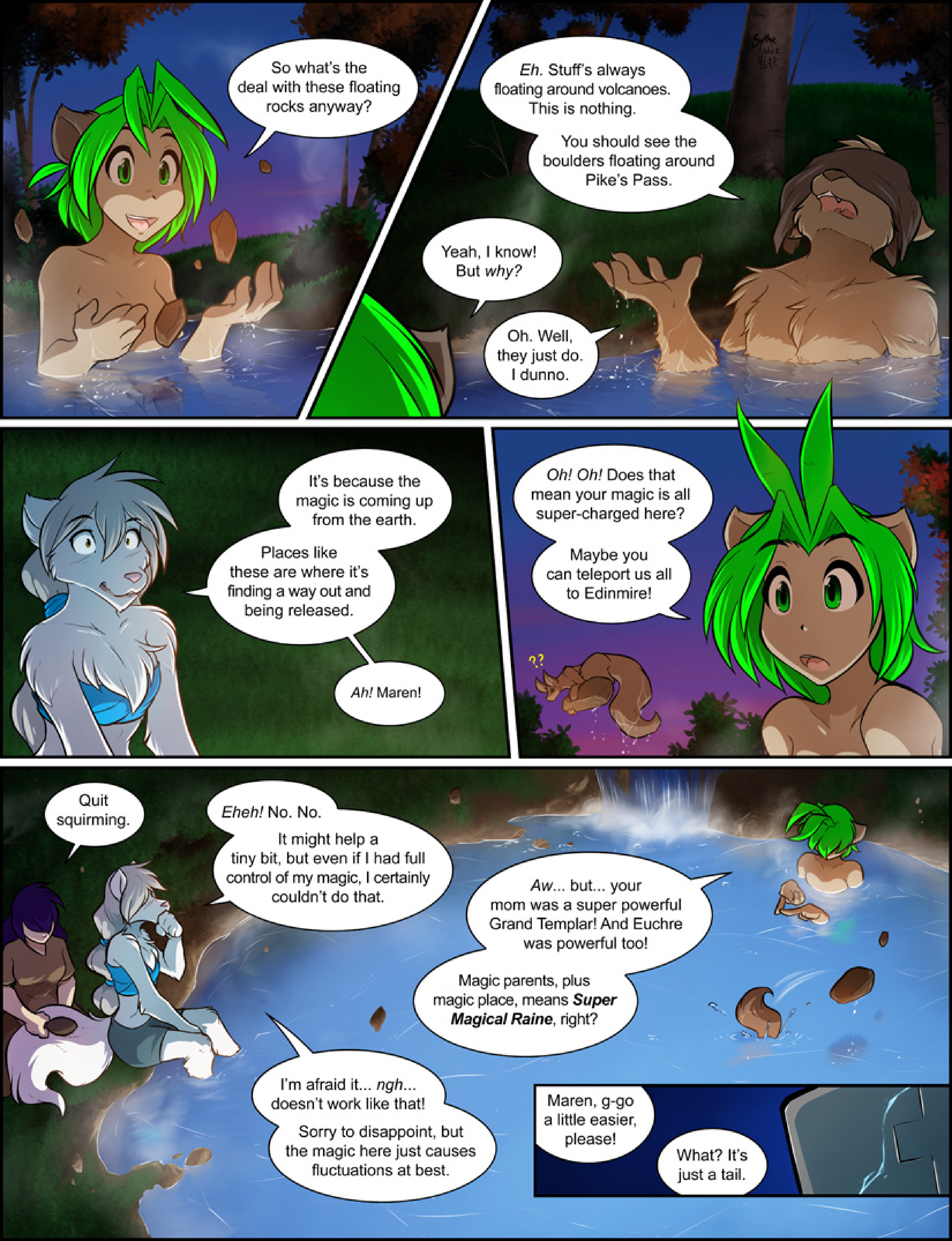
Chapter 19
REUNIONS

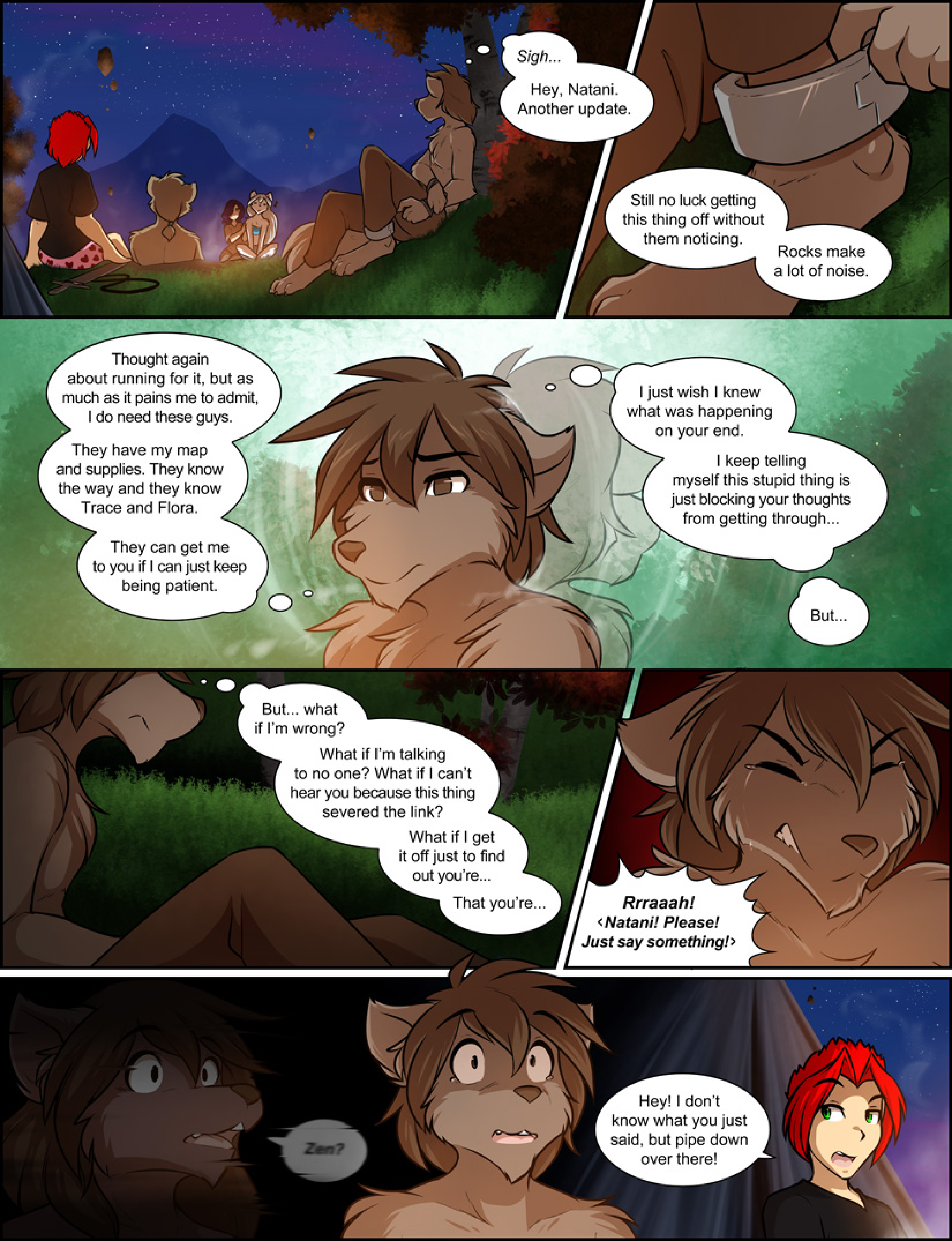

Sigh... please tell me we're close to this Lyn'knoll place.
Nope. But I'm pretty sure that's Barrow Rock over there.
Relax, Maren.
Once we reach the border city we'll be there before we know it!
Ngh...
Easy for you to say...
You're not the one lugging around all the camping supplies!
Hey! Keep your voice down! Soldiers sometimes patrol these roads.
Need I remind you, our group is currently 50% wolf right now!
'Sides, Sythe and I already had a turn, it's too heavy for Karen, and Raine's still injuried.
Don't worry. We're going to rest in... three more miles!
Grrr...
One more!
Say, Raine. I wanted to ask about your shape shifting...
Hm?
That cut on your stomach... would it still be there if you were to turn human again?
Er, yes, I think any changes remain.
Oh... okay.
. . .
So say you got with Sythe and then changed back. Would you have humans or puppies?
THUD!
Karen! Don't ask stuff like that!

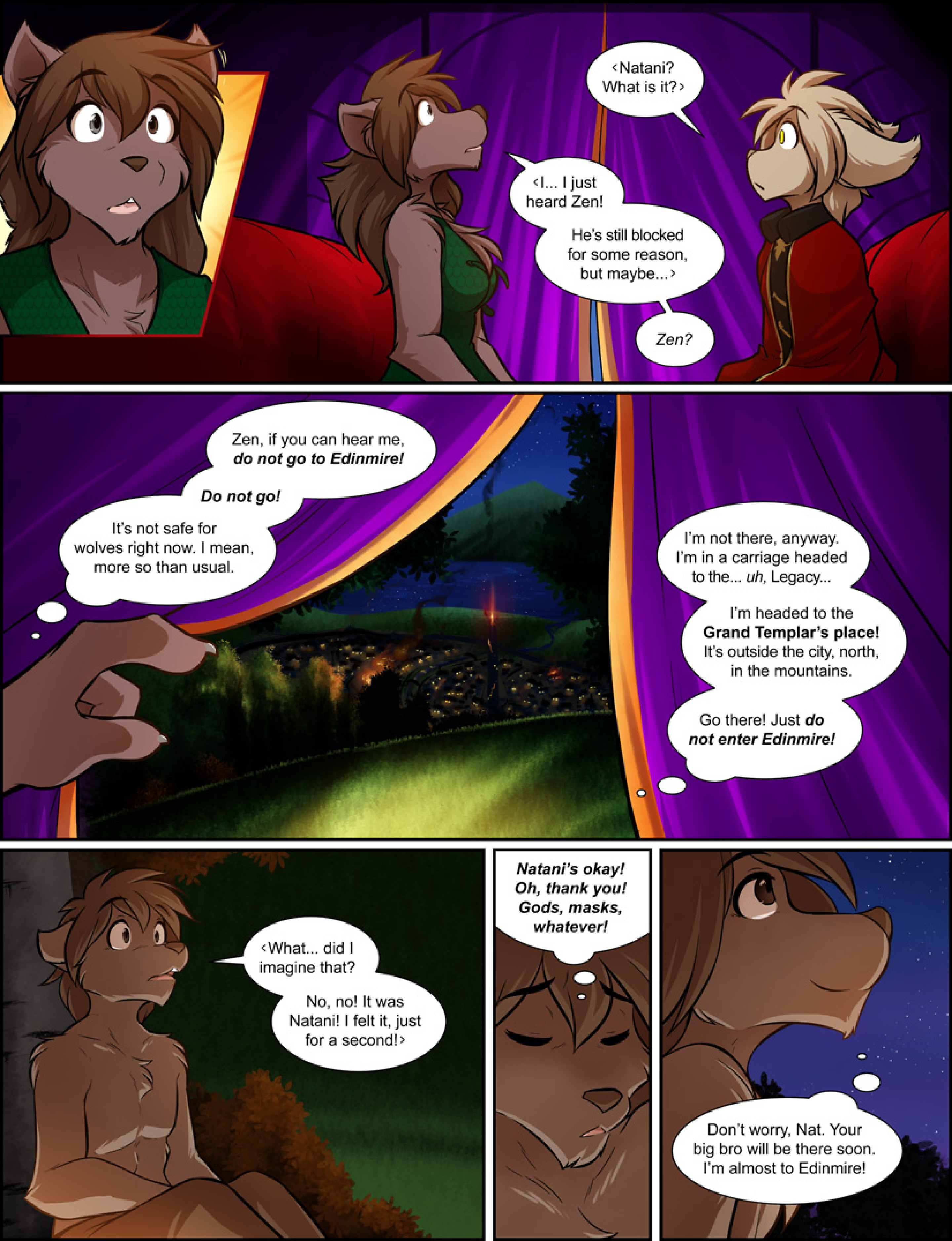

Hey, speaking of my kin, our new *mutual friend* has barely spoken a word since we put the shackle on him.
What happened to that charming rogue act?
I dunno. I don't trust it.
Woah! Hey guys, check it out!
This lake looks cool!
There's floating rocks! And the water's steaming! *Ooo...*
Don't touch it, you idiot!
Huh?
Barrow Rock might be inactive, but there's sure to be springs around here that could still melt your skin off!
Oh...
Well, your little friend doesn't seem to mind.
My wha–
Mrs. Nibbly!
You could have been boiled alive!
As much as I hate to agree with a rodent, I'm setting my tent right here.
If I'm to die, at least I'll be warm.

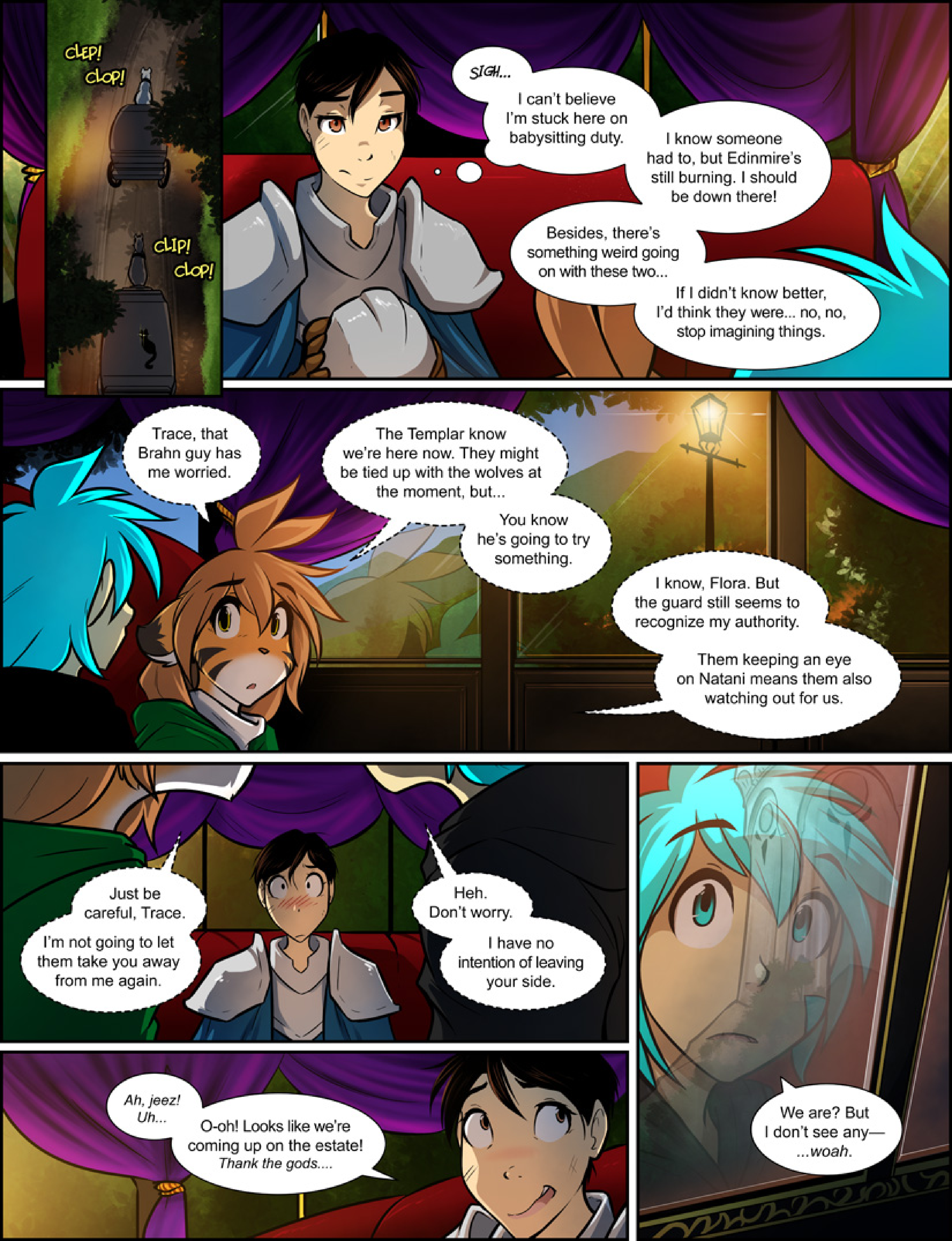

Ow! I wish my shoes still fit. How do Keidran stand walking barefoot all the time?
You get used to it.
Aaah~!
But I must admit, it's nice to take a load off.
Ugh. I don't know if ***I'll*** ever get used to it.
It's still so strange to see you this way, with all that... fur.
Sorry. I know it bothers you.
But believe me, if you think that's awkward, try being the one who has to wear the f—
BRUSH!
Eep!
Maren! W-what are you doing?
Brushing you.
Your fur is tangled and matted all over. You clearly don't know how to care for it.
Don't take this the wrong way, but I used to have a dog I groomed all the time.
Dishevelled fur is kind of a pet-peeve of mine.
It's why I try to avoid looking at Sythe.
You know you love it!
So hold still and let me know if this hurts.
N-no...
This... this is nice.

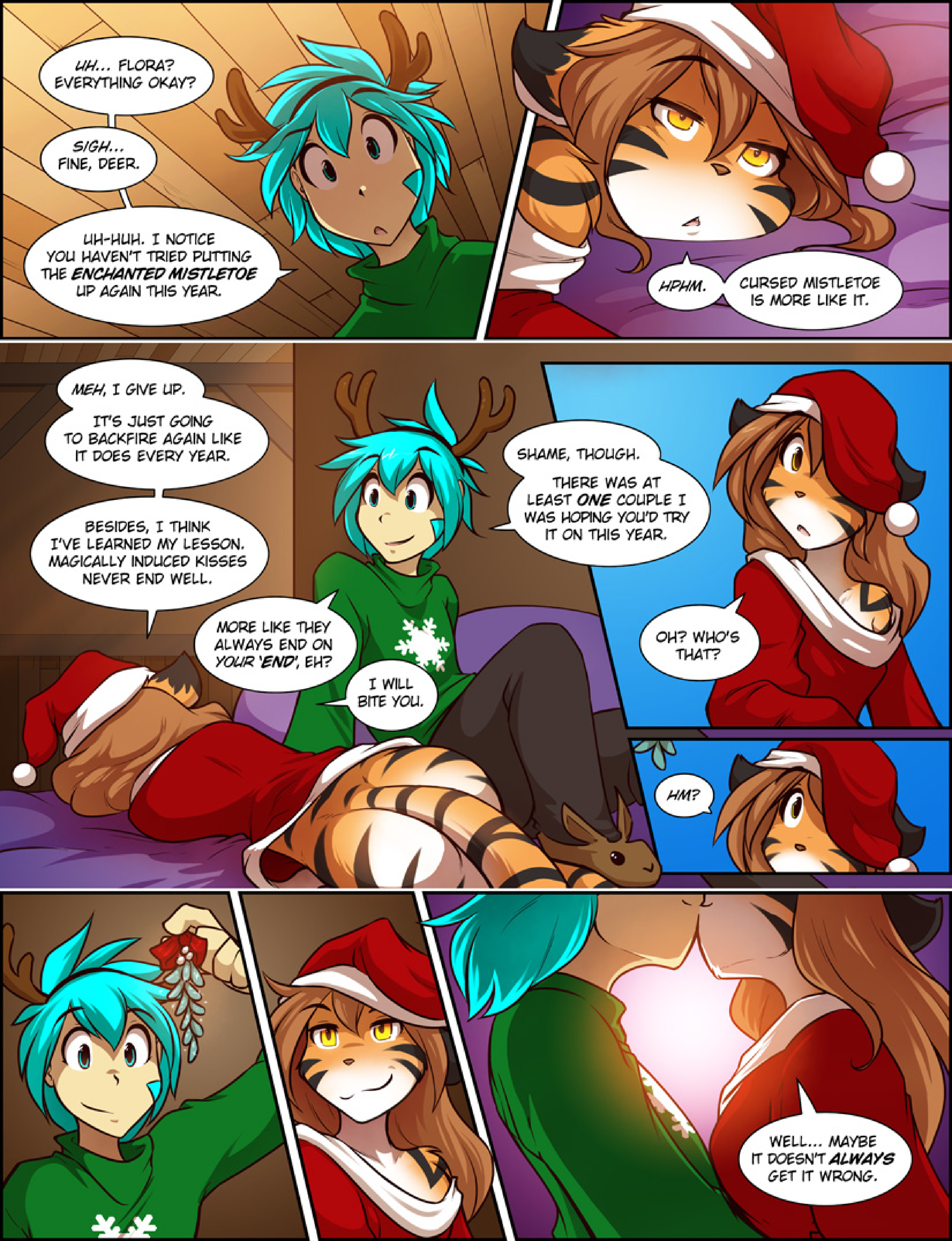

Oh, I'm going to need this out of the way.
Wha-? Hey!
Maren! Don't do that! The guys are right over there!
Uh, Raine... You're *covered* in fur, remember? Nothing's going to show.
Yeah! Besides, how are you going to get in the spring otherwise?
Relax, we're all friends here!
Well, except the moody wolf over there.
I... I know. Modesty's kind of silly at this point.
Especially with all the time we've spent camping together.
I'd just... prefer to keep it on for now. It helps me feel a little more... human.
Hey, don't sweat it, Raine.
It's fine.
Whatever makes you comfortable.
Although, even with the top...
You know there are also rows going down her stomach under that fur, right?
PFFF!
On me too, technically.
I know you're lying just to mess with me!
Hey, I just figured if you're still interested in Raine, you should know all the... perks.
Shut up!

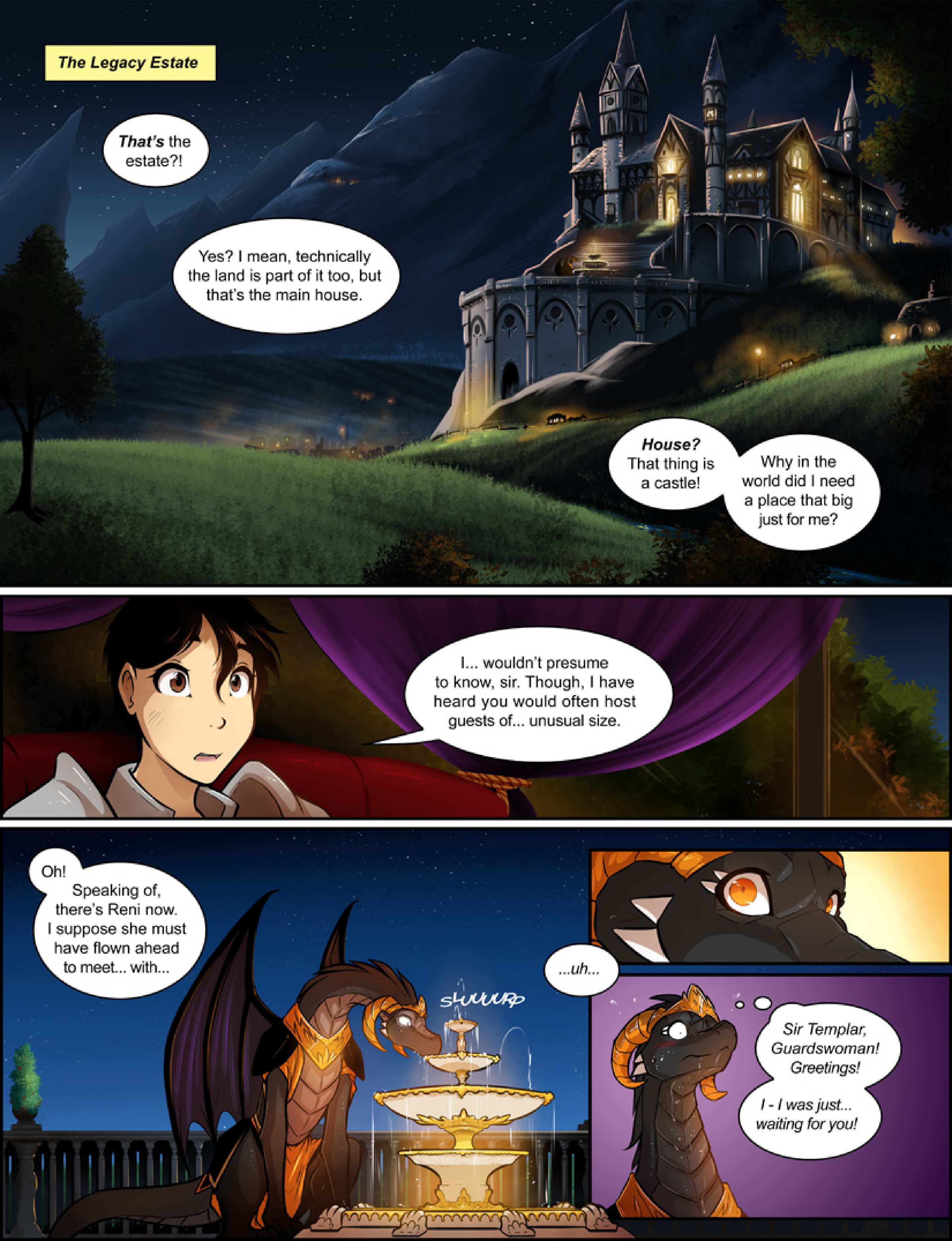

So what's the deal with these floating rocks anyway?
Sythe waz HERE
Eh. Stuff's always floating around volcanoes. This is nothing.
You should see the boulders floating around Pike's Pass.
Yeah, I know! But *why?*
Oh. Well, they just do. I dunno.
It's because the magic is coming up from the earth.
Places like these are where it's finding a way out and being released.
Ah! Maren!
Oh! Oh! Does that mean your magic is all super-charged here?
Maybe you can teleport us all to Edinmire!
??
Quit squirming.
Eheh! No. No.
It might help a tiny bit, but even if I had full control of my magic, I certainly couldn't do that.
Aw... but... your mom was a super powerful Grand Templar! And Euchre was powerful too!
Magic parents, plus magic place, means ***Super Magical Raine***, right?
I'm afraid it... *ngh*... doesn't work like that!
Sorry to disappoint, but the magic here just causes fluctuations at best.
Maren, g-go a little easier, please!
What? It's just a tail.

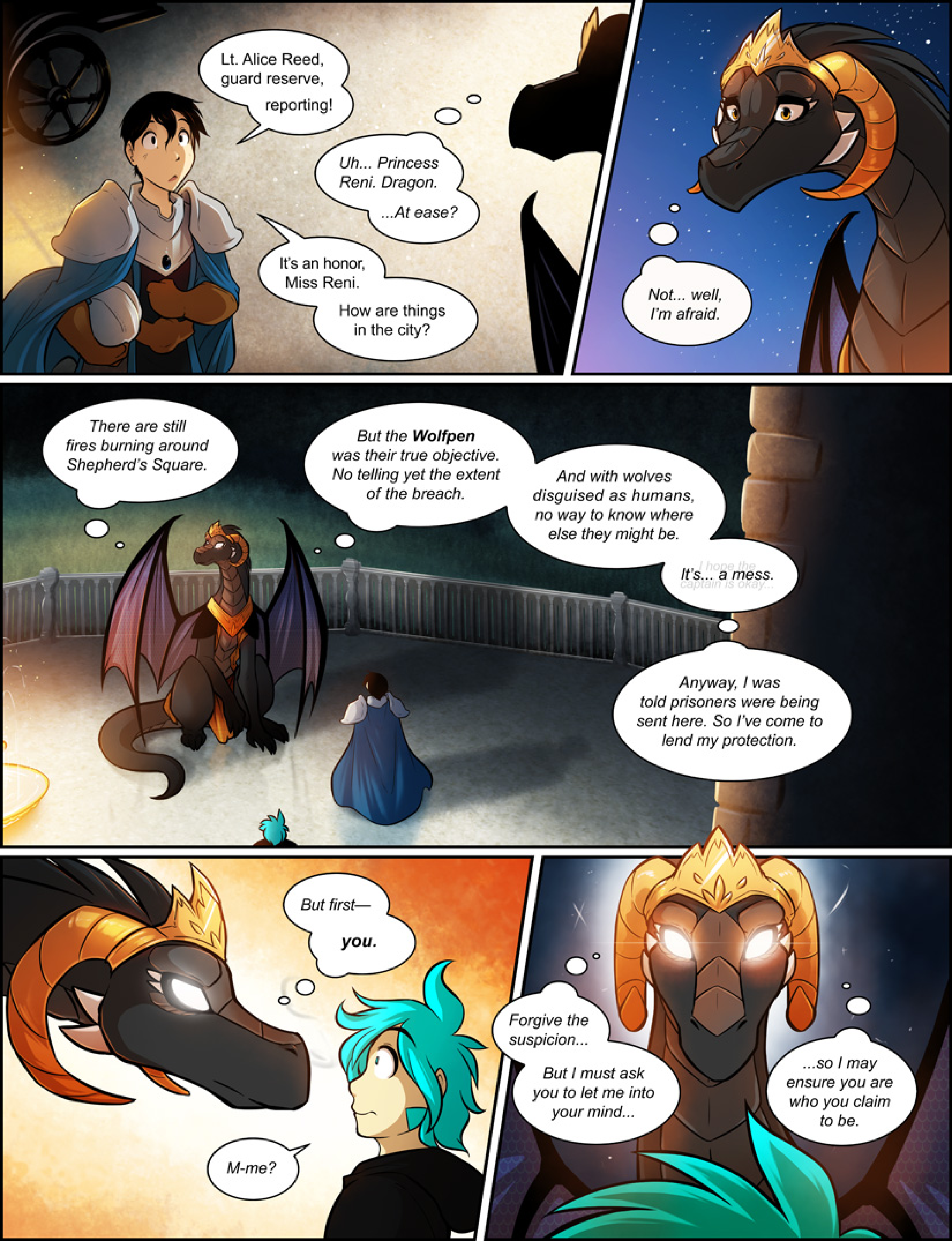

Sigh...
Hey, Natani. Another update.
Still no luck getting this thing off without them noticing.
Rocks make a lot of noise.
Thought again about running for it, but as much as it pains me to admit, I do need these guys.
They have my map and supplies. They know the way and they know Trace and Flora.
They can get me to you if I can just keep being patient.
I just wish I knew what was happening on your end.
I keep telling myself this stupid thing is just blocking your thoughts from getting through...
But...
But... what if I'm wrong?
What if I'm talking to no one? What if I can't hear you because this thing severed the link?
What if I get it off just to find out you're...
That you're...
Rrraaah!
‹Natani! Please! Just say something!›
Zen?
Hey! I don't know what you just said, but pipe down over there!

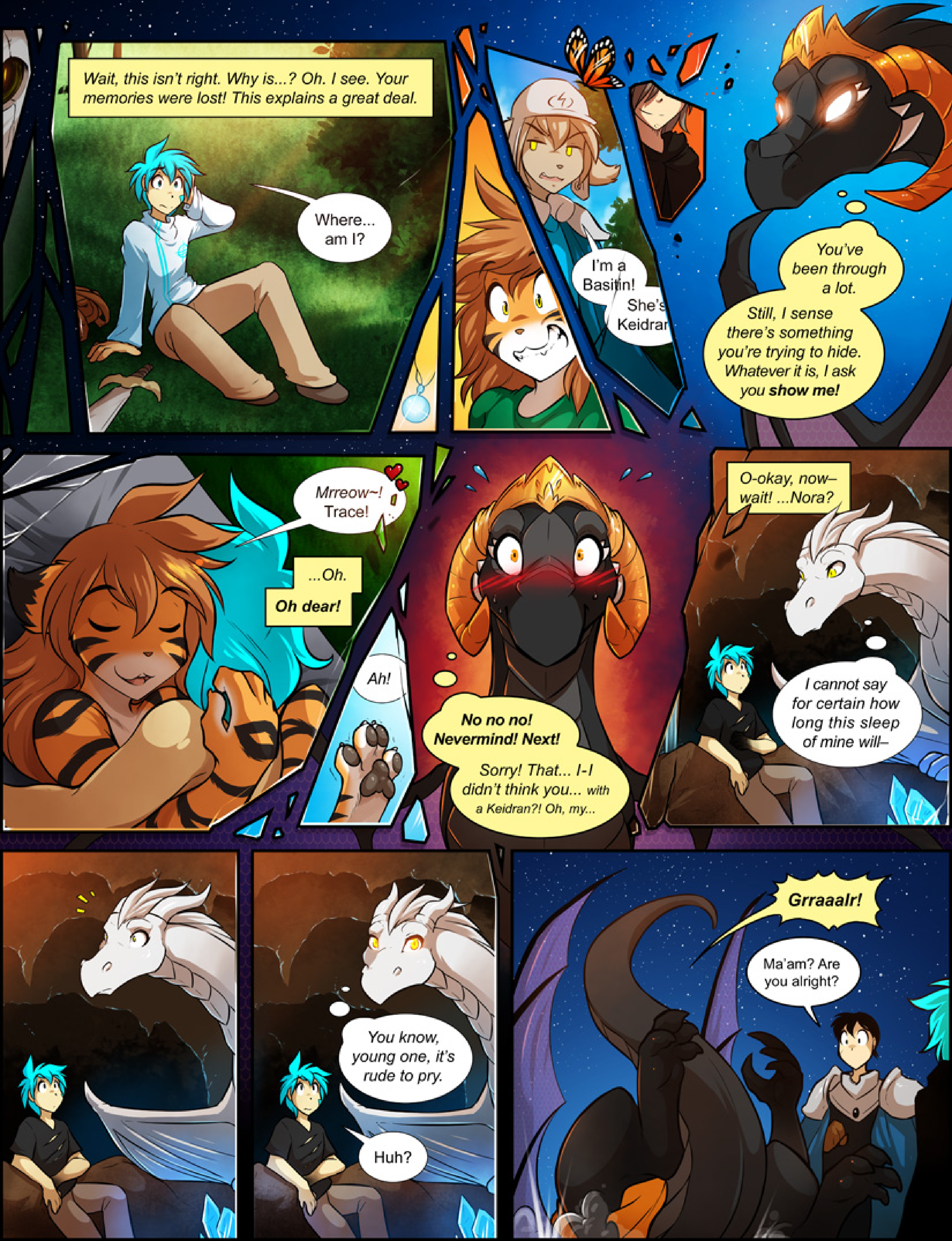

‹Natani? What is it?›
‹I... I just heard Zen!
He's still blocked for some reason, but maybe...›
Zen?
Zen, if you can hear me, ***do not go to Edinmire!***
Do not go!
It's not safe for wolves right now. I mean, more so than usual.
I'm not there, anyway. I'm in a carriage headed to the... *uh,* Legacy...
I'm headed to the **Grand Templar's place!** It's outside the city, north, in the mountains.
Go there! Just ***do not enter Edinmire!***
‹What... did I imagine that?
No, no! It was Natani! I felt it, just for a second!›
Natani's okay! Oh, thank you! Gods, masks, whatever!
Don't worry, Nat. Your big bro will be there soon. I'm almost to Edinmire!

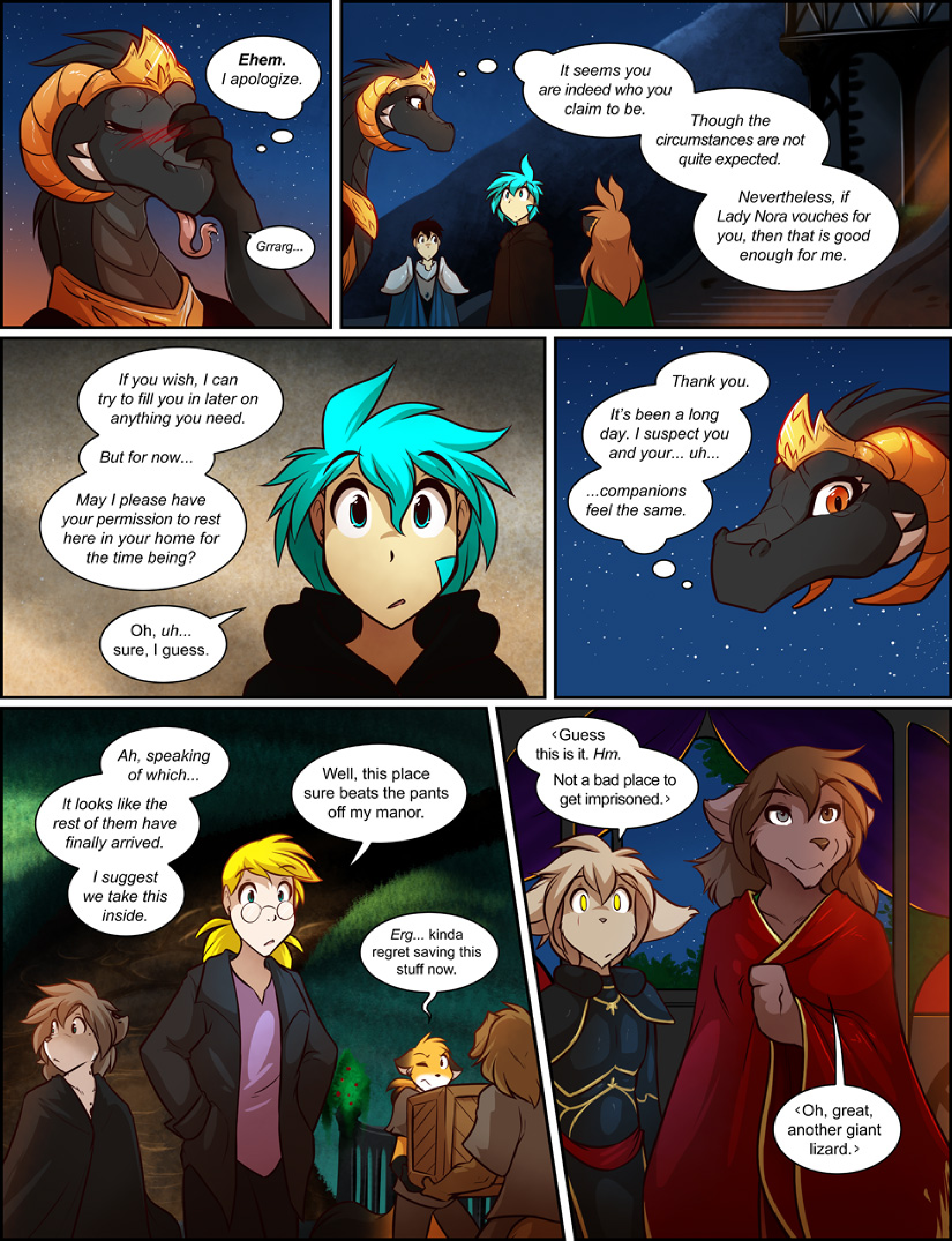

CLEP!
CLOP!
CLIP!
CLOP!
SIGH...
I can't believe I'm stuck here on babysitting duty.
I know someone had to, but Edinmire's still burning. I should be down there!
Besides, there's something weird going on with these two...
If I didn't know better, I'd think they were... no, no, stop imagining things.
Trace, that Brahn guy has me worried.
The Templar know we're here now. They might be tied up with the wolves at the moment, but...
You know he's going to try something.
I know, Flora. But the guard still seems to recognize my authority.
Them keeping an eye on Natani means them also watching out for us.
Just be careful, Trace.
I'm not going to let them take you away from me again.
Heh. Don't worry.
I have no intention of leaving your side.
Ah, jeez! Uh...
O-oh! Looks like we're coming up on the estate! *Thank the gods....*
We are? But I don't see any— ...*woah.*

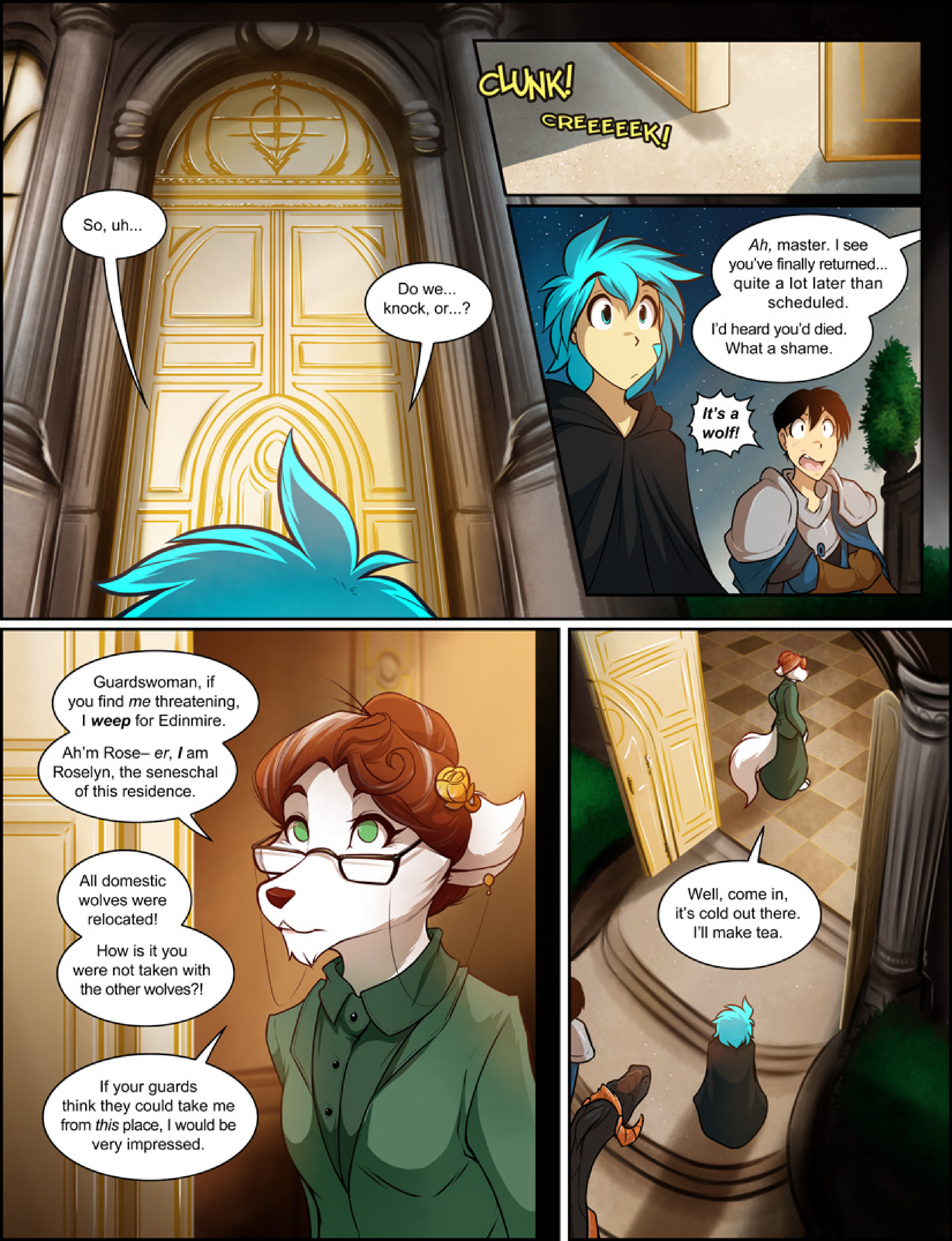

UH... FLORA? EVERYTHING OKAY?
SIGH... FINE, DEER.
UH-HUH. I NOTICE YOU HAVEN'T TRIED PUTTING THE ***ENCHANTED MISTLETOE*** UP AGAIN THIS YEAR.
HPHM.
CURSED MISTLETOE IS MORE LIKE IT.
MEH, I GIVE UP.
IT'S JUST GOING TO BACKFIRE AGAIN LIKE IT DOES EVERY YEAR.
BESIDES, I THINK I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON. MAGICALLY INDUCED KISSES NEVER END WELL.
MORE LIKE THEY ALWAYS END ON *YOUR* ***'END'***, EH?
I WILL BITE YOU.
SHAME, THOUGH.
THERE WAS AT LEAST ***ONE*** COUPLE I WAS HOPING YOU'D TRY IT ON THIS YEAR.
OH? WHO'S THAT?
HM?
WELL... MAYBE IT DOESN'T ***ALWAYS*** GET IT WRONG.

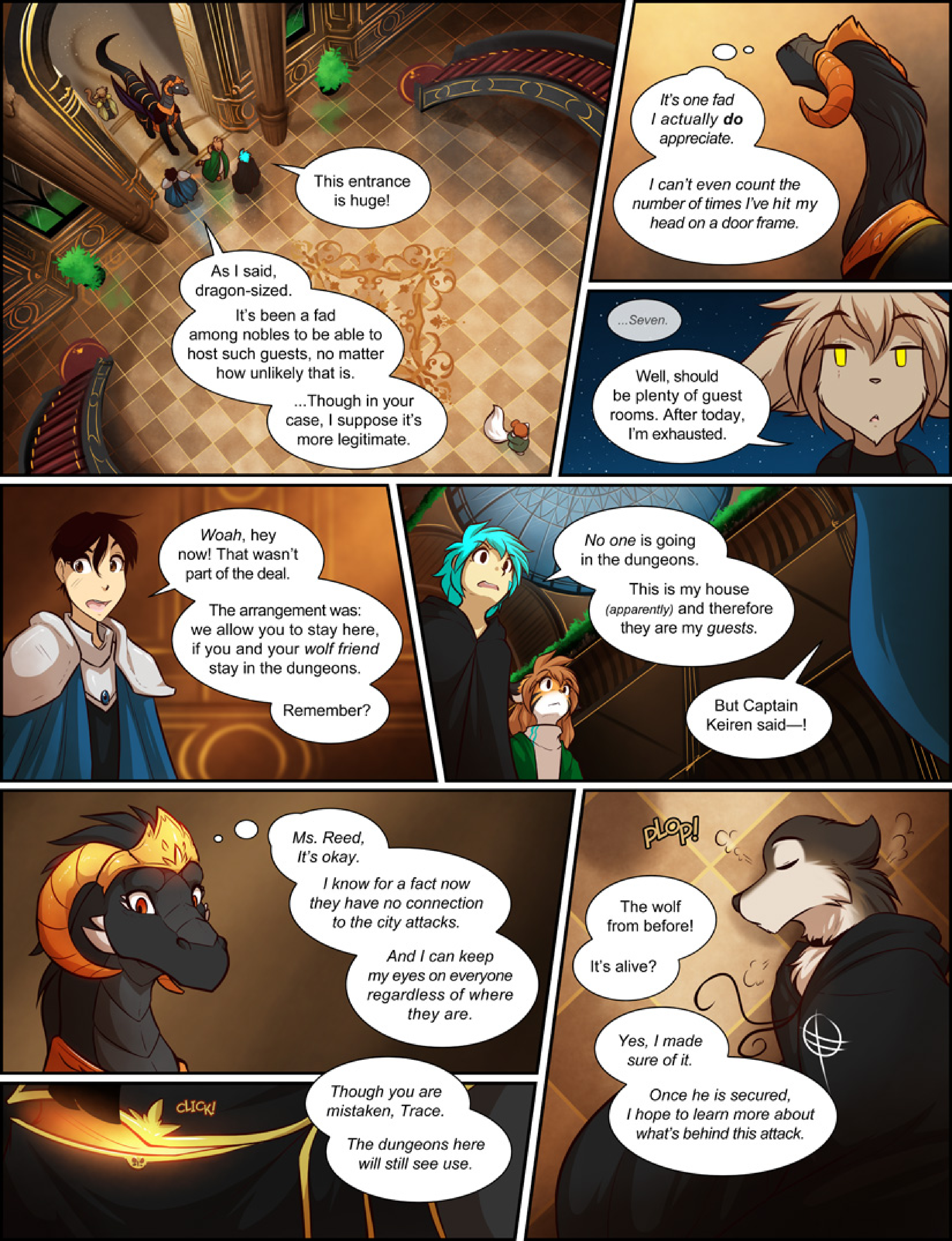

The Legacy Estate
That's the estate?!
Yes? I mean, technically the land is part of it too, but that's the main house.
House? That thing is a castle!
Why in the world did I need a place that big just for me?
I... wouldn't presume to know, sir. Though, I have heard you would often host guests of... unusual size.
Oh! Speaking of, there's Reni now. I suppose she must have flown ahead to meet... with...
SLUUUURP
...uh...
Sir Templar, Guardswoman! Greetings!
I - I was just... waiting for you!

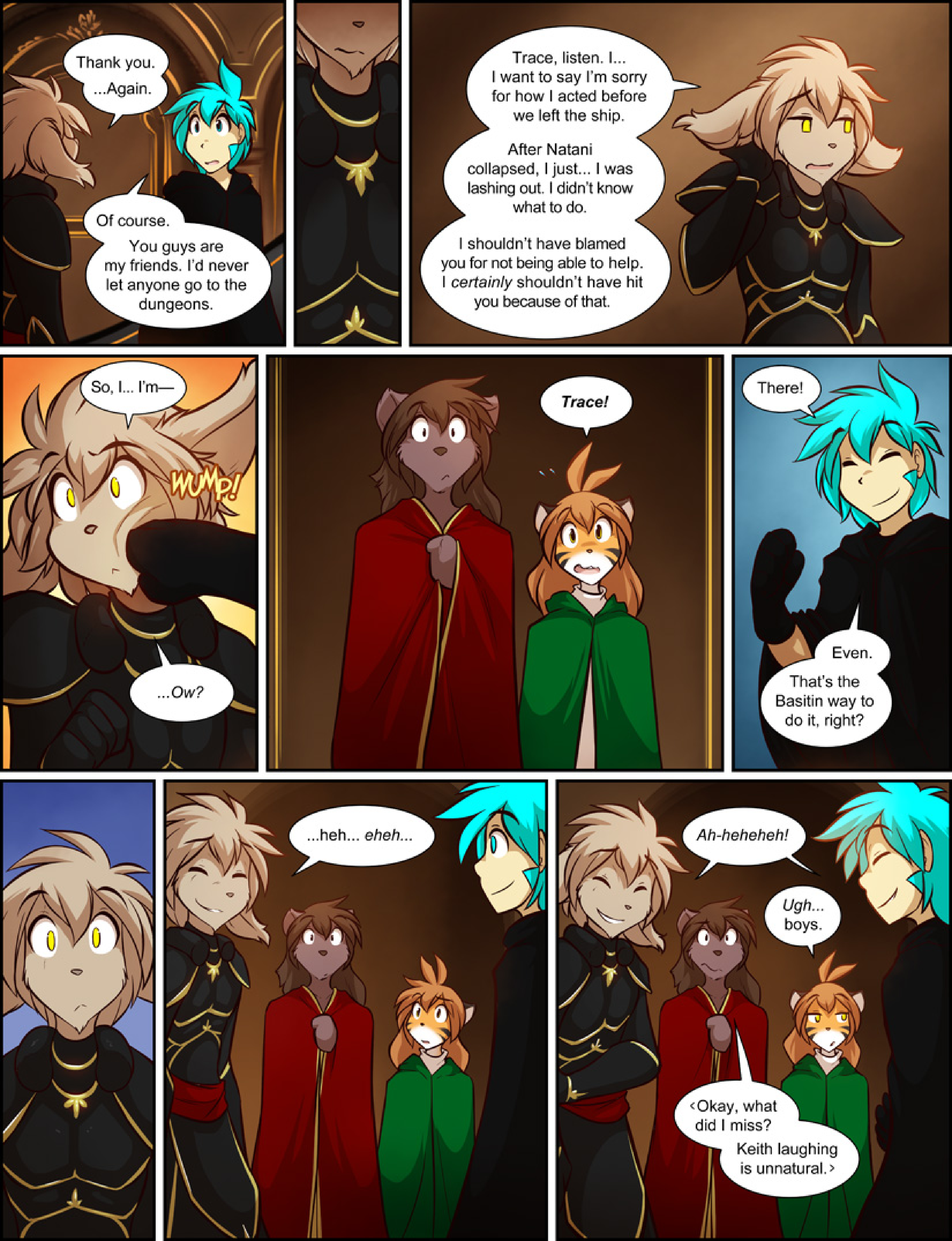

Lt. Alice Reed, guard reserve, reporting!
Uh... Princess Reni. Dragon. ...At ease?
It's an honor, Miss Reni. How are things in the city?
Not... well, I'm afraid.
There are still fires burning around Shepherd's Square.
But the **Wolfpen** was their true objective. No telling yet the extent of the breach.
And with wolves disguised as humans, no way to know where else they might be.
It's... a mess.
I hope the captain is okay...
Anyway, I was told prisoners were being sent here. So I've come to lend my protection.
But first—
you.
M-me?
Forgive the suspicion...
But I must ask you to let me into your mind...
...so I may ensure you are who you claim to be.

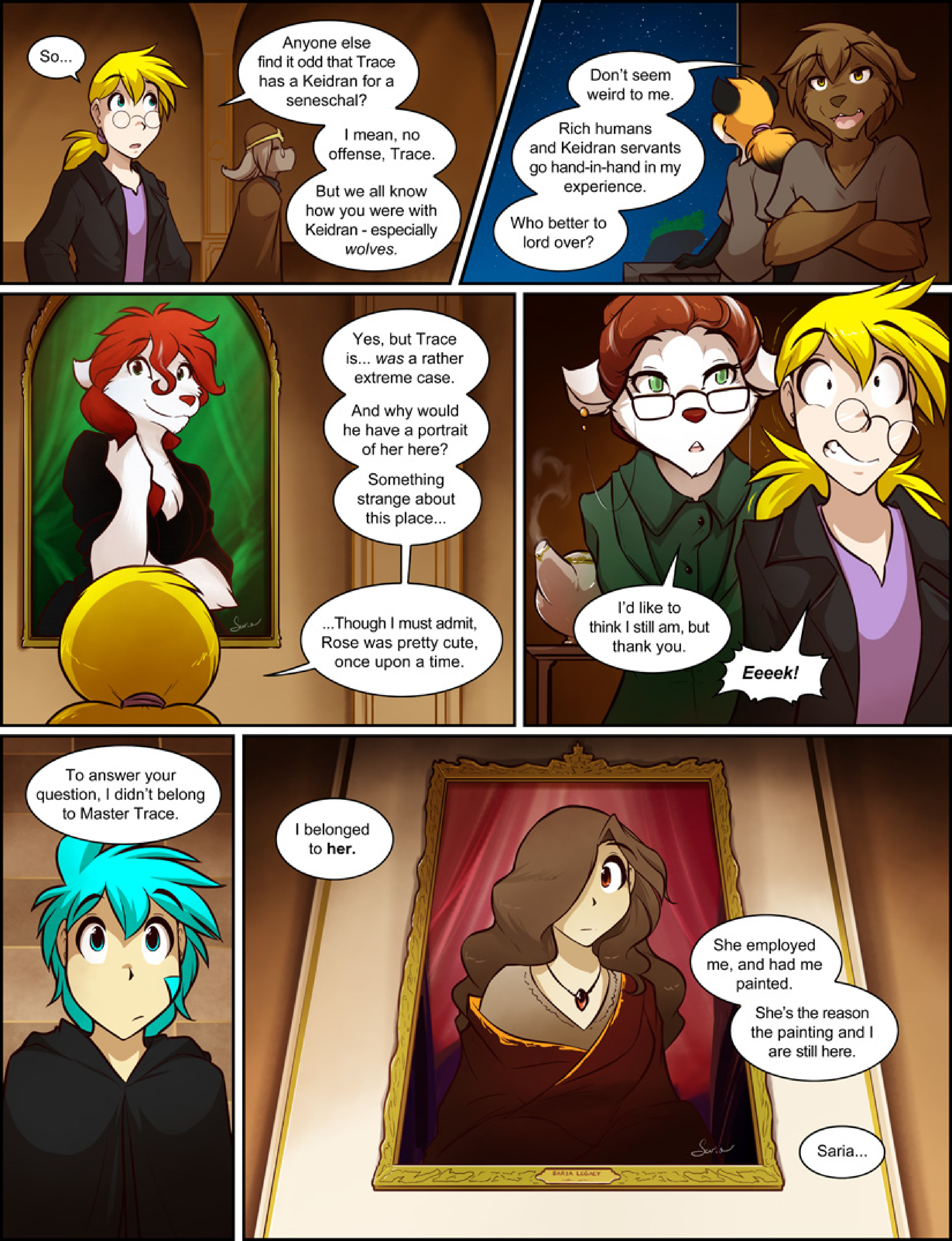

Wait, this isn't right. Why is...? Oh. I see. Your memories were lost! This explains a great deal.
Where... am I?
I'm a Basitin!
She's Keidran
You've been through a lot.
Still, I sense there's something you're trying to hide. Whatever it is, I ask you **show me!**
Mrreow~! Trace!
...Oh.
Oh dear!
Ah!
No no no! Nevermind! Next!
Sorry! That... I-I didn't think you... with a Keidran?! Oh, my...
O-okay, now– wait! ...Nora?
I cannot say for certain how long this sleep of mine will–
You know, young one, it's rude to pry.
Huh?
Grraaalr!
Ma'am? Are you alright?

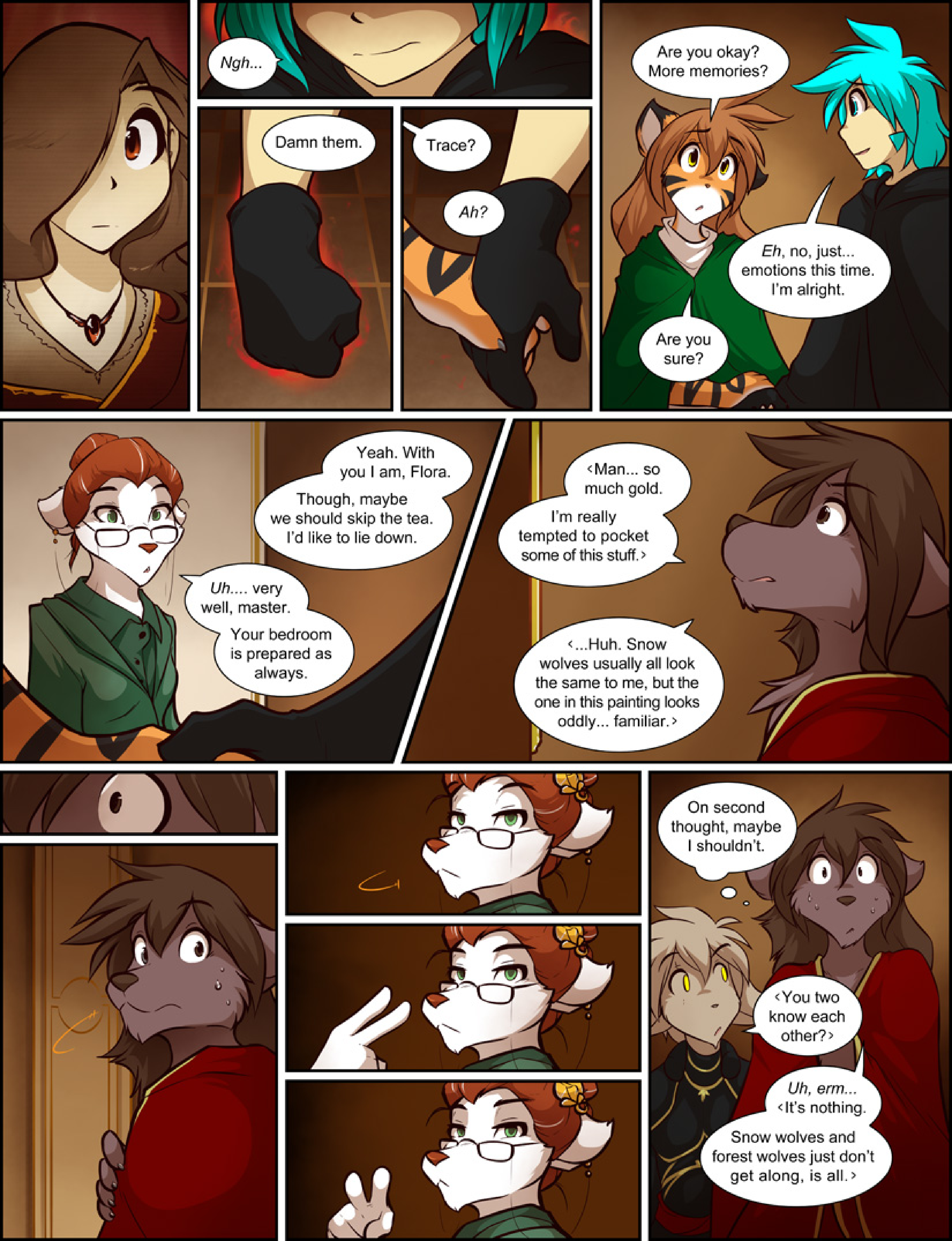

Ehem. I apologize.
Grrarg...
It seems you are indeed who you claim to be.
Though the circumstances are not quite expected.
Nevertheless, if Lady Nora vouches for you, then that is good enough for me.
If you wish, I can try to fill you in later on anything you need.
But for now...
May I please have your permission to rest here in your home for the time being?
Oh, uh... sure, I guess.
Thank you.
It's been a long day. I suspect you and your... uh...
...companions feel the same.
Ah, speaking of which...
It looks like the rest of them have finally arrived.
I suggest we take this inside.
Well, this place sure beats the pants off my manor.
Erg... kinda regret saving this stuff now.
‹Guess this is it. Hm.
Not a bad place to get imprisoned.›
‹Oh, great, another giant lizard.›

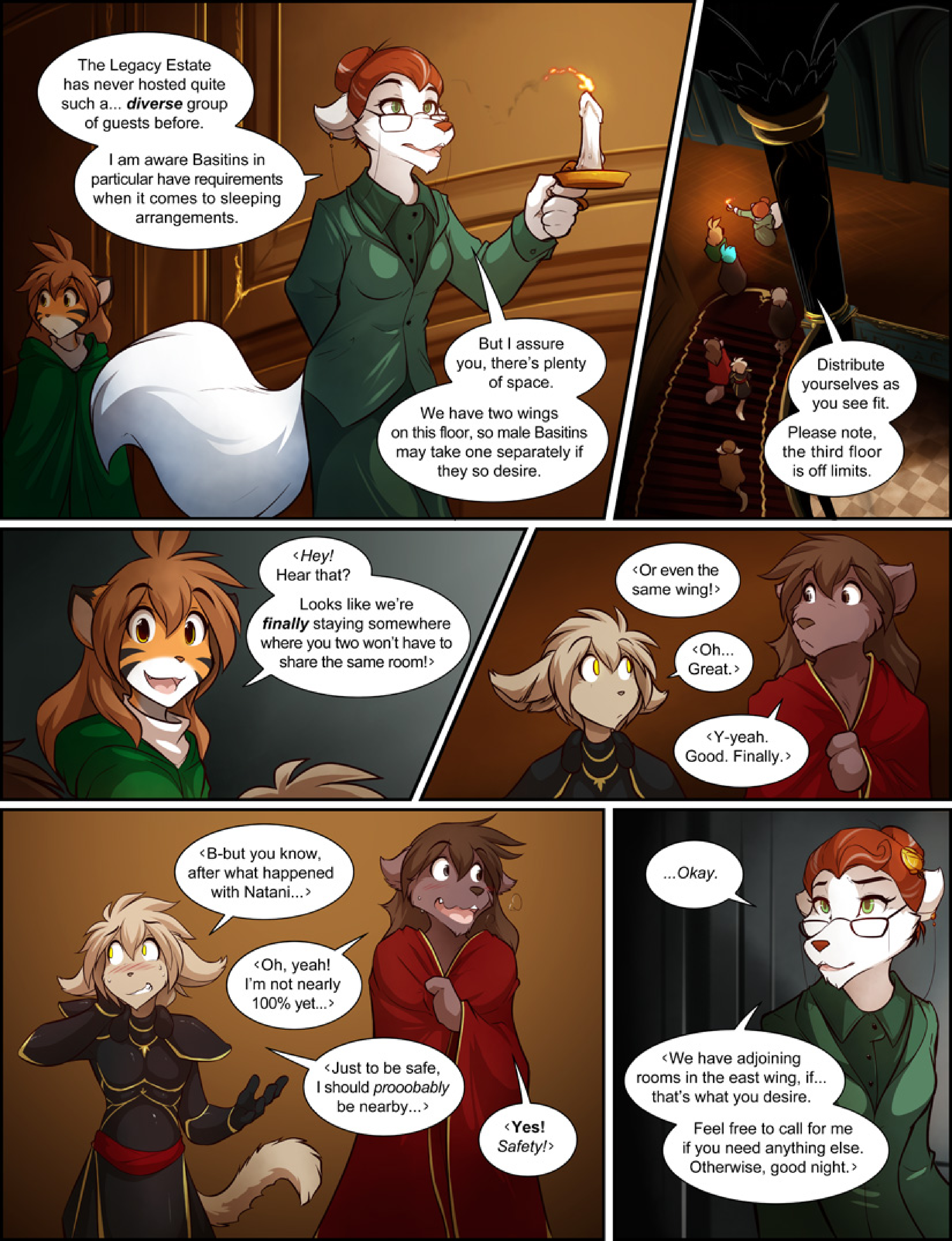

So, uh...
Do we... knock, or...?
CLUNK!
CREEEEEK!
Ah, master. I see you've finally returned... quite a lot later than scheduled.
I'd heard you'd died. What a shame.
It's a wolf!
Guardswoman, if you find *me* threatening, I ***weep*** for Edinmire.
Ah'm Rose– *er,* ***I*** am Roselyn, the seneschal of this residence.
All domestic wolves were relocated!
How is it you were not taken with the other wolves?!
If your guards think they could take me from *this* place, I would be very impressed.
Well, come in, it's cold out there. I'll make tea.

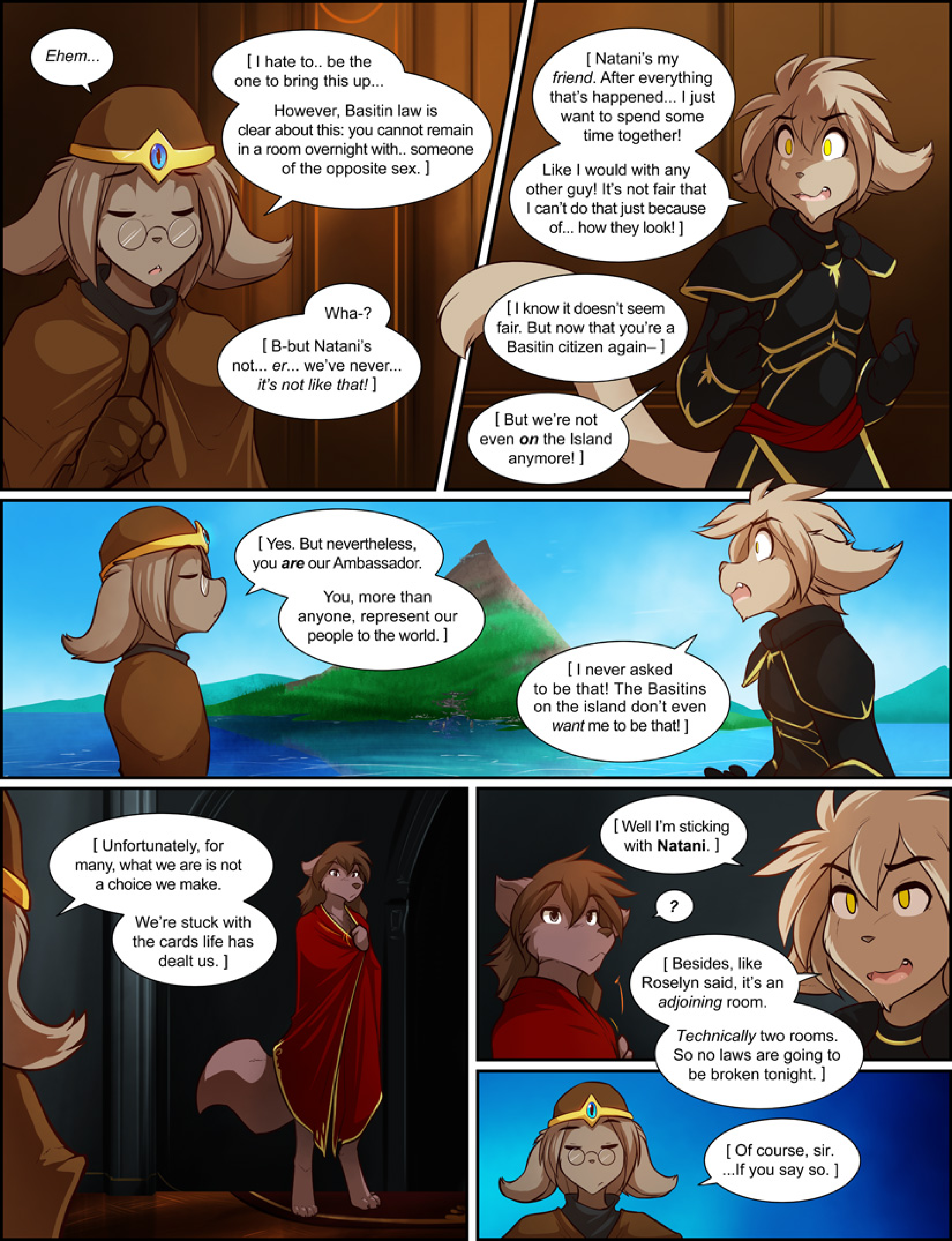

This entrance is huge!
As I said, dragon-sized.
It's been a fad among nobles to be able to host such guests, no matter how unlikely that is.
...Though in your case, I suppose it's more legitimate.
It's one fad I actually ***do*** *appreciate.*
I can't even count the number of times I've hit my head on a door frame.
...Seven.
Well, should be plenty of guest rooms. After today, I'm exhausted.
Woah, hey now! That wasn't part of the deal.
The arrangement was: we allow you to stay here, if you and your *wolf friend* stay in the dungeons.
Remember?
No one is going in the dungeons.
This is my house *(apparently)* and therefore they are my *guests*.
But Captain Keiren said—!
Ms. Reed, It's okay.
I know for a fact now they have no connection to the city attacks.
And I can keep my eyes on everyone regardless of where they are.
CLICK!
Though you are mistaken, Trace.
The dungeons here will still see use.
PLOP!
The wolf from before!
It's alive?
Yes, I made sure of it.
Once he is secured, I hope to learn more about what's behind this attack.

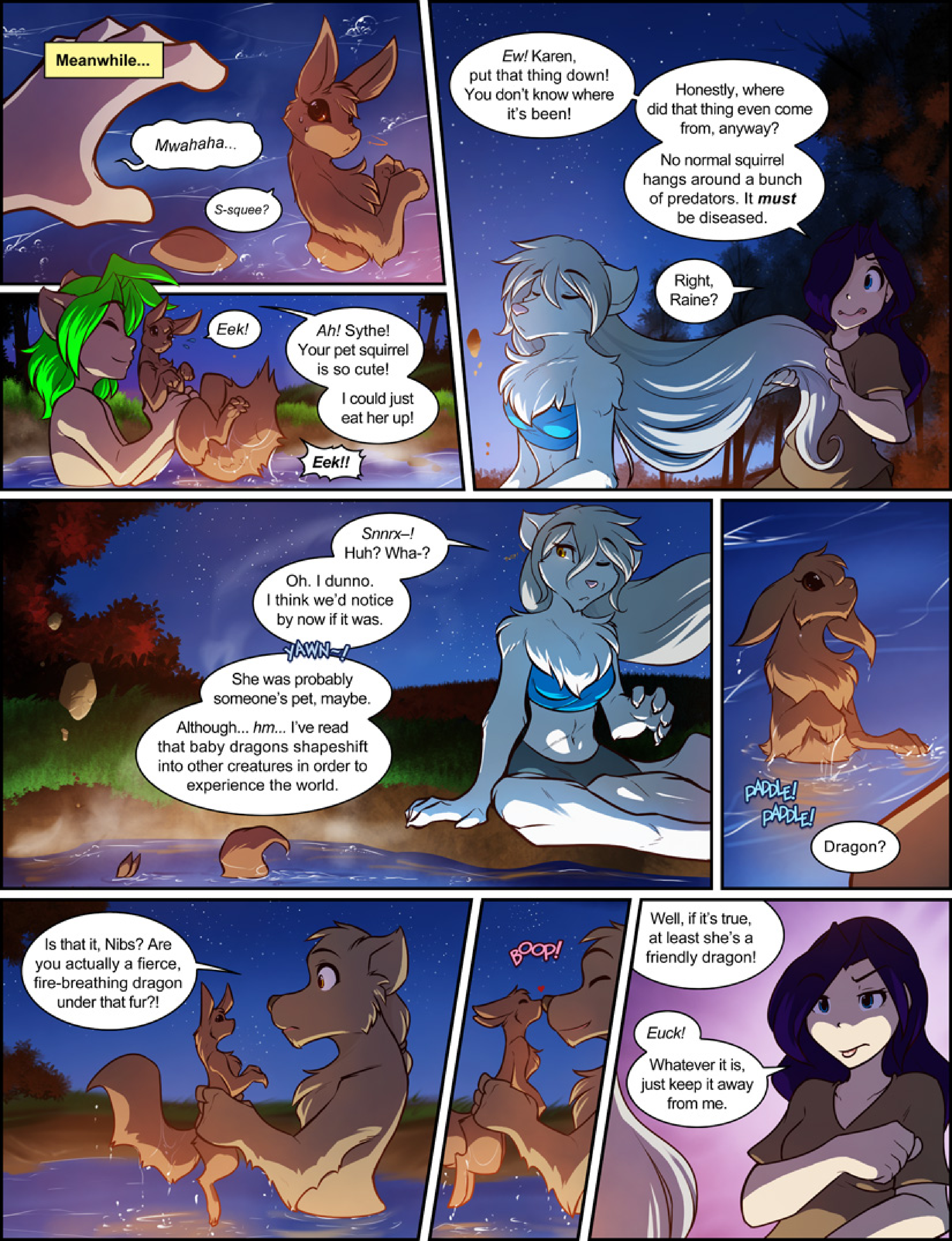

Thank you.
...Again.
Of course.
You guys are my friends. I'd never let anyone go to the dungeons.
Trace, listen. I... I want to say I'm sorry for how I acted before we left the ship.
After Natani collapsed, I just... I was lashing out. I didn't know what to do.
I shouldn't have blamed you for not being able to help. I *certainly* shouldn't have hit you because of that.
So, I... I'm—
WUMP!
...Ow?
Trace!
There!
Even.
That's the Basitin way to do it, right?
...heh... *eheh...*
Ah-heheheh!
Ugh... boys.
‹Okay, what did I miss?
Keith laughing is unnatural.›

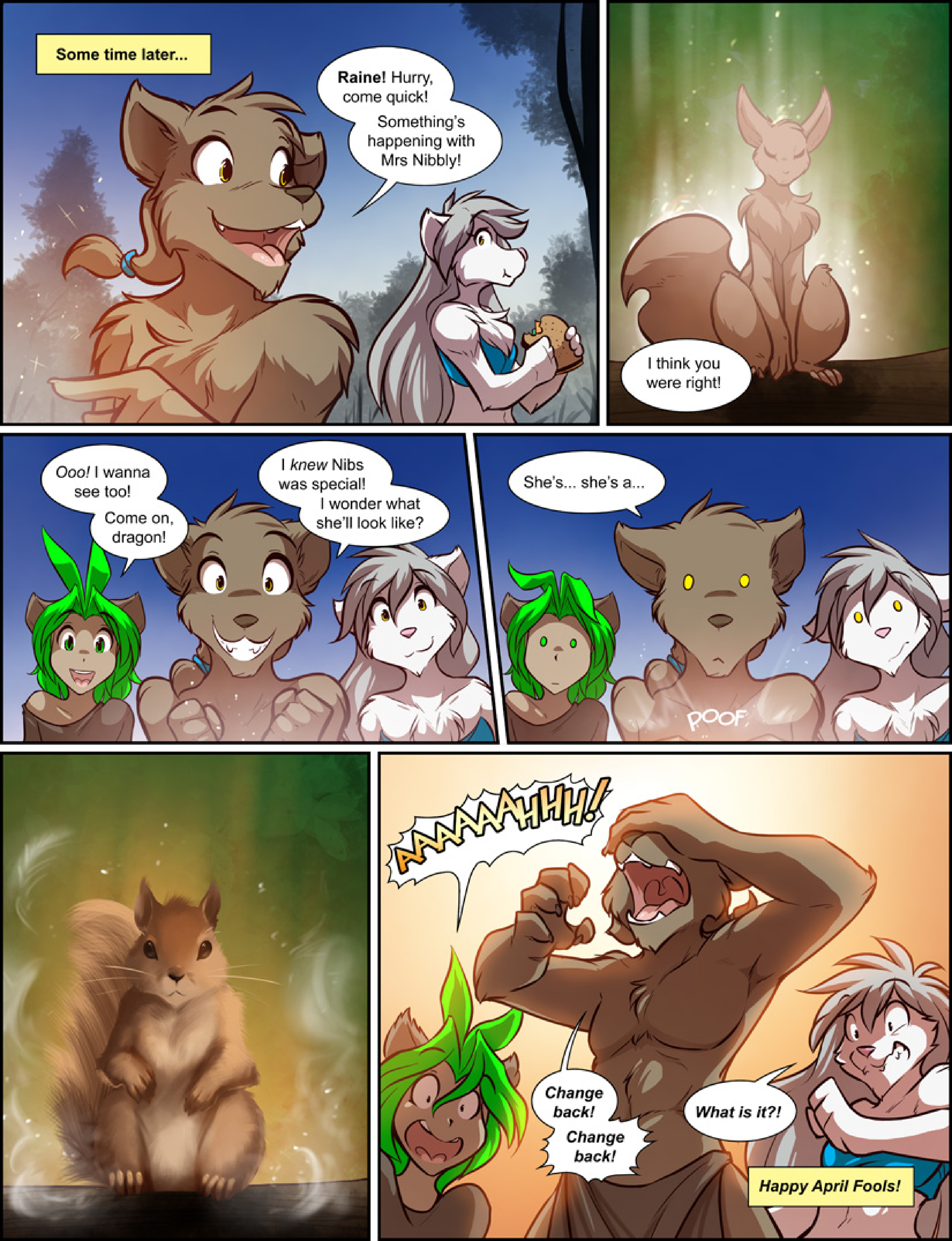

So...
Anyone else find it odd that Trace has a Keidran for a seneschal?
I mean, no offense, Trace.
But we all know how you were with Keidran - especially *wolves.*
Don't seem weird to me.
Rich humans and Keidran servants go hand-in-hand in my experience.
Who better to lord over?
Yes, but Trace is... *was* a rather extreme case.
And why would he have a portrait of her here?
Something strange about this place...
...Though I must admit, Rose was pretty cute, once upon a time.
Saria
I'd like to think I still am, but thank you.
Eeeek!
To answer your question, I didn't belong to Master Trace.
I belonged to **her.**
She employed me, and had me painted.
She's the reason the painting and I are still here.
Saria...
SARIA LEGACY
Saria

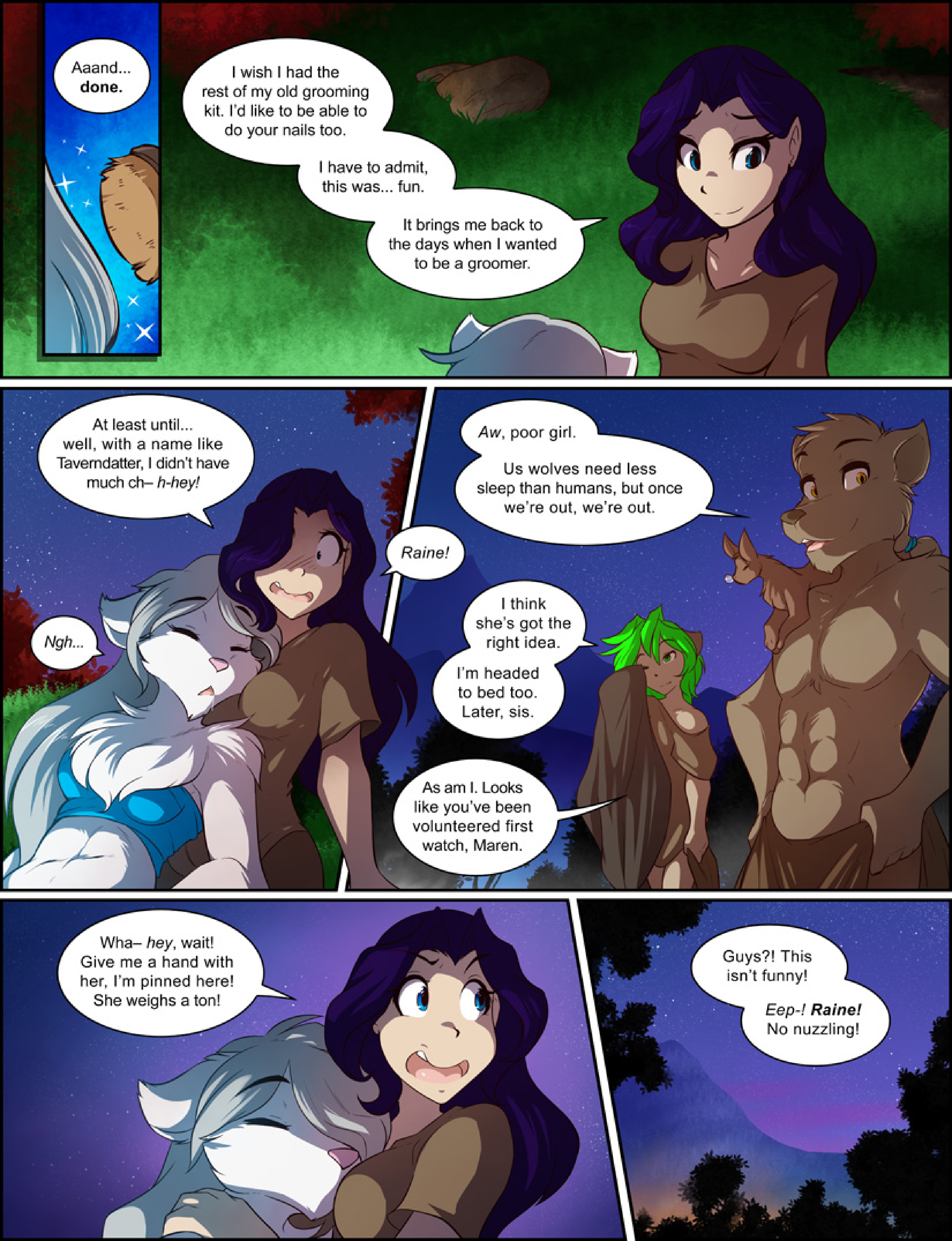

Ngh...
Damn them.
Trace?
Ah?
Are you okay? More memories?
Eh, no, just... emotions this time. I'm alright.
Are you sure?
Yeah. With you I am, Flora.
Though, maybe we should skip the tea. I'd like to lie down.
Uh.... very well, master.
Your bedroom is prepared as always.
‹Man... so much gold.
I'm really tempted to pocket some of this stuff.›
‹...Huh. Snow wolves usually all look the same to me, but the one in this painting looks oddly... familiar.›
On second thought, maybe I shouldn't.
‹You two know each other?›
Uh, erm... ‹It's nothing.
Snow wolves and forest wolves just don't get along, is all.›

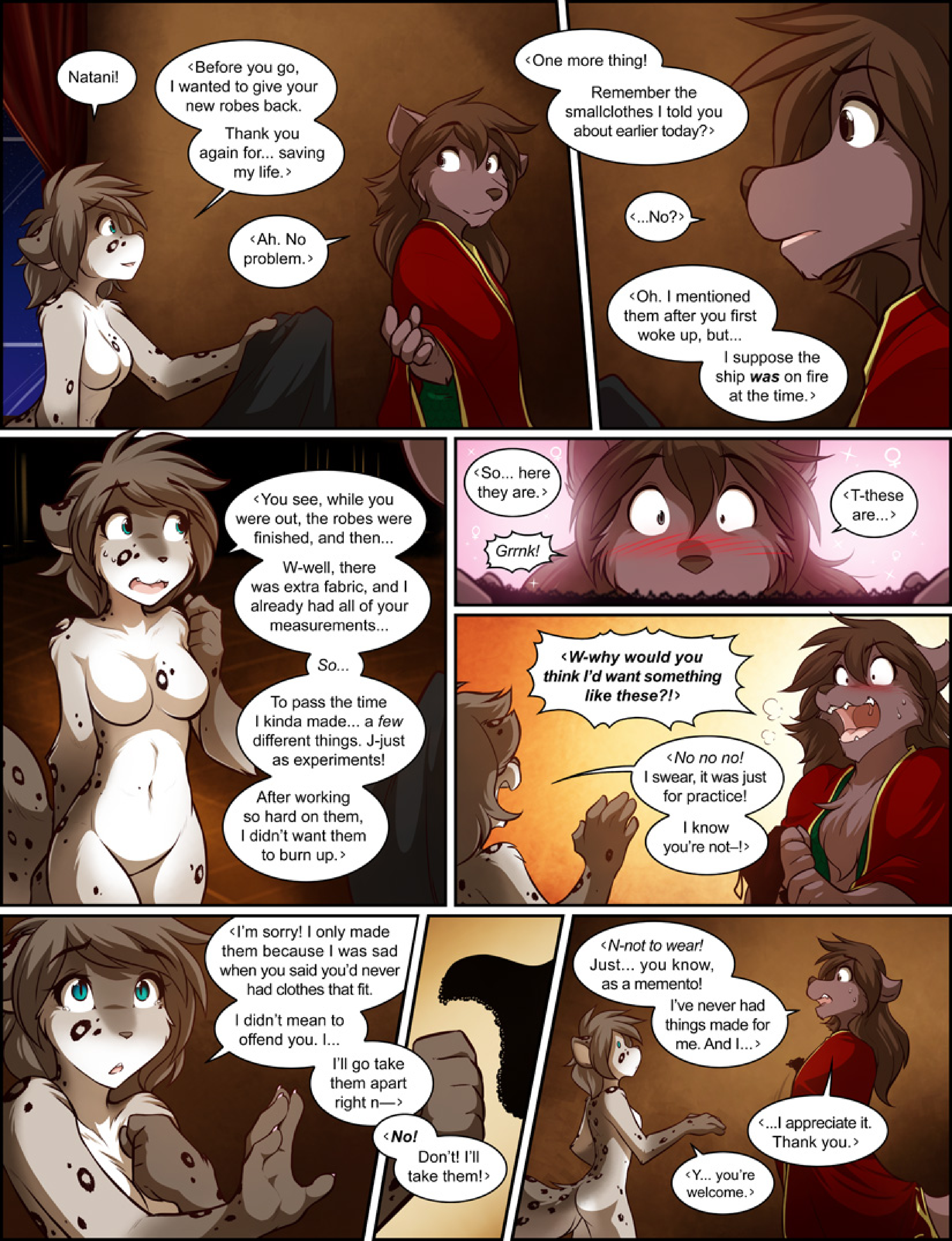

The Legacy Estate has never hosted quite such a... ***diverse*** group of guests before.
I am aware Basitins in particular have requirements when it comes to sleeping arrangements.
But I assure you, there's plenty of space.
We have two wings on this floor, so male Basitins may take one separately if they so desire.
Distribute yourselves as you see fit.
Please note, the third floor is off limits.
‹*Hey!* Hear that?
Looks like we're ***finally*** staying somewhere where you two won't have to share the same room!›
‹Or even the same wing!›
‹Oh... Great.›
‹Y-yeah. Good. Finally.›
‹B-but you know, after what happened with Natani...›
‹Oh, yeah! I'm not nearly 100% yet...›
‹Just to be safe, I should *prooobably* be nearby...›
‹**Yes!** *Safety!*›
...Okay.
‹We have adjoining rooms in the east wing, if... that's what you desire.
Feel free to call for me if you need anything else. Otherwise, good night.›

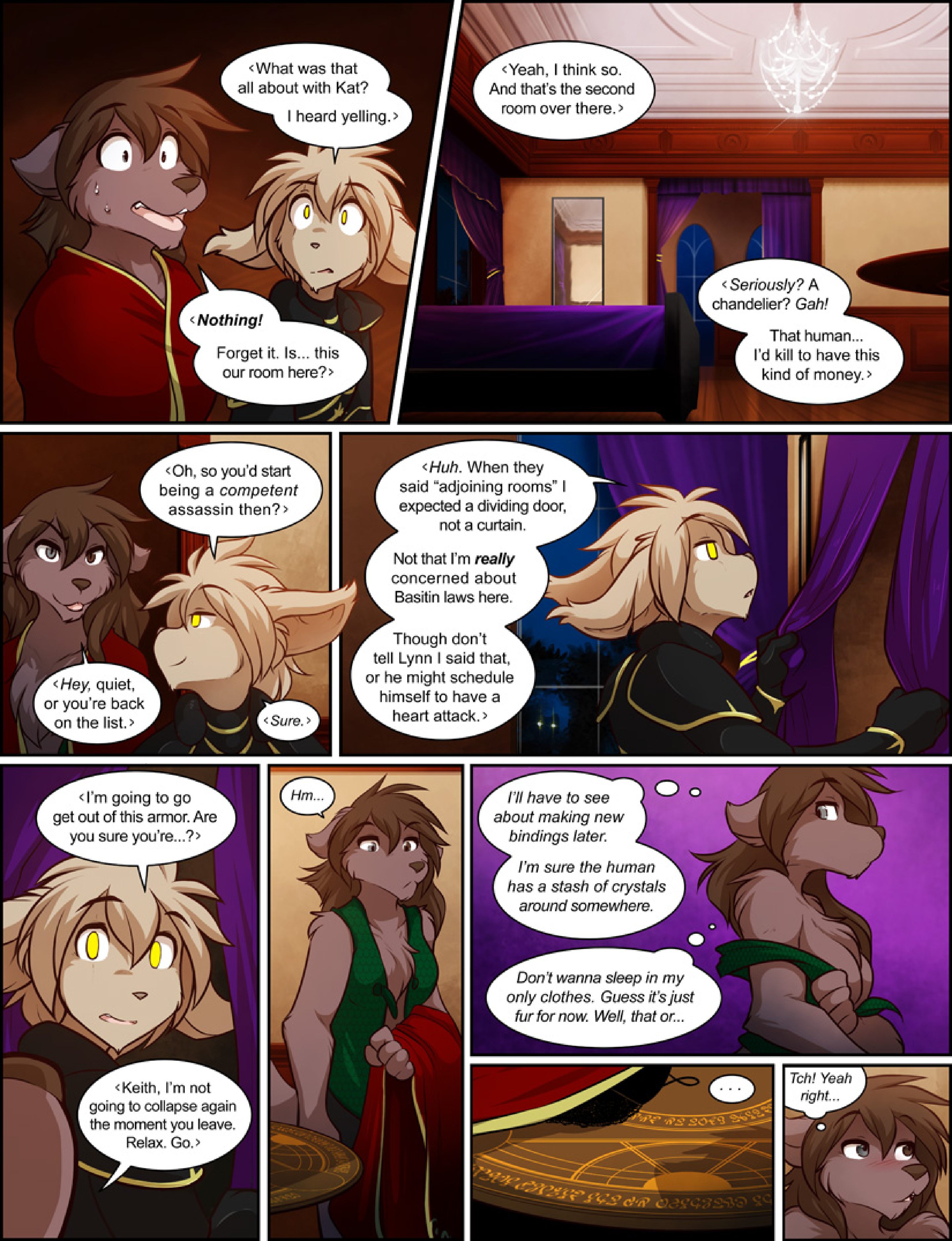

Ehem...
[I hate to.. be the one to bring this up...
However, Basitin law is clear about this: you cannot remain in a room overnight with.. someone of the opposite sex.]
Wha-?
[B-but Natani's not... *er*... we've never... *it's not like that!*]
[Natani's my *friend*. After everything that's happened... I just want to spend some time together!
Like I would with any other guy! It's not fair that I can't do that just because of... how they look!]
[I know it doesn't seem fair. But now that you're a Basitin citizen again–]
[But we're not even ***on*** the Island anymore!]
[Yes. But nevertheless, you ***are*** our Ambassador.
You, more than anyone, represent our people to the world.]
[I never asked to be that! The Basitins on the island don't even *want* me to be that!]
[Unfortunately, for many, what we are is not a choice we make.
We're stuck with the cards life has dealt us.]
[Well I'm sticking with **Natani**.]
?
[Besides, like Roselyn said, it's an *adjoining* room.
Technically two rooms. So no laws are going to be broken tonight.]
[Of course, sir. ...If you say so.]

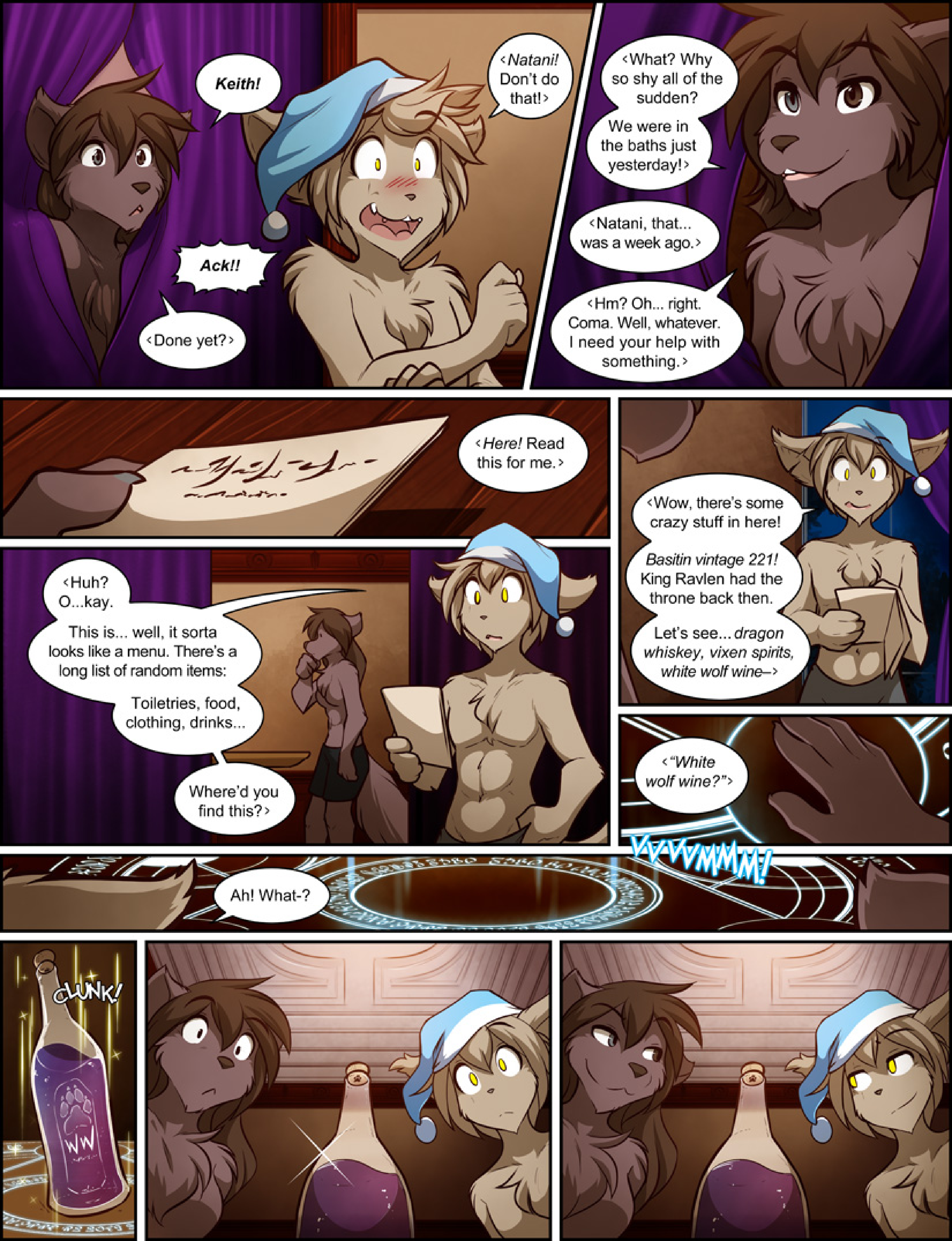

Meanwhile...
Mwahaha...
S-squee?
Ew! Karen, put that thing down! You don't know where it's been!
Honestly, where did that thing even come from, anyway?
No normal squirrel hangs around a bunch of predators. It ***must*** be diseased.
Right, Raine?
Eek!
Ah! Sythe! Your pet squirrel is so cute!
I could just eat her up!
Eek!!
Snnrx–! Huh? Wha-?
Oh. I dunno. I think we'd notice by now if it was.
YAWN–!
She was probably someone's pet, maybe.
Although... *hm*... I've read that baby dragons shapeshift into other creatures in order to experience the world.
PADDLE! PADDLE!
Dragon?
Is that it, Nibs? Are you actually a fierce, fire-breathing dragon under that fur?!
BOOP!
Well, if it's true, at least she's a friendly dragon!
Euck!
Whatever it is, just keep it away from me.

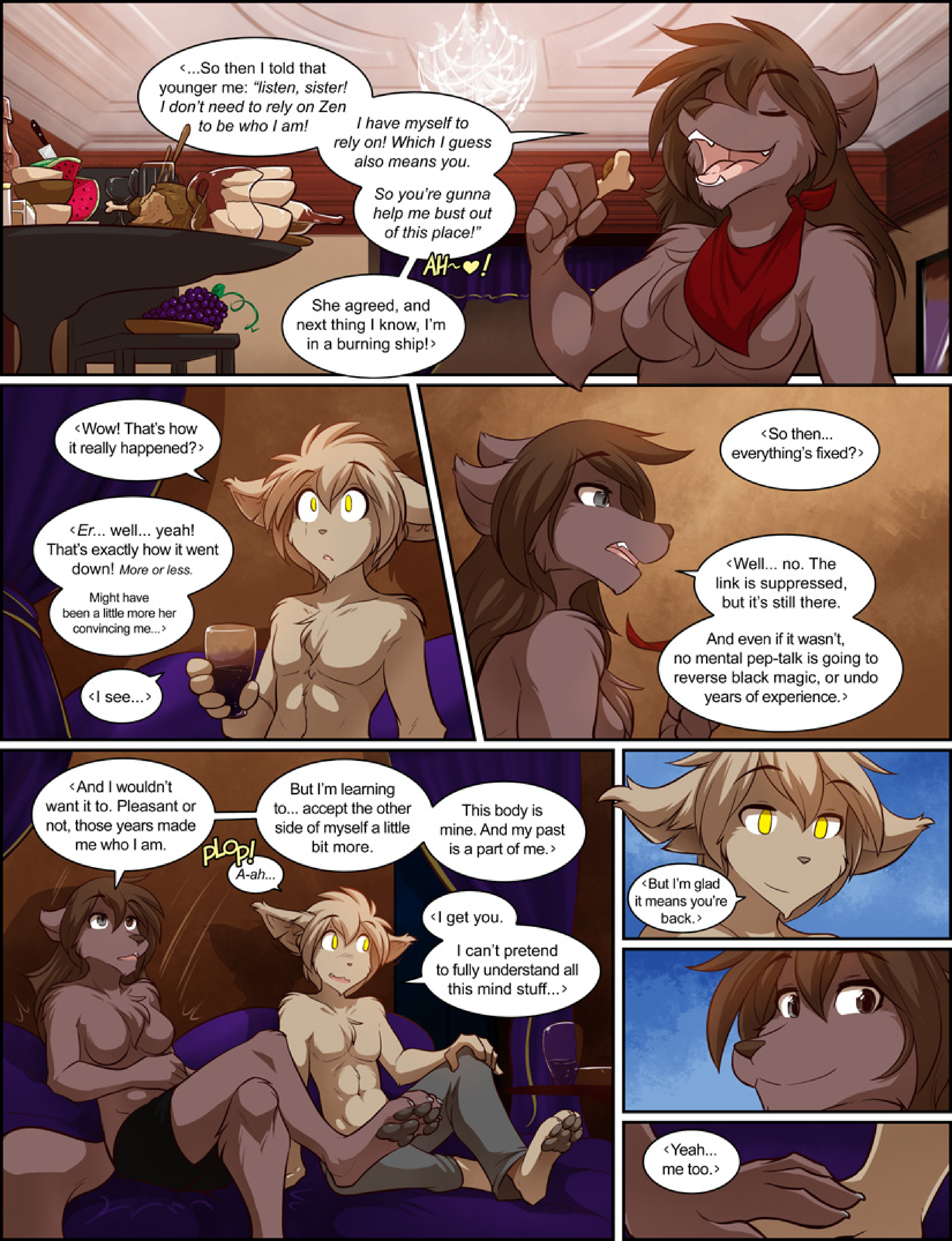

Some time later...
Raine! Hurry, come quick!
Something's happening with Mrs Nibbly!
I think you were right!
Ooo! I wanna see too!
Come on, dragon!
I *knew* Nibs was special!
I wonder what she'll look like?
She's... she's a...
POOF
AAAAAAHHH!
Change back!
Change back!
What is it?!
Happy April Fools!

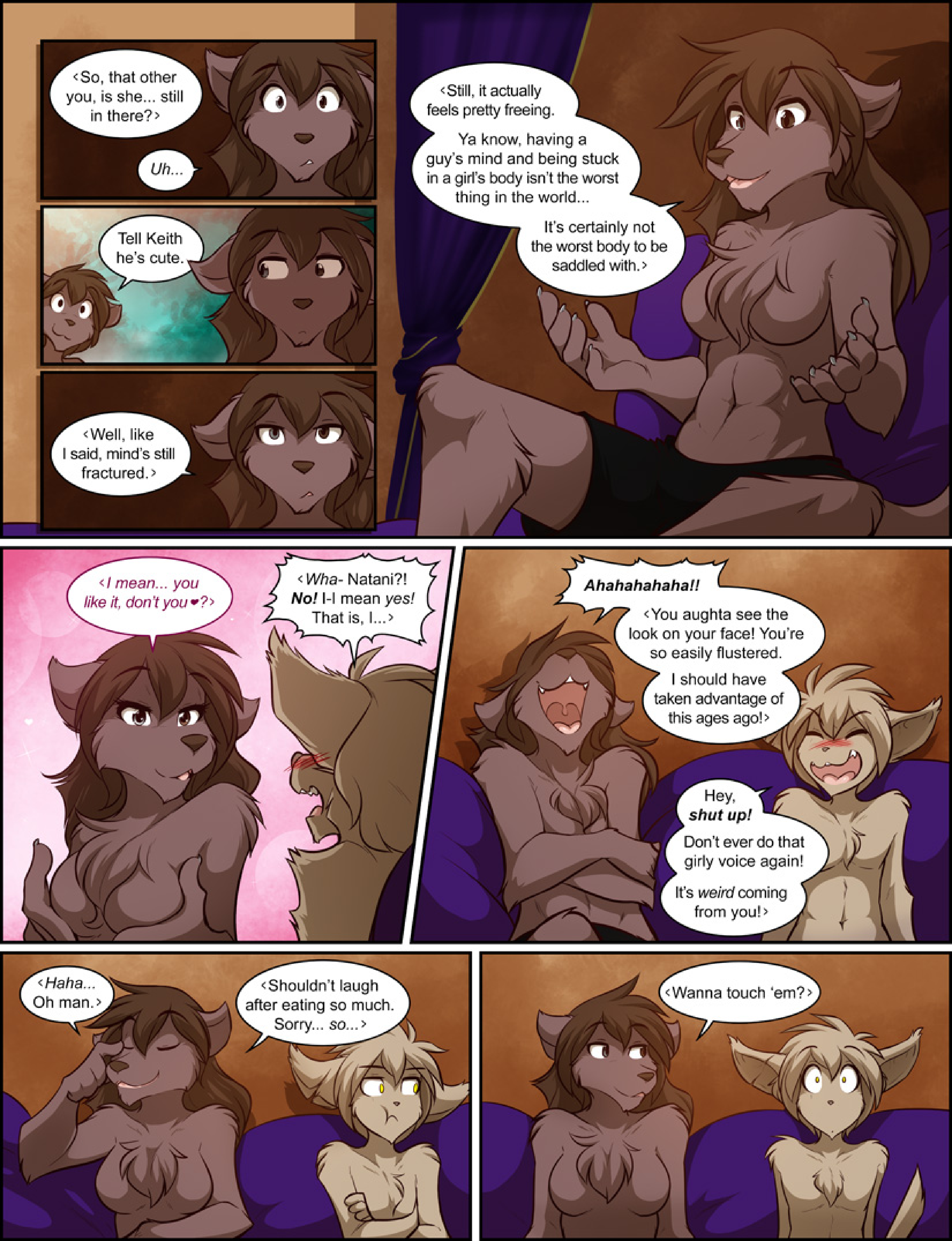

Aaand... **done.**
I wish I had the rest of my old grooming kit. I'd like to be able to do your nails too.
I have to admit, this was... fun.
It brings me back to the days when I wanted to be a groomer.
At least until... well, with a name like Taverndatter, I didn't have much ch– *h-hey!*
Ngh...
Raine!
Aw, poor girl.
Us wolves need less sleep than humans, but once we're out, we're out.
I think she's got the right idea.
I'm headed to bed too. Later, sis.
As am I. Looks like you've been volunteered first watch, Maren.
Wha– *hey*, wait! Give me a hand with her, I'm pinned here! She weighs a ton!
Guys?! This isn't funny!
Eep-! ***Raine!*** No nuzzling!

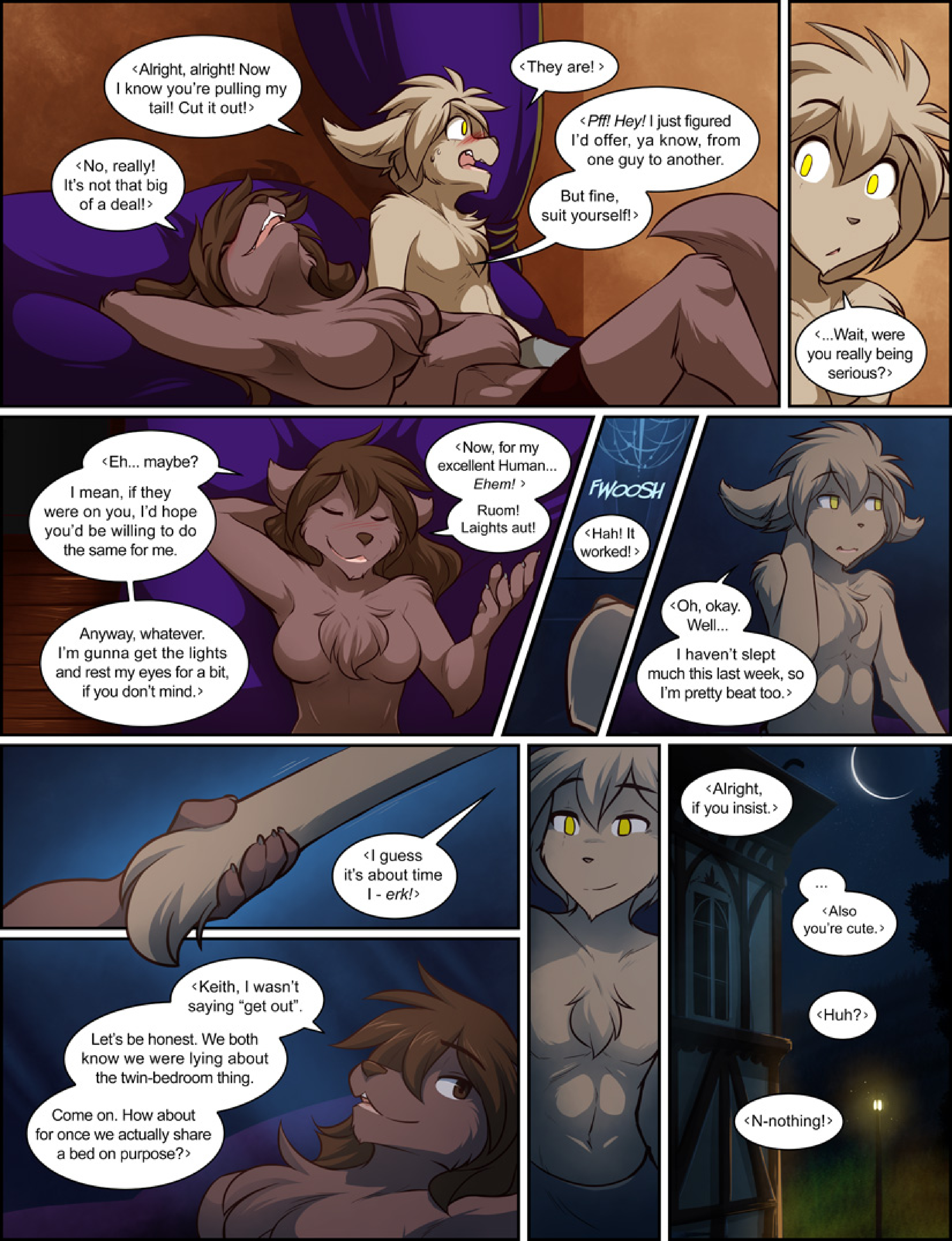

Natani!
<Before you go, I wanted to give your new robes back.
Thank you again for... saving my life.>
<Ah. No problem.>
<One more thing!
Remember the smallclothes I told you about earlier today?>
<...No?>
<Oh. I mentioned them after you first woke up, but...
I suppose the ship **was** on fire at the time.>
<You see, while you were out, the robes were finished, and then...
W-well, there was extra fabric, and I already had all of your measurements...
So...
To pass the time I kinda made... a *few* different things. J-just as experiments!
After working so hard on them, I didn't want them to burn up.>
<So... here they are.>
Grrnk!
<T-these are...>
<W-why would you think I'd want something like these?!>
<*No no no!* I swear, it was just for practice!
I know you're not–!>
<I'm sorry! I only made them because I was sad when you said you'd never had clothes that fit.
I didn't mean to offend you. I...
I'll go take them apart right n—>
<***No!***
Don't! I'll take them!>
<*N-not to wear!* Just... you know, as a memento!
I've never had things made for me. And I...>
<...I appreciate it. Thank you.>
<Y... you're welcome.>

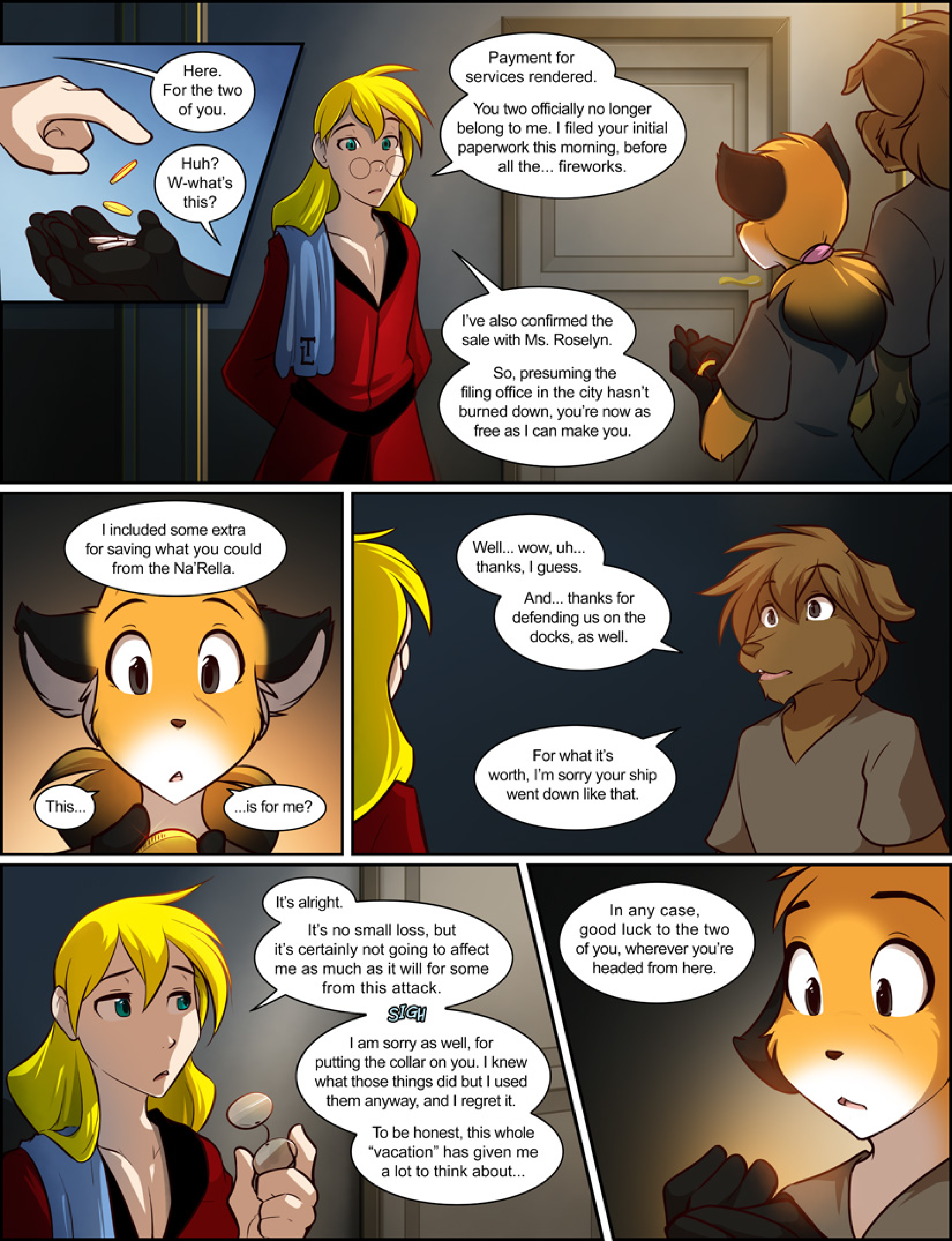

<What was that all about with Kat?
I heard yelling.>
<**Nothing!**
Forget it. Is... this our room here?>
<Yeah, I think so. And that's the second room over there.>
<*Seriously?* A chandelier? *Gah!*
That human... I'd kill to have this kind of money.>
<Oh, so you'd start being a *competent* assassin then?>
<*Hey*, quiet, or you're back on the list.>
<*Sure.*>
<*Huh*. When they said "adjoining rooms" I expected a dividing door, not a curtain.
Not that I'm ***really*** concerned about Basitin laws here.
Though don't tell Lynn I said that, or he might schedule himself to have a heart attack.>
<I'm going to go get out of this armor. Are you sure you're...?>
<Keith, I'm not going to collapse again the moment you leave. Relax. Go.>
Hm...
I'll have to see about making new bindings later.
I'm sure the human has a stash of crystals around somewhere.
Don't wanna sleep in my only clothes. Guess it's just fur for now. Well, that or...
. . .
Tch! Yeah right...

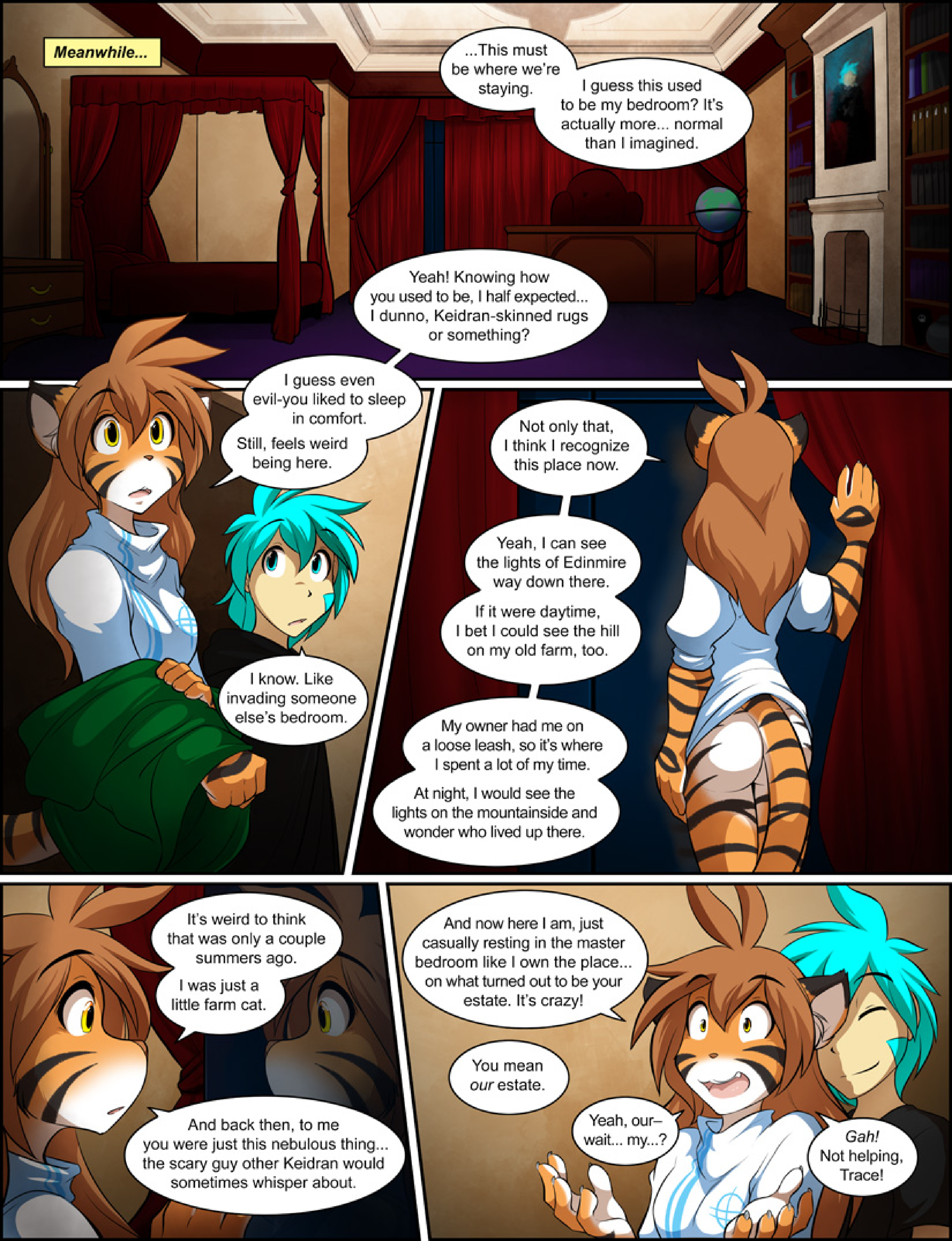

Keith!
<*Natani!* Don't do that!>
Ack!!
<Done yet?>
<What? Why so shy all of the sudden?
We were in the baths just yesterday!>
<Natani, that... was a week ago.>
<Hm? Oh... right. Coma. Well, whatever. I need your help with something.>
<*Here!* Read this for me.>
<Huh? O...kay.
This is... well, it sorta looks like a menu. There's a long list of random items:
Toiletries, food, clothing, drinks...
Where'd you find this?>
<Wow, there's some crazy stuff in here!
Basitin vintage 221! King Ravlen had the throne back then.
Let's see... *dragon whiskey, vixen spirits, white wolf wine*–>
<*"White wolf wine?"*>
VVVVMMM!
Ah! What-?
CLUNK!
WW

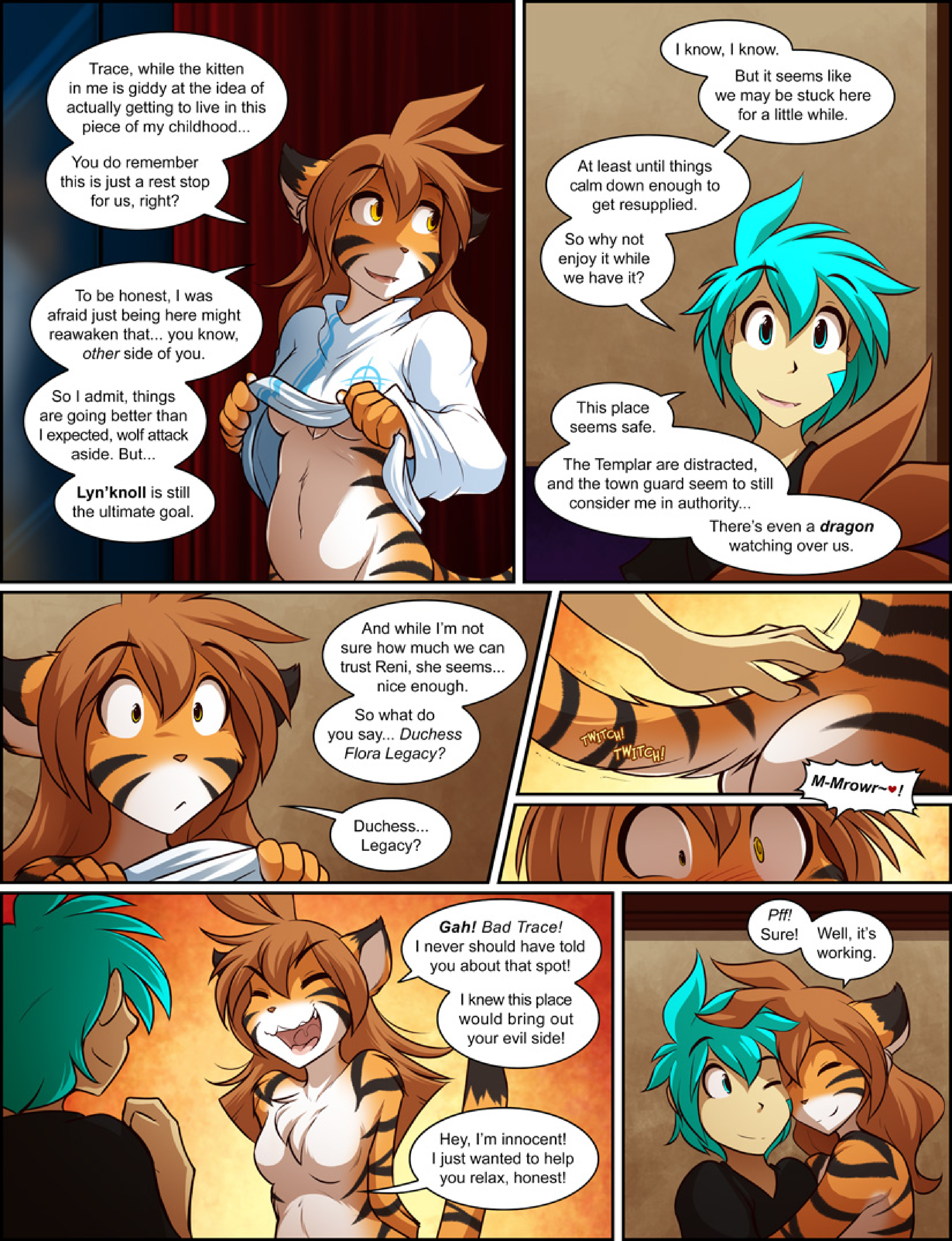

‹...So then I told that younger me: *"listen, sister! I don't need to rely on Zen to be who I am!*
I have myself to rely on! Which I guess also means you.
So you're gunna help me bust out of this place!"
AH~♥!
She agreed, and next thing I know, I'm in a burning ship!›
‹Wow! That's how it really happened?›
‹*Er*... well... yeah! That's exactly how it went down! *More or less.*
Might have been a little more her convincing me...›
‹I see...›
‹So then... everything's fixed?›
‹Well... no. The link is suppressed, but it's still there.
And even if it wasn't, no mental pep-talk is going to reverse black magic, or undo years of experience.›
‹And I wouldn't want it to. Pleasant or not, those years made me who I am.
But I'm learning to... accept the other side of myself a little bit more.
This body is mine. And my past is a part of me.›
PLOP!
A-ah...
‹I get you.
I can't pretend to fully understand all this mind stuff...›
‹But I'm glad it means you're back.›
‹Yeah... me too.›

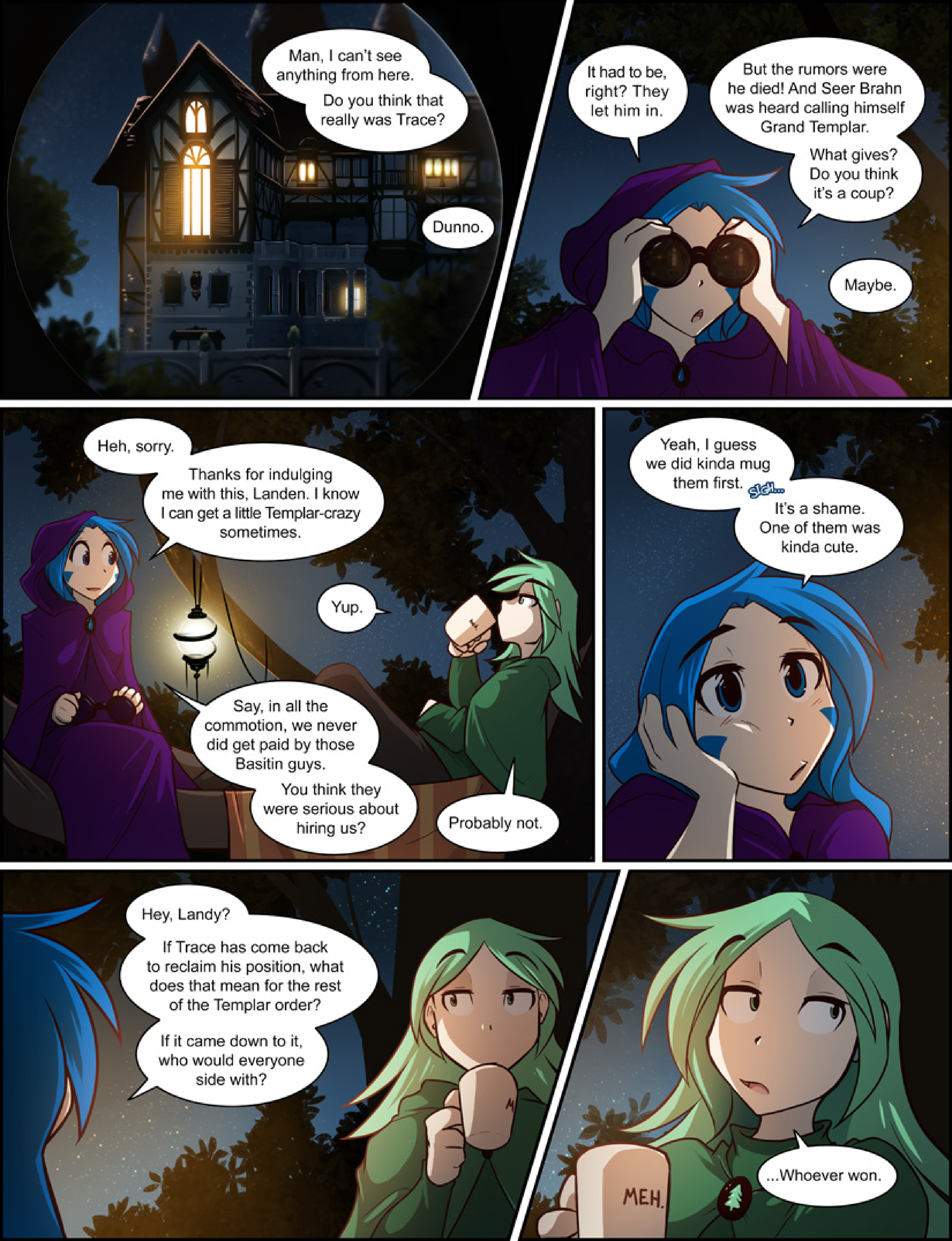

<So, that other you, is she... still in there?>
Uh...
Tell Keith he's cute.
<Well, like I said, mind's still fractured.>
<Still, it actually feels pretty freeing.
Ya know, having a guy's mind and being stuck in a girl's body isn't the worst thing in the world...
It's certainly not the worst body to be saddled with.>
<I mean... you like it, don't you❤?>
<Wha- Natani?! No! I-I mean yes! That is, I...>
Ahahahahaha!!
<You aughta see the look on your face! You're so easily flustered.
I should have taken advantage of this ages ago!>
Hey, shut up!
Don't ever do that girly voice again!
It's weird coming from you!>
<Haha... Oh man.>
<Shouldn't laugh after eating so much. Sorry... so...>
<Wanna touch 'em?>

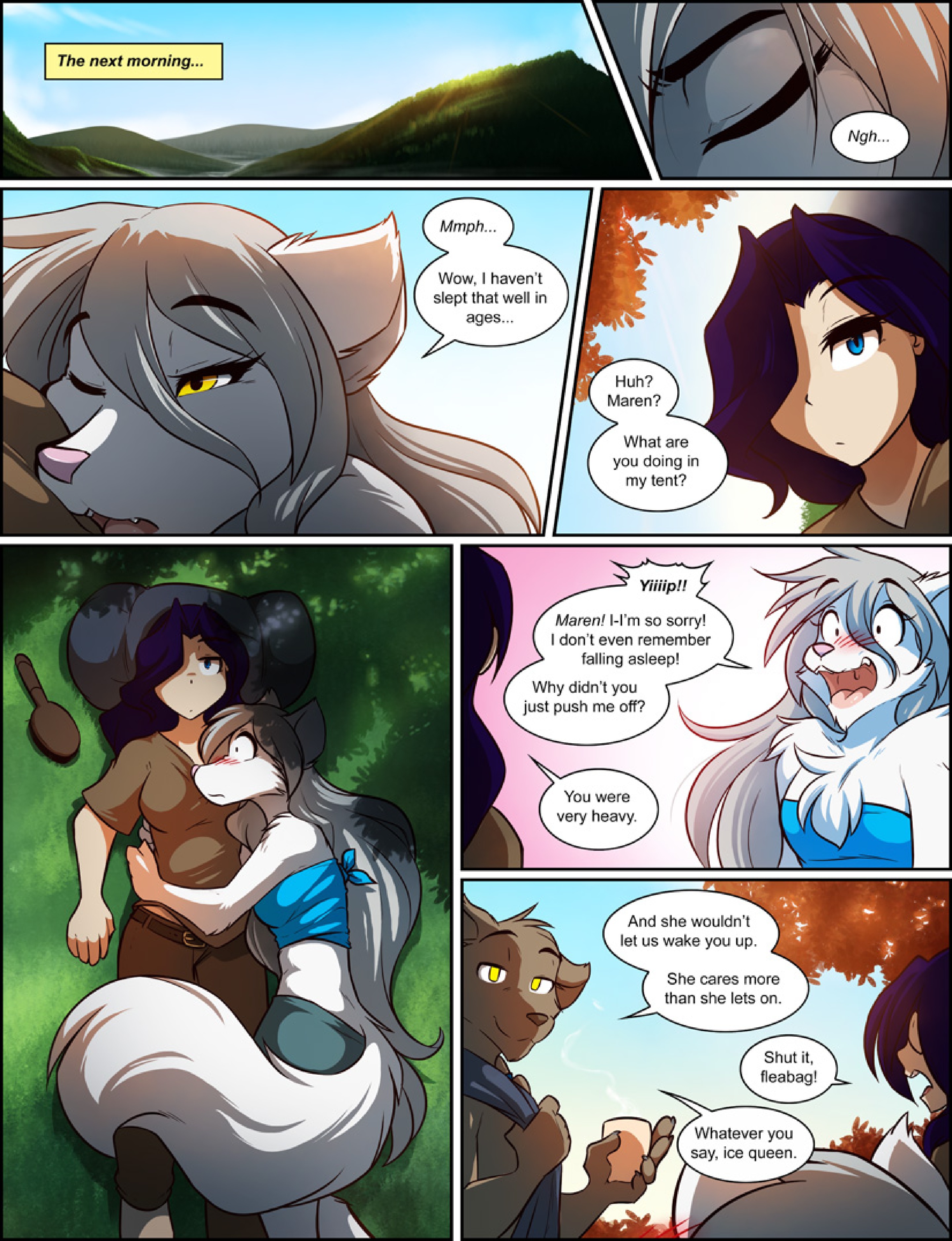

<Alright, alright! Now I know you're pulling my tail! Cut it out!>
<They are!>
<No, really! It's not that big of a deal!>
<*Pff! Hey!* I just figured I'd offer, ya know, from one guy to another.
But fine, suit yourself!>
<...Wait, were you really being serious?>
<Eh... maybe?
I mean, if they were on you, I'd hope you'd be willing to do the same for me.
Anyway, whatever. I'm gunna get the lights and rest my eyes for a bit, if you don't mind.>
<Now, for my excellent Human... *Ehem!* >
Ruom! Laights aut!
FWOOSH
<Hah! It worked!>
<Oh, okay. Well...
I haven't slept much this last week, so I'm pretty beat too.>
<I guess it's about time I - *erk!*>
<Keith, I wasn't saying "get out".
Let's be honest. We both know we were lying about the twin-bedroom thing.
Come on. How about for once we actually share a bed on purpose?>
<Alright, if you insist.>
...
<Also you're cute.>
<Huh?>
<N-nothing!>

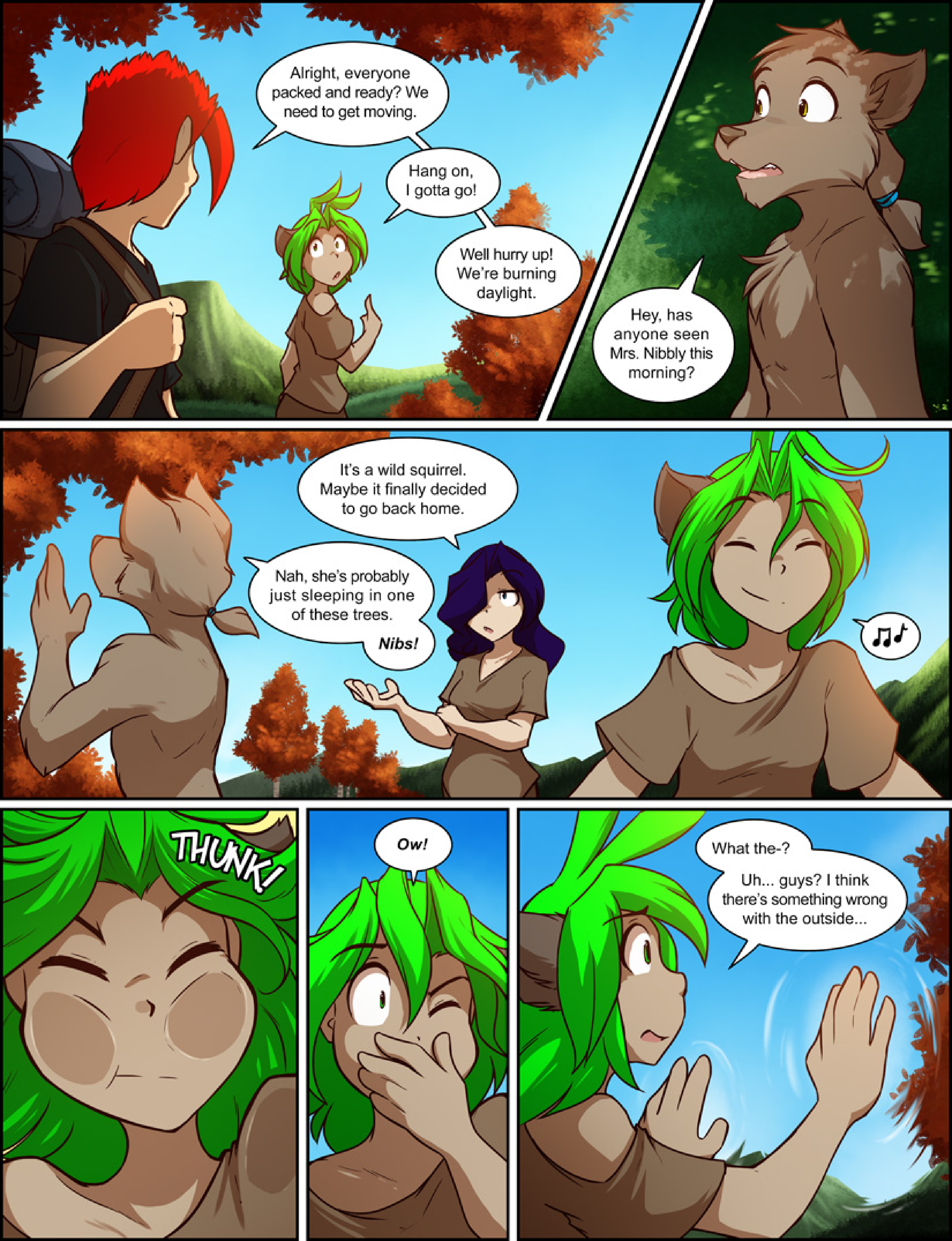

Here. For the two of you.
Huh? W-what's this?
Payment for services rendered.
You two officially no longer belong to me. I filed your initial paperwork this morning, before all the... fireworks.
I've also confirmed the sale with Ms. Roselyn.
So, presuming the filing office in the city hasn't burned down, you're now as free as I can make you.
I included some extra for saving what you could from the Na'Rella.
This...
...is for me?
Well... wow, uh... thanks, I guess.
And... thanks for defending us on the docks, as well.
For what it's worth, I'm sorry your ship went down like that.
It's alright.
It's no small loss, but it's certainly not going to affect me as much as it will for some from this attack.
SIGH
I am sorry as well, for putting the collar on you. I knew what those things did but I used them anyway, and I regret it.
To be honest, this whole "vacation" has given me a lot to think about...
In any case, good luck to the two of you, wherever you're headed from here.

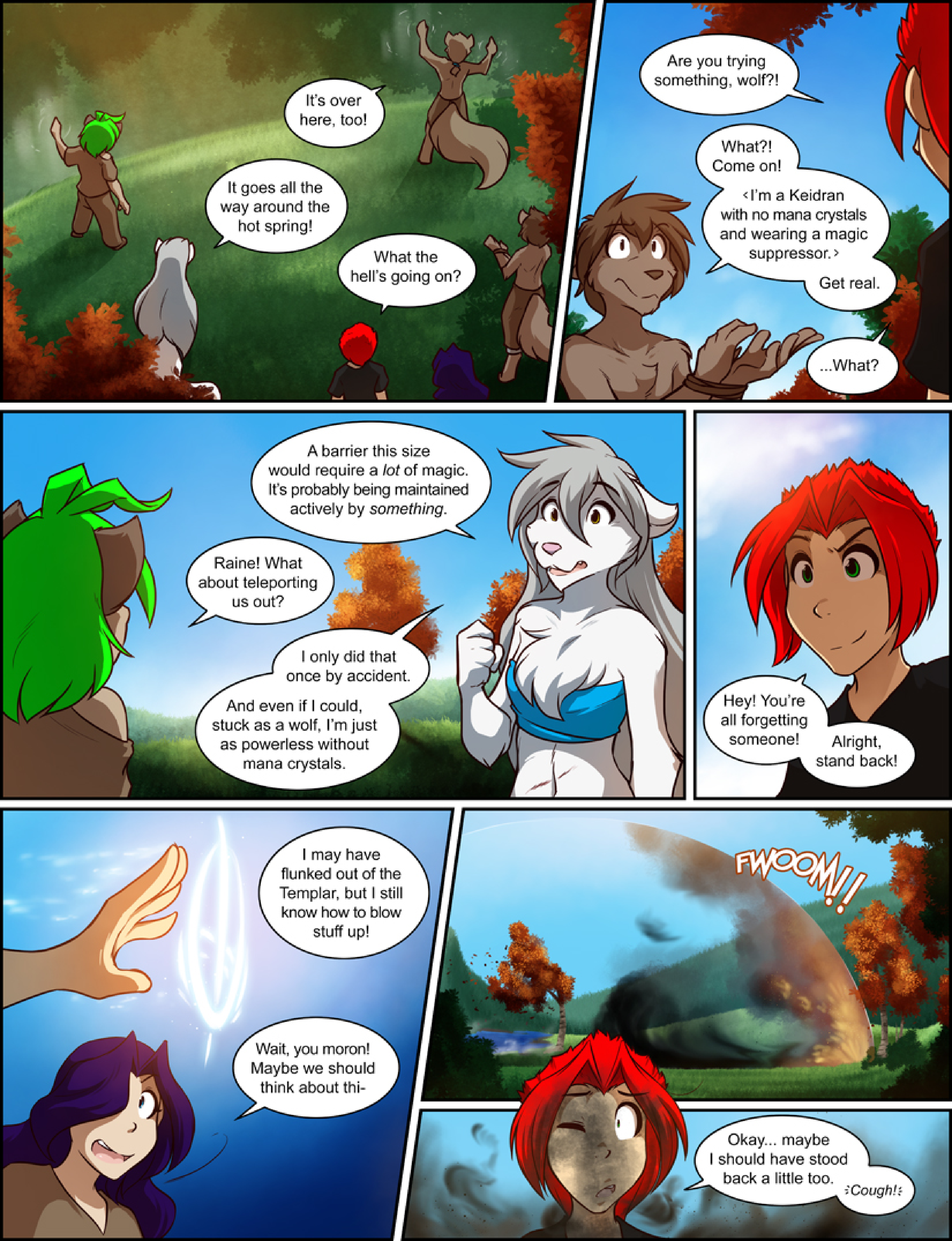

Meanwhile...
...This must be where we're staying.
I guess this used to be my bedroom? It's actually more... normal than I imagined.
Yeah! Knowing how you used to be, I half expected... I dunno, Keidran-skinned rugs or something?
I guess even evil-you liked to sleep in comfort.
Still, feels weird being here.
I know. Like invading someone else's bedroom.
Not only that, I think I recognize this place now.
Yeah, I can see the lights of Edinmire way down there.
If it were daytime, I bet I could see the hill on my old farm, too.
My owner had me on a loose leash, so it's where I spent a lot of my time.
At night, I would see the lights on the mountainside and wonder who lived up there.
It's weird to think that was only a couple summers ago.
I was just a little farm cat.
And back then, to me you were just this nebulous thing... the scary guy other Keidran would sometimes whisper about.
And now here I am, just casually resting in the master bedroom like I own the place... on what turned out to be your estate. It's crazy!
You mean *our* estate.
Yeah, our– wait... my...?
Gah! Not helping, Trace!

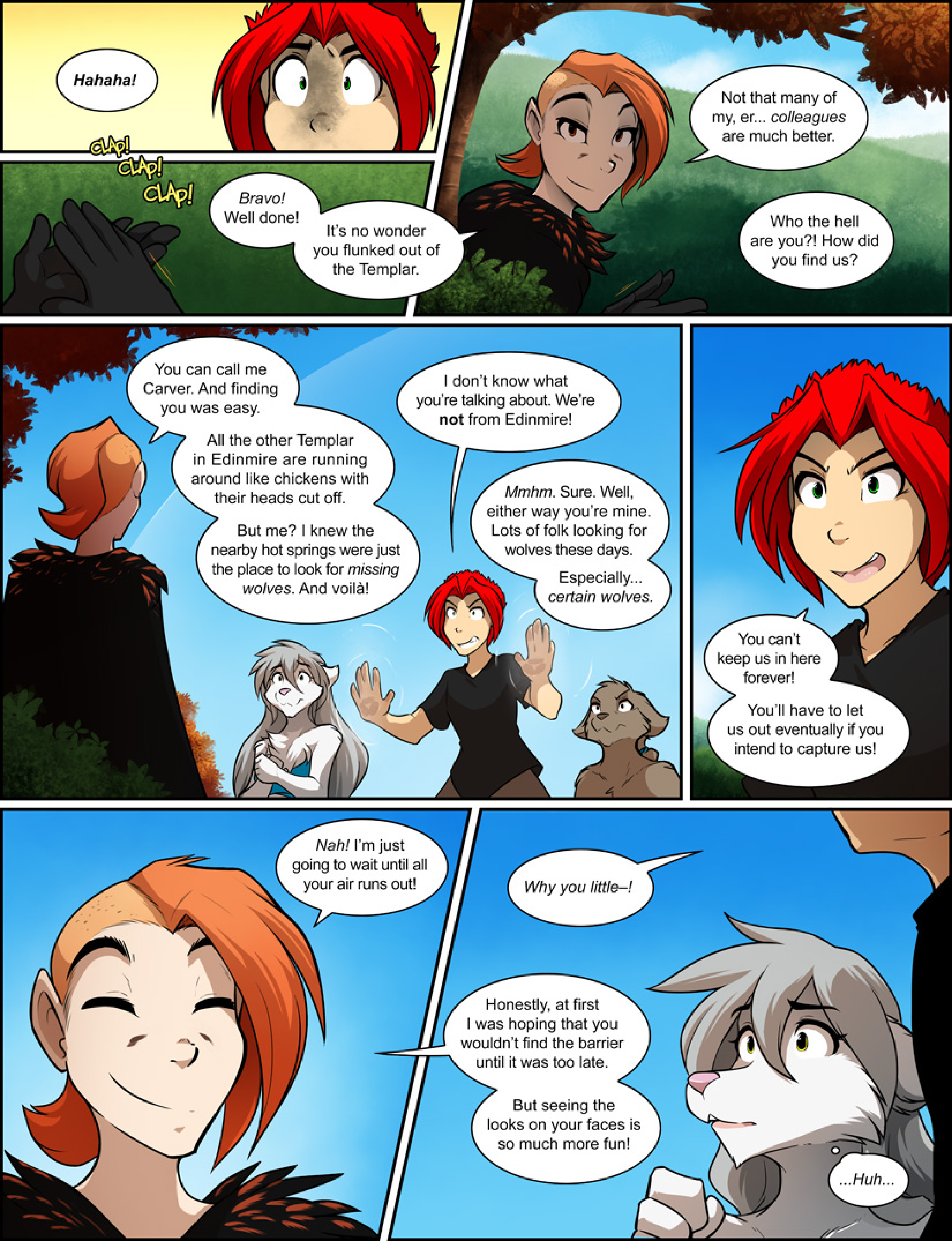

Trace, while the kitten in me is giddy at the idea of actually getting to live in this piece of my childhood...
You do remember this is just a rest stop for us, right?
To be honest, I was afraid just being here might reawaken that... you know, *other* side of you.
So I admit, things are going better than I expected, wolf attack aside. But...
Lyn'knoll is still the ultimate goal.
I know, I know.
But it seems like we may be stuck here for a little while.
At least until things calm down enough to get resupplied.
So why not enjoy it while we have it?
This place seems safe.
The Templar are distracted, and the town guard seem to still consider me in authority...
There's even a ***dragon*** watching over us.
And while I'm not sure how much we can trust Reni, she seems... nice enough.
So what do you say... *Duchess Flora Legacy?*
Duchess... Legacy?
TWITCH!
TWITCH!
M-Mrowr~♥!
Gah! *Bad Trace!* I never should have told you about that spot!
I knew this place would bring out your evil side!
Hey, I'm innocent! I just wanted to help you relax, honest!
Pff! Sure!
Well, it's working.

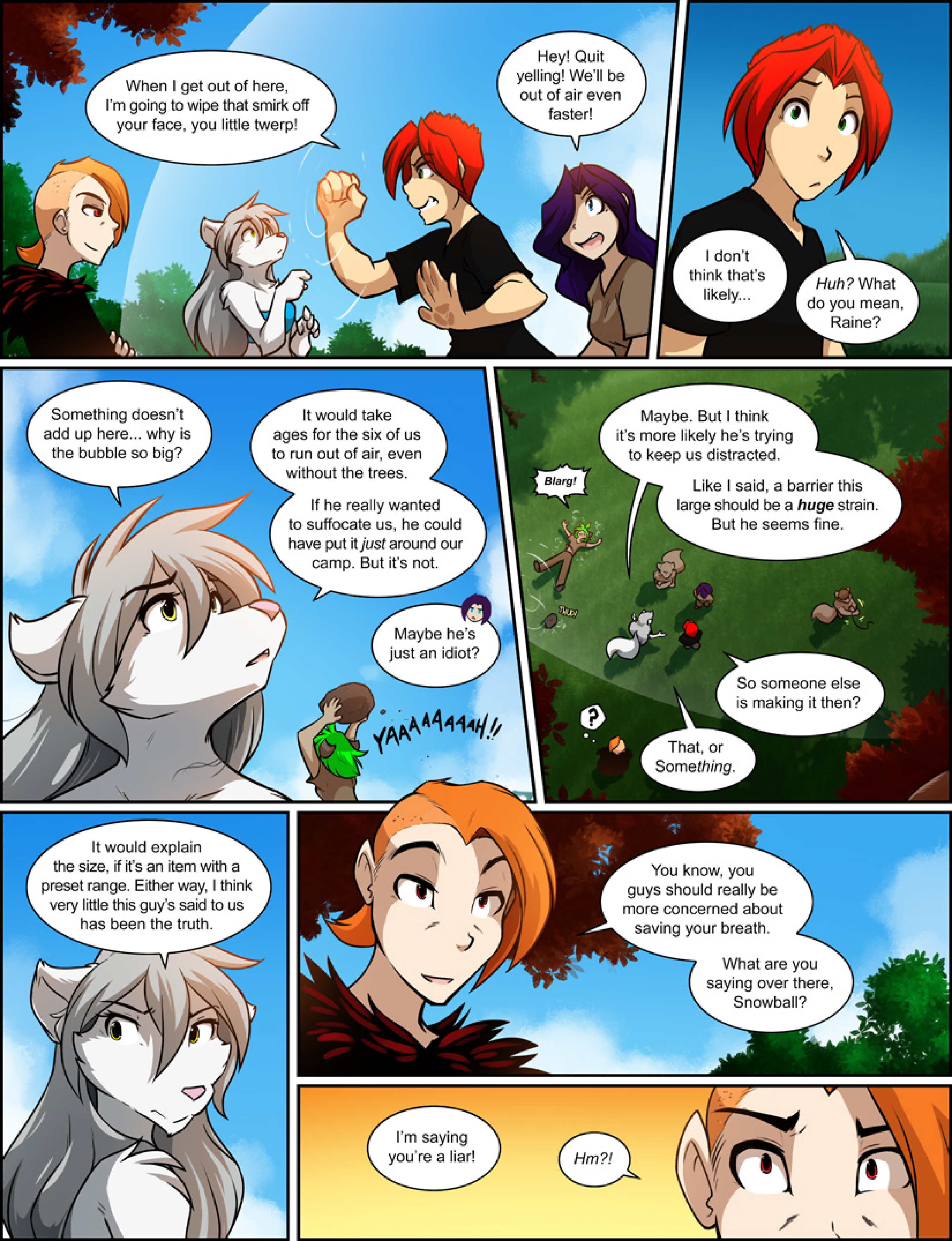

Man, I can't see anything from here.
Do you think that really was Trace?
Dunno.
It had to be, right? They let him in.
But the rumors were he died! And Seer Brahn was heard calling himself Grand Templar.
What gives? Do you think it's a coup?
Maybe.
Heh, sorry.
Thanks for indulging me with this, Landen. I know I can get a little Templar-crazy sometimes.
Yup.
Say, in all the commotion, we never did get paid by those Basitin guys.
You think they were serious about hiring us?
Probably not.
Yeah, I guess we did kinda mug them first.
sigh...
It's a shame. One of them was kinda cute.
Hey, Landy?
If Trace has come back to reclaim his position, what does that mean for the rest of the Templar order?
If it came down to it, who would everyone side with?
MEH.
...Whoever won.

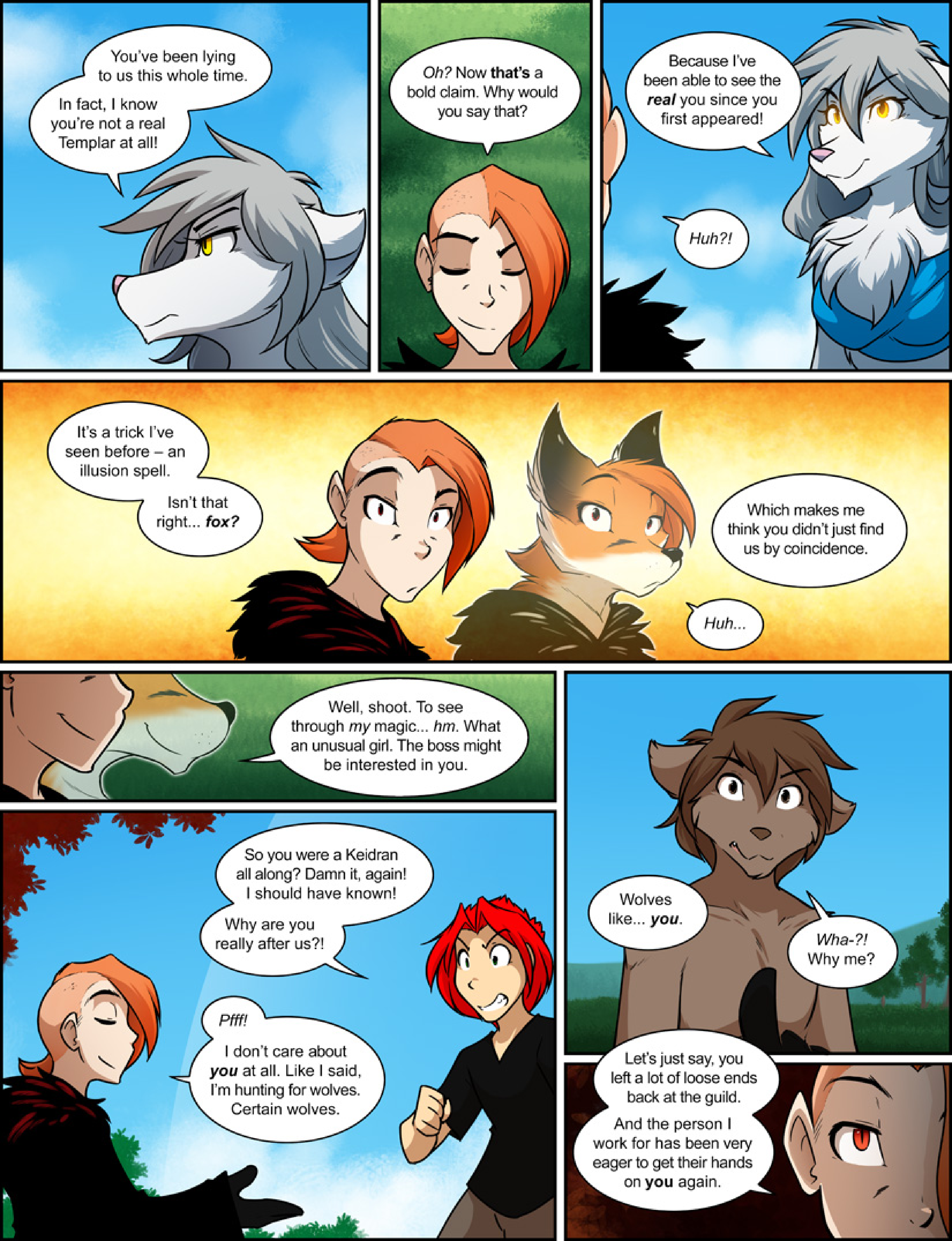

The next morning...
Ngh...
Mmph...
Wow, I haven't slept that well in ages...
Huh? Maren?
What are you doing in my tent?
Yiiiip!!
Maren! I-I'm so sorry! I don't even remember falling asleep!
Why didn't you just push me off?
You were very heavy.
And she wouldn't let us wake you up.
She cares more than she lets on.
Shut it, fleabag!
Whatever you say, ice queen.

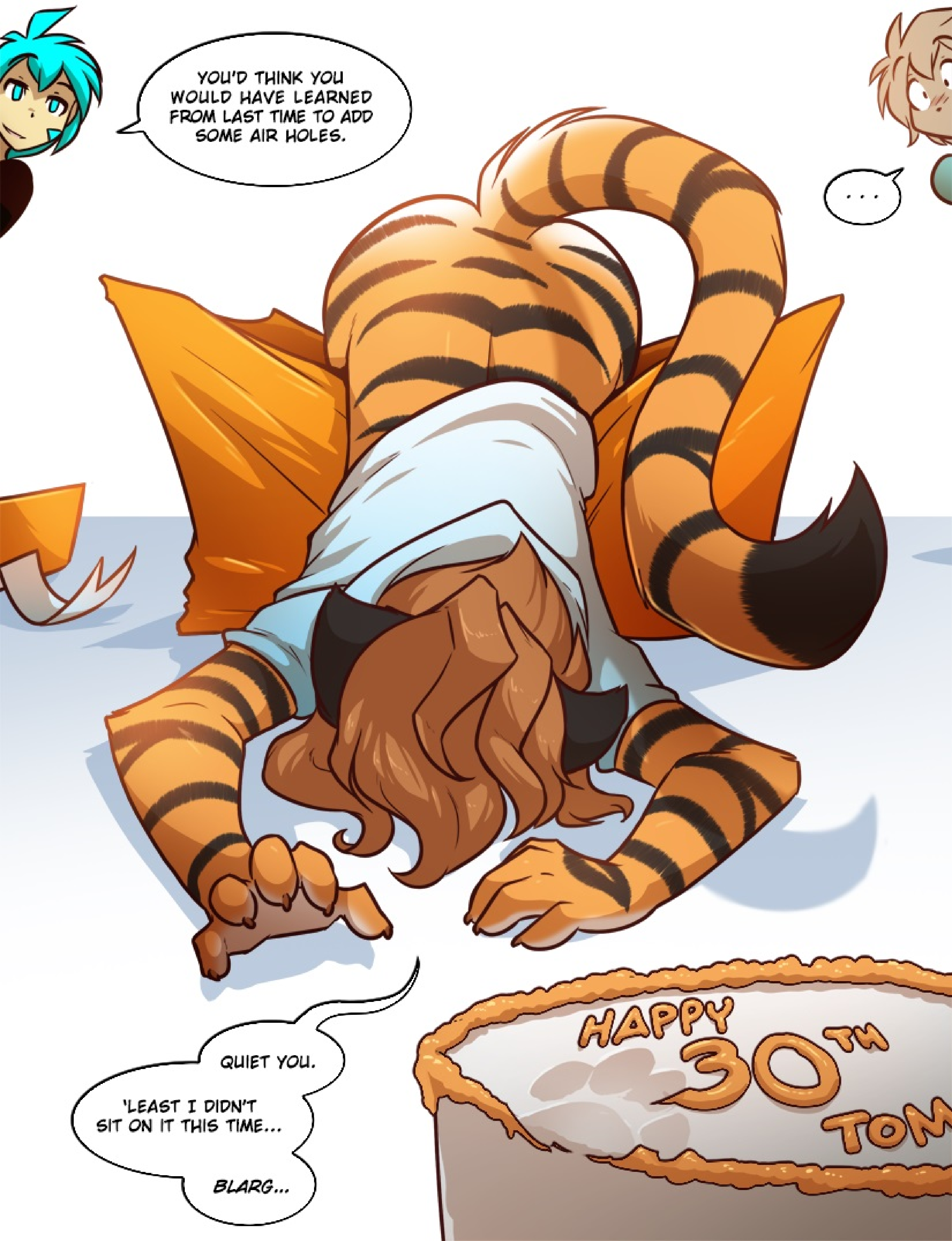

Alright, everyone packed and ready? We need to get moving.
Hang on, I gotta go!
Well hurry up! We're burning daylight.
Hey, has anyone seen Mrs. Nibbly this morning?
It's a wild squirrel. Maybe it finally decided to go back home.
Nah, she's probably just sleeping in one of these trees.
Nibs!
♫♪
THUNK!
Ow!
What the-?
Uh... guys? I think there's something wrong with the outside...

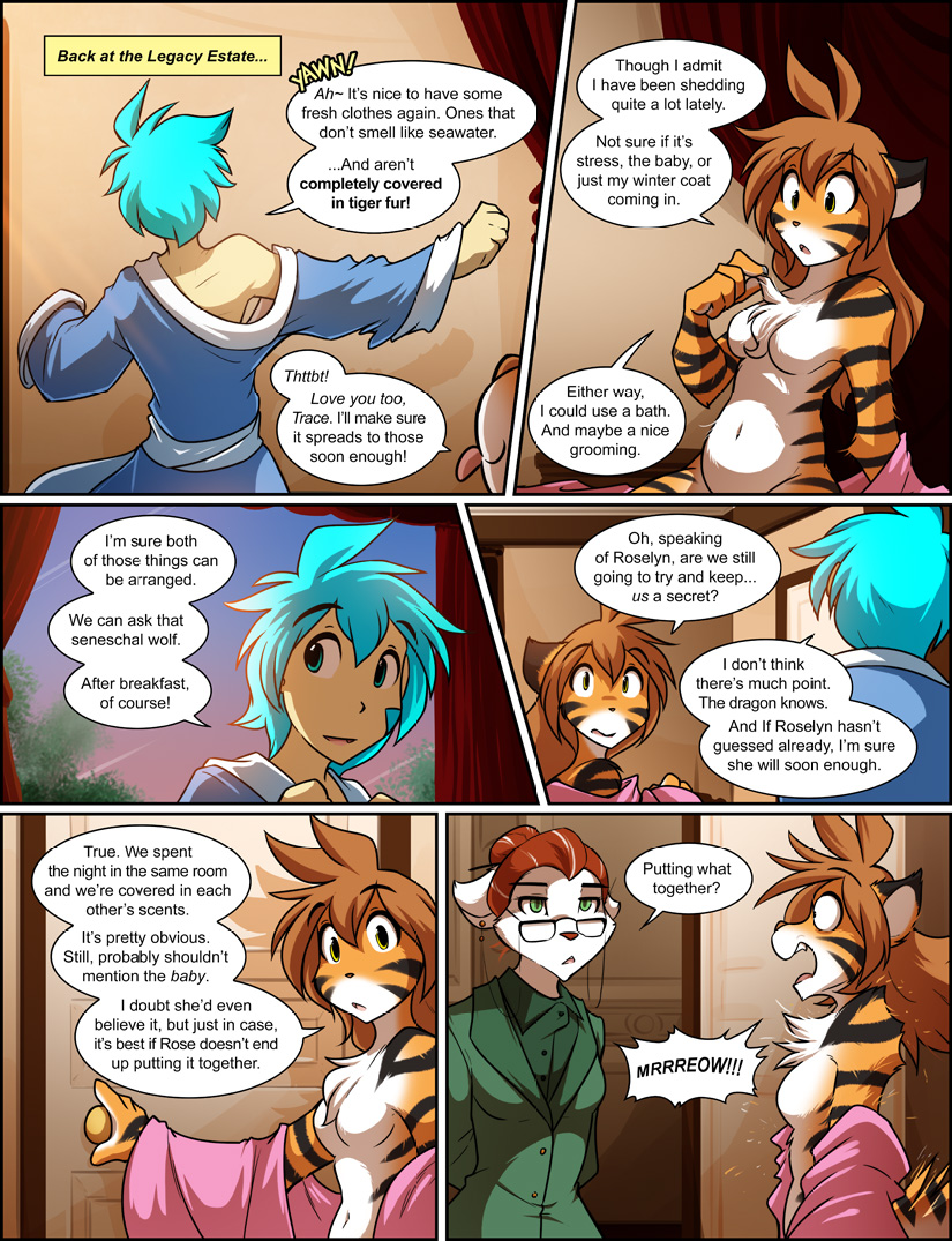

It's over here, too!
It goes all the way around the hot spring!
What the hell's going on?
Are you trying something, wolf?!
What?! Come on!
<I'm a Keidran with no mana crystals and wearing a magic suppressor.>
Get real.
...What?
A barrier this size would require a *lot* of magic. It's probably being maintained actively by *something*.
Raine! What about teleporting us out?
I only did that once by accident.
And even if I could, stuck as a wolf, I'm just as powerless without mana crystals.
Hey! You're all forgetting someone!
Alright, stand back!
I may have flunked out of the Templar, but I still know how to blow stuff up!
Wait, you moron! Maybe we should think about thi-
FWOOM!!
Okay... maybe I should have stood back a little too.
Cough!

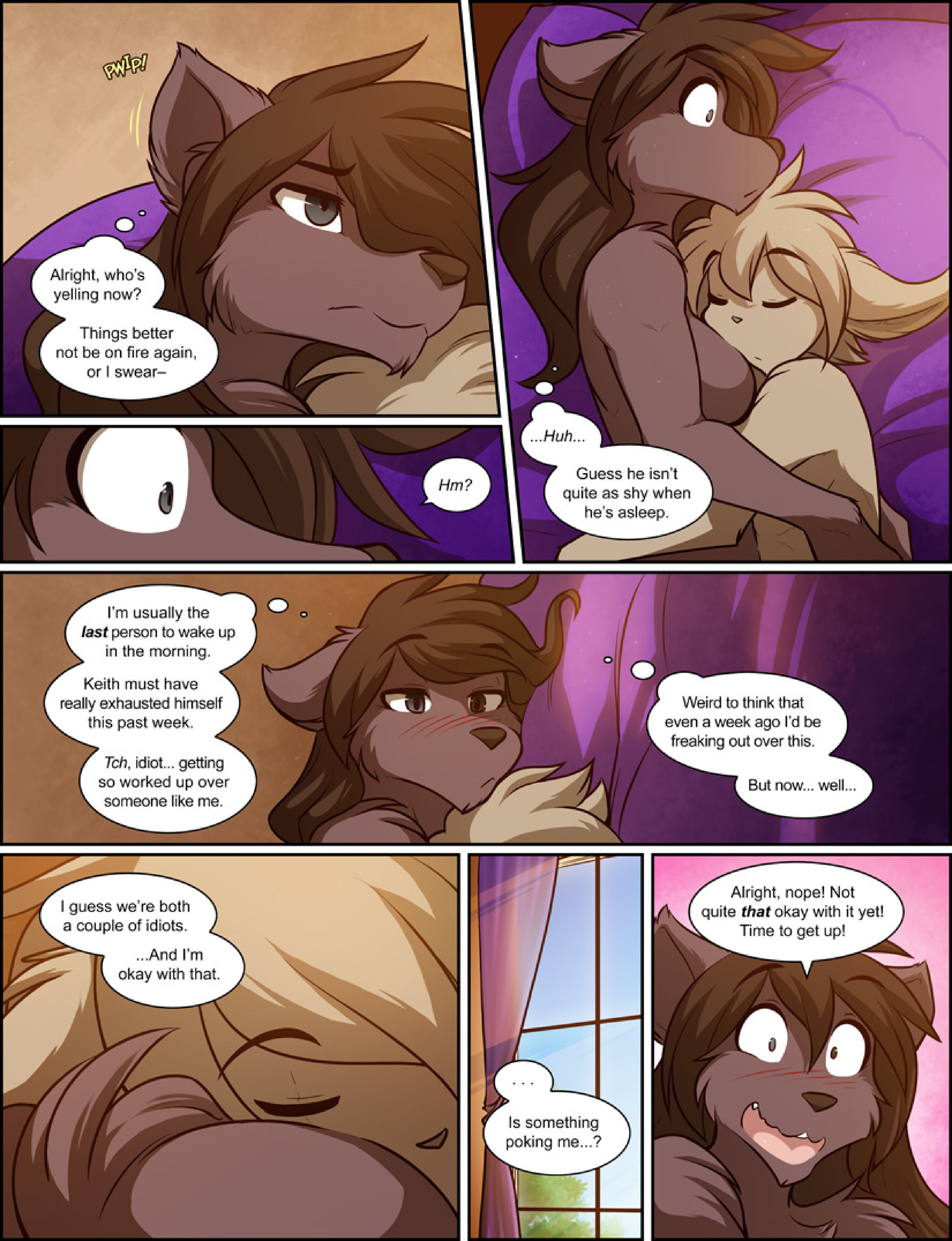

Hahaha!
CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!
Bravo! Well done!
It's no wonder you flunked out of the Templar.
Not that many of my, er... *colleagues* are much better.
Who the hell are you?! How did you find us?
You can call me Carver. And finding you was easy.
All the other Templar in Edinmire are running around like chickens with their heads cut off.
But me? I knew the nearby hot springs were just the place to look for *missing wolves*. And voilà!
I don't know what you're talking about. We're **not** from Edinmire!
Mmhm. Sure. Well, either way you're mine. Lots of folk looking for wolves these days.
Especially... *certain wolves.*
You can't keep us in here forever!
You'll have to let us out eventually if you intend to capture us!
Nah! I'm just going to wait until all your air runs out!
Why you little–!
Honestly, at first I was hoping that you wouldn't find the barrier until it was too late.
But seeing the looks on your faces is so much more fun!
...Huh...

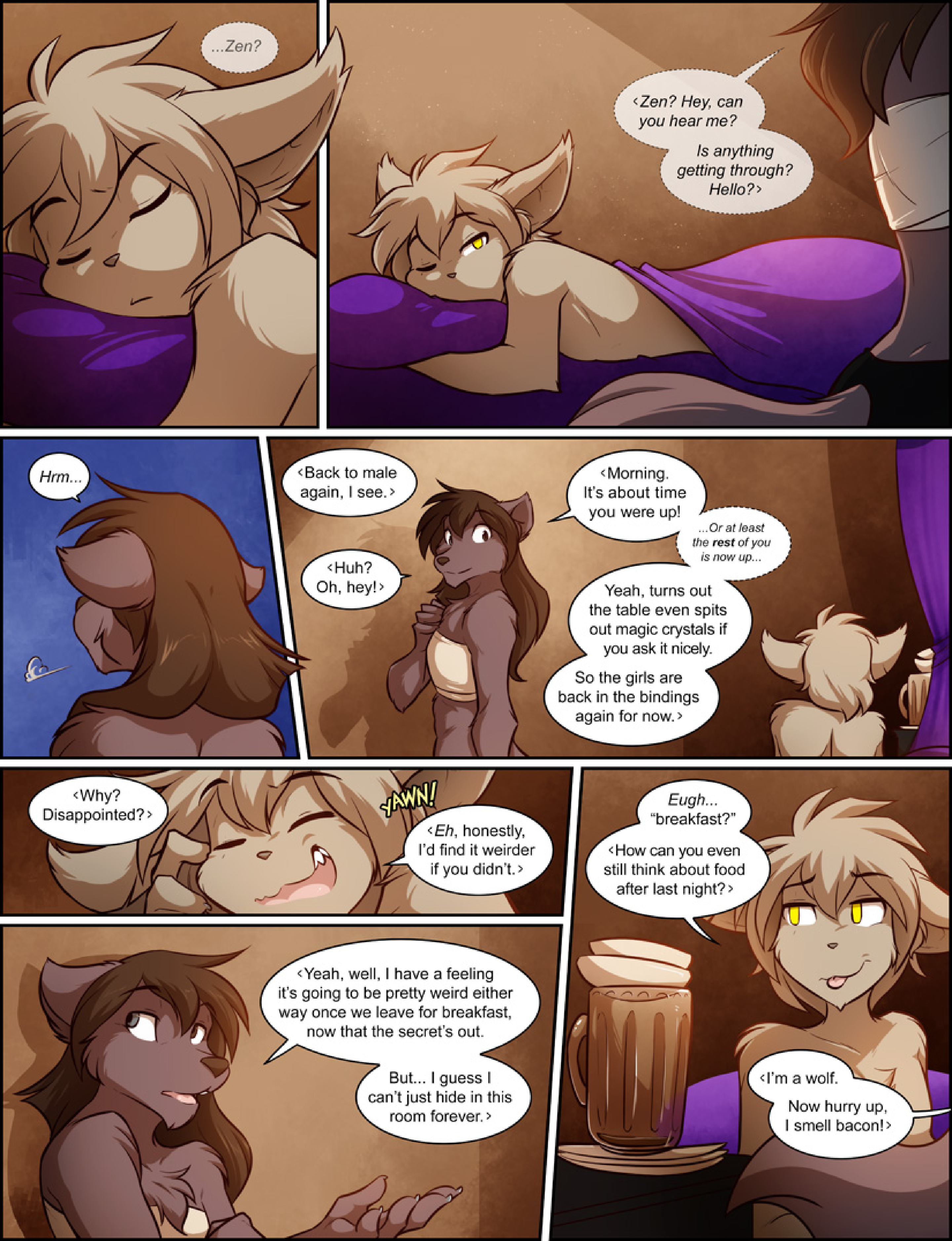

When I get out of here, I'm going to wipe that smirk off your face, you little twerp!
Hey! Quit yelling! We'll be out of air even faster!
I don't think that's likely...
Huh? What do you mean, Raine?
Something doesn't add up here... why is the bubble so big?
It would take ages for the six of us to run out of air, even without the trees.
If he really wanted to suffocate us, he could have put it *just* around our camp. But it's not.
Maybe he's just an idiot?
YAAAAAAAAH!!
Maybe. But I think it's more likely he's trying to keep us distracted.
Like I said, a barrier this large should be a ***huge*** strain. But he seems fine.
Blarg!
THUD!
So someone else is making it then?
?
That, or *Something*.
It would explain the size, if it's an item with a preset range. Either way, I think very little this guy's said to us has been the truth.
You know, you guys should really be more concerned about saving your breath.
What are you saying over there, Snowball?
I'm saying you're a liar!
Hm?!

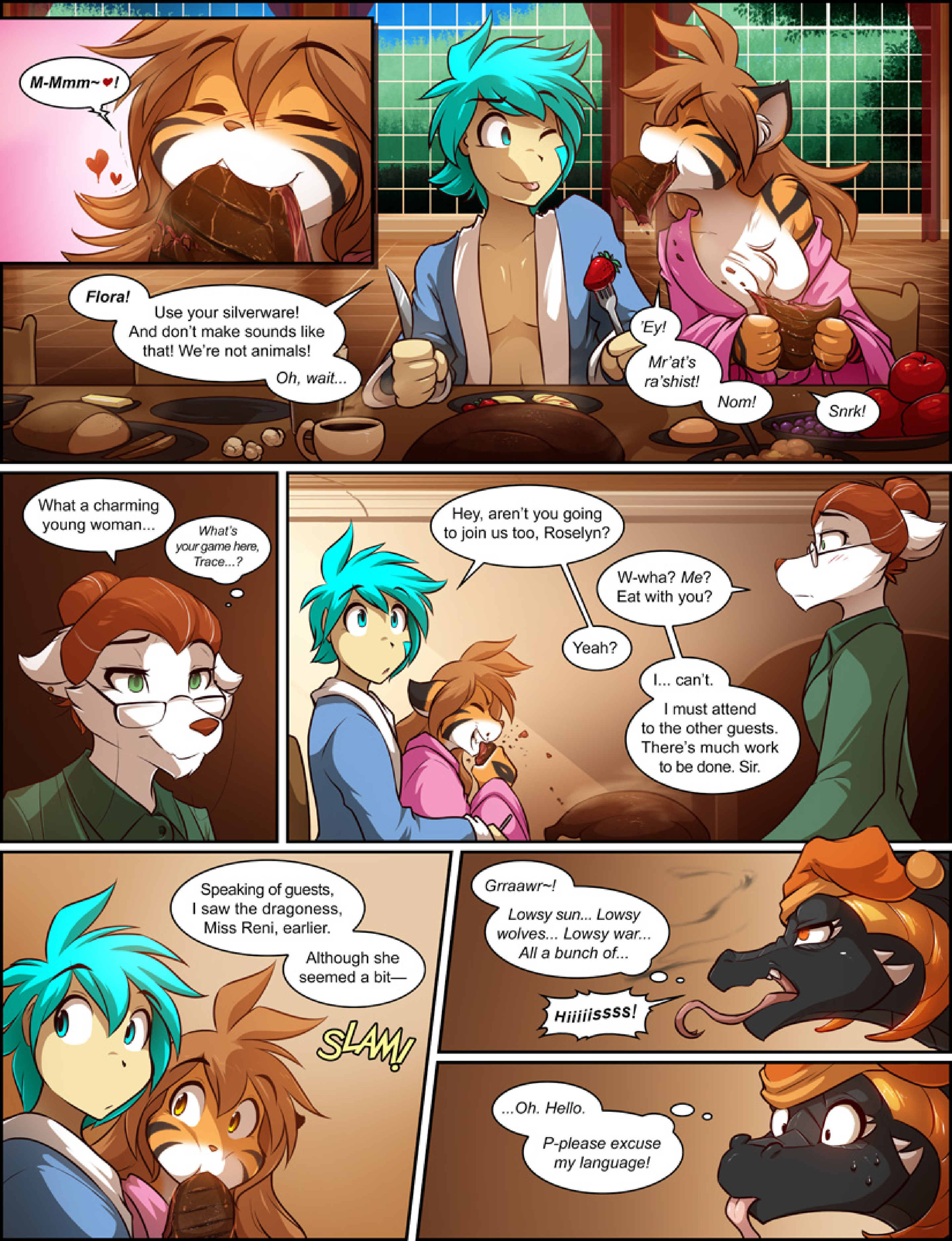

You've been lying to us this whole time.
In fact, I know you're not a real Templar at all!
Oh? Now **that's** a bold claim. Why would you say that?
Because I've been able to see the ***real*** you since you first appeared!
Huh?!
It's a trick I've seen before – an illusion spell.
Isn't that right... ***fox?***
Which makes me think you didn't just find us by coincidence.
Huh...
Well, shoot. To see through *my* magic... *hm.* What an unusual girl. The boss might be interested in you.
So you were a Keidran all along? Damn it, again! I should have known!
Why are you really after us?!
Pfff!
I don't care about ***you*** at all. Like I said, I'm hunting for wolves. Certain wolves.
Wolves like... ***you***.
Wha-?! Why me?
Let's just say, you left a lot of loose ends back at the guild.
And the person I work for has been very eager to get their hands on **you** again.

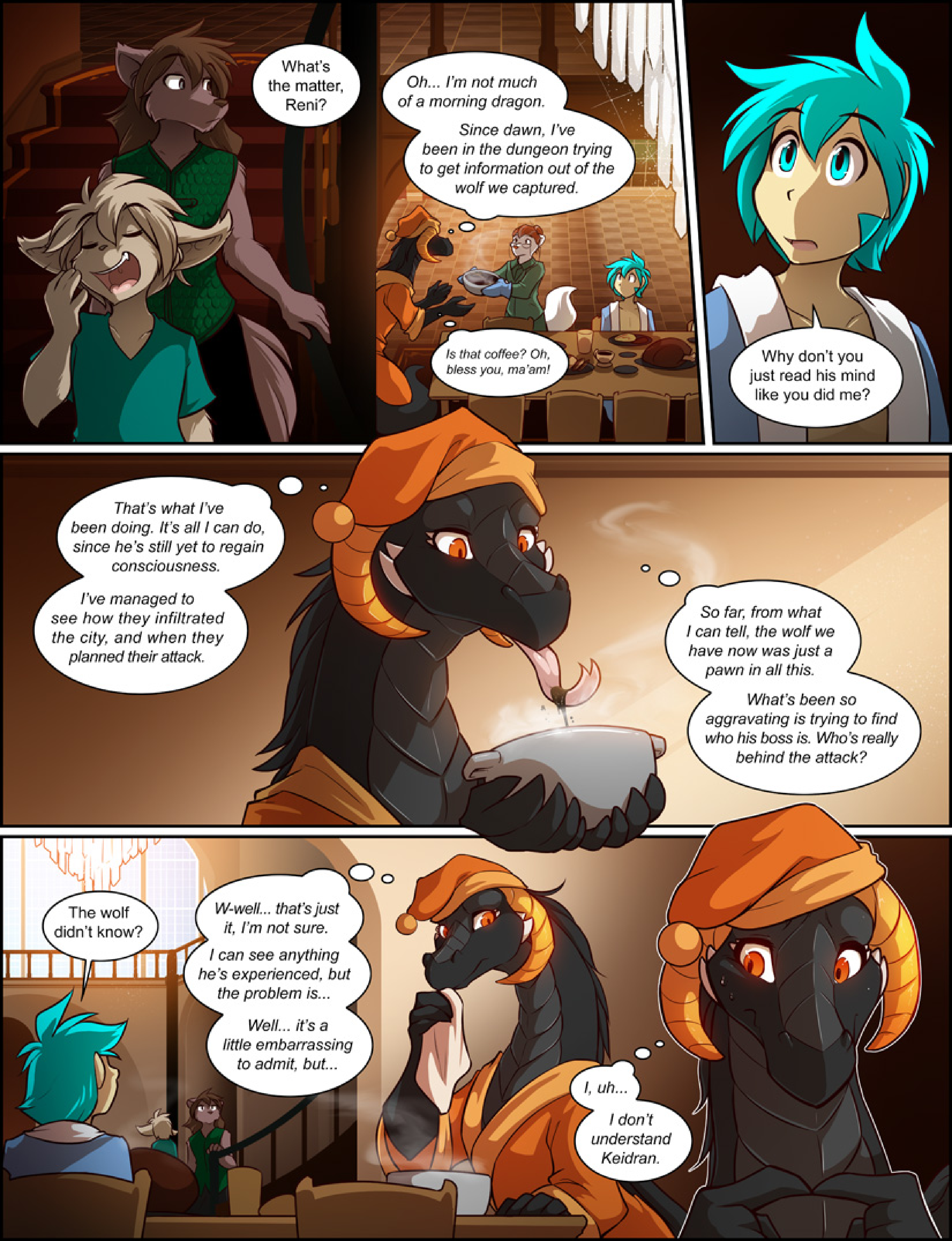

YOU'D THINK YOU WOULD HAVE LEARNED FROM LAST TIME TO ADD SOME AIR HOLES.
...
QUIET YOU.
'LEAST I DIDN'T SIT ON IT THIS TIME...
BLARG...
HAPPY 30TH TOM

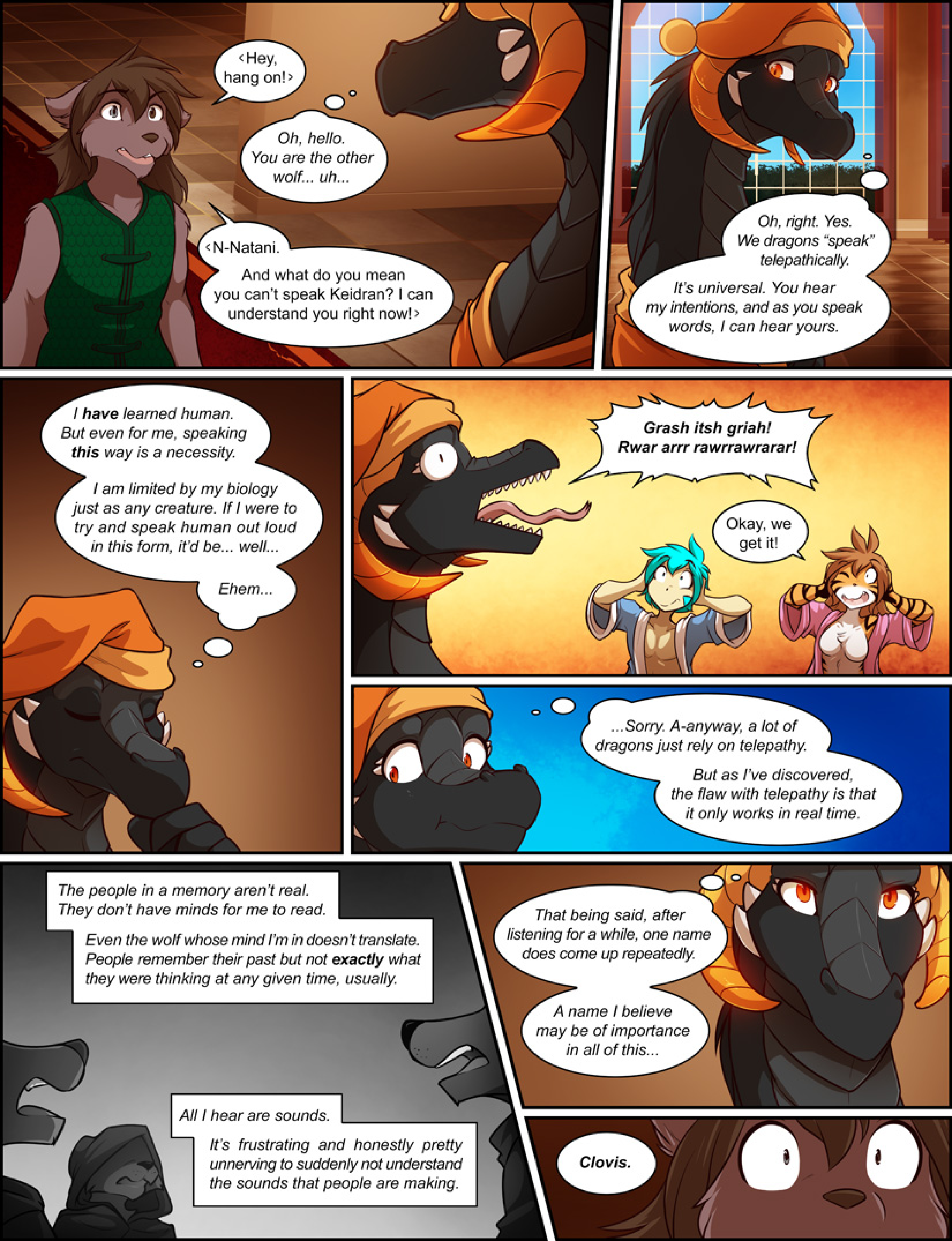

Back at the Legacy Estate...
YAWN!
Ah~ It's nice to have some fresh clothes again. Ones that don't smell like seawater.
...And aren't completely covered in tiger fur!
Thttbt!
Love you too, Trace. I'll make sure it spreads to those soon enough!
Though I admit I have been shedding quite a lot lately.
Not sure if it's stress, the baby, or just my winter coat coming in.
Either way, I could use a bath. And maybe a nice grooming.
I'm sure both of those things can be arranged.
We can ask that seneschal wolf.
After breakfast, of course!
Oh, speaking of Roselyn, are we still going to try and keep... us a secret?
I don't think there's much point. The dragon knows.
And If Roselyn hasn't guessed already, I'm sure she will soon enough.
True. We spent the night in the same room and we're covered in each other's scents.
It's pretty obvious. Still, probably shouldn't mention the baby.
I doubt she'd even believe it, but just in case, it's best if Rose doesn't end up putting it together.
Putting what together?
MRRREOW!!!

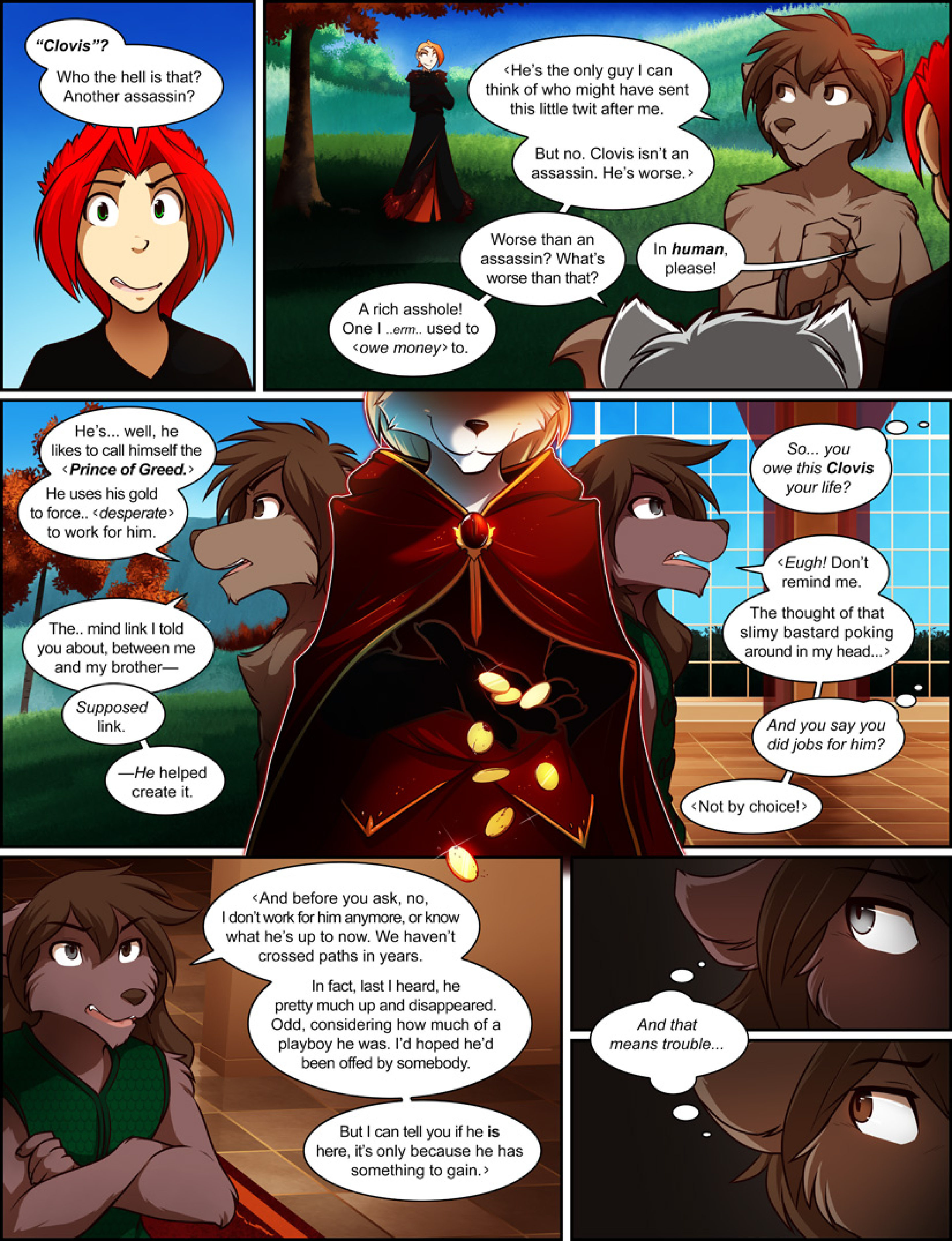

PWIP!
Alright, who's yelling now?
Things better not be on fire again, or I swear–
Hm?
...Huh...
Guess he isn't quite as shy when he's asleep.
I'm usually the ***last*** person to wake up in the morning.
Keith must have really exhausted himself this past week.
Tch, idiot... getting so worked up over someone like me.
Weird to think that even a week ago I'd be freaking out over this.
But now... well...
I guess we're both a couple of idiots.
...And I'm okay with that.
. . .
Is something poking me...?
Alright, nope! Not quite ***that*** okay with it yet! Time to get up!

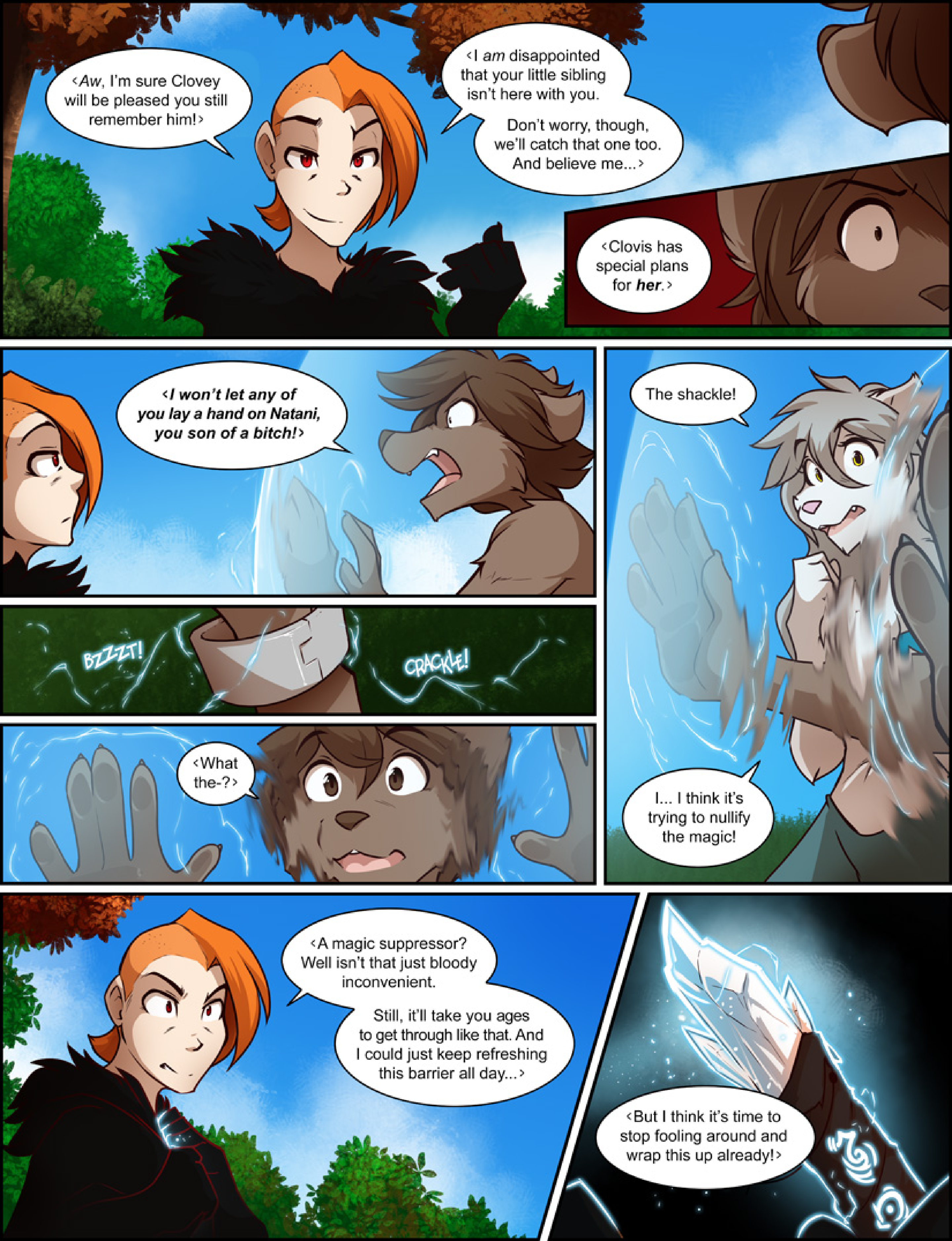

...Zen?
<Zen? Hey, can you hear me?
Is anything getting through? Hello?>
Hrm...
<Back to male again, I see.>
<Huh? Oh, hey!>
<Morning. It's about time you were up!
...Or at least the **rest** of you is now up...
Yeah, turns out the table even spits out magic crystals if you ask it nicely.
So the girls are back in the bindings again for now.>
<Why? Disappointed?>
YAWN!
<*Eh*, honestly, I'd find it weirder if you didn't.>
Eugh... "breakfast?"
<How can you even still think about food after last night?>
<Yeah, well, I have a feeling it's going to be pretty weird either way once we leave for breakfast, now that the secret's out.
But... I guess I can't just hide in this room forever.>
<I'm a wolf.
Now hurry up, I smell bacon!>

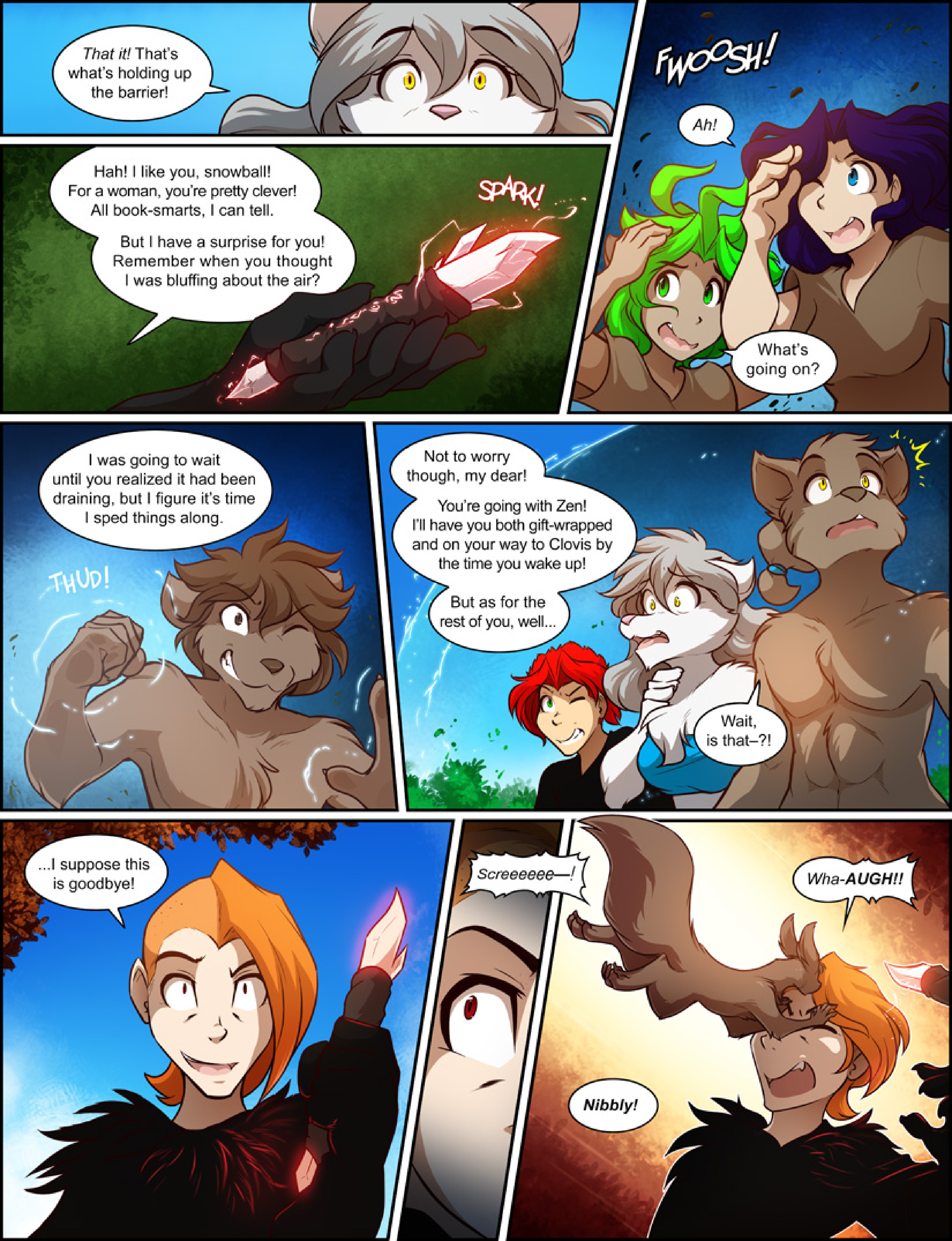

M-Mmm~♥!
Flora! Use your silverware! And don't make sounds like that! We're not animals!
Oh, wait...
'Ey!
Mr'at's ra'shist!
Nom!
Snrk!
What a charming young woman...
What's your game here, Trace...?
Hey, aren't you going to join us too, Roselyn?
Yeah?
W-wha? Me? Eat with you?
I... can't.
I must attend to the other guests. There's much work to be done. Sir.
Speaking of guests, I saw the dragoness, Miss Reni, earlier.
Although she seemed a bit—
SLAM!
Grraawr~!
Lowsy sun... Lowsy wolves... Lowsy war... All a bunch of...
Hiiiiissss!
...Oh. Hello.
P-please excuse my language!

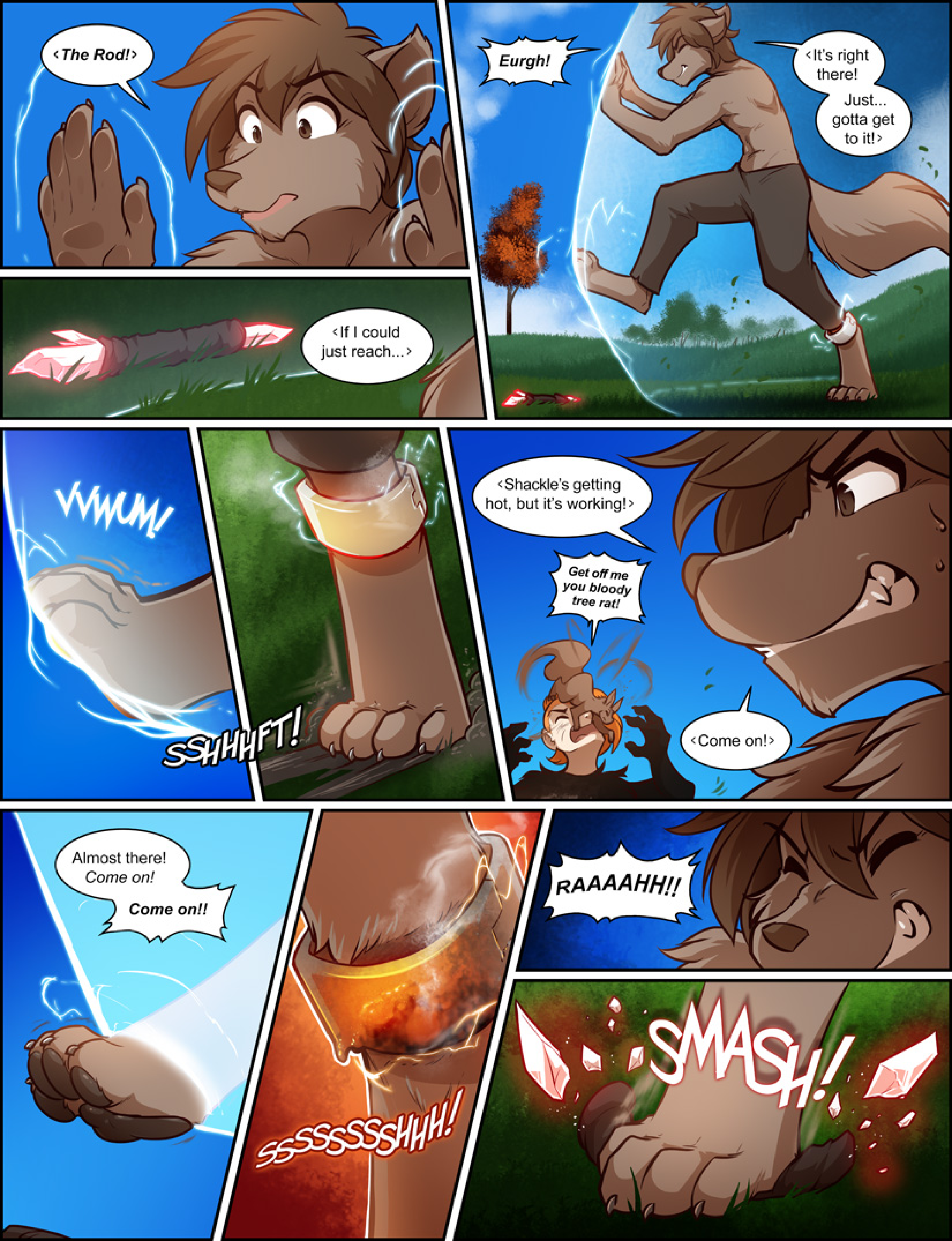

What's the matter, Reni?
Oh... I'm not much of a morning dragon.
Since dawn, I've been in the dungeon trying to get information out of the wolf we captured.
Is that coffee? Oh, bless you, ma'am!
Why don't you just read his mind like you did me?
That's what I've been doing. It's all I can do, since he's still yet to regain consciousness.
I've managed to see how they infiltrated the city, and when they planned their attack.
So far, from what I can tell, the wolf we have now was just a pawn in all this.
What's been so aggravating is trying to find who his boss is. Who's really behind the attack?
The wolf didn't know?
W-well... that's just it, I'm not sure.
I can see anything he's experienced, but the problem is...
Well... it's a little embarrassing to admit, but...
I, uh...
I don't understand Keidran.

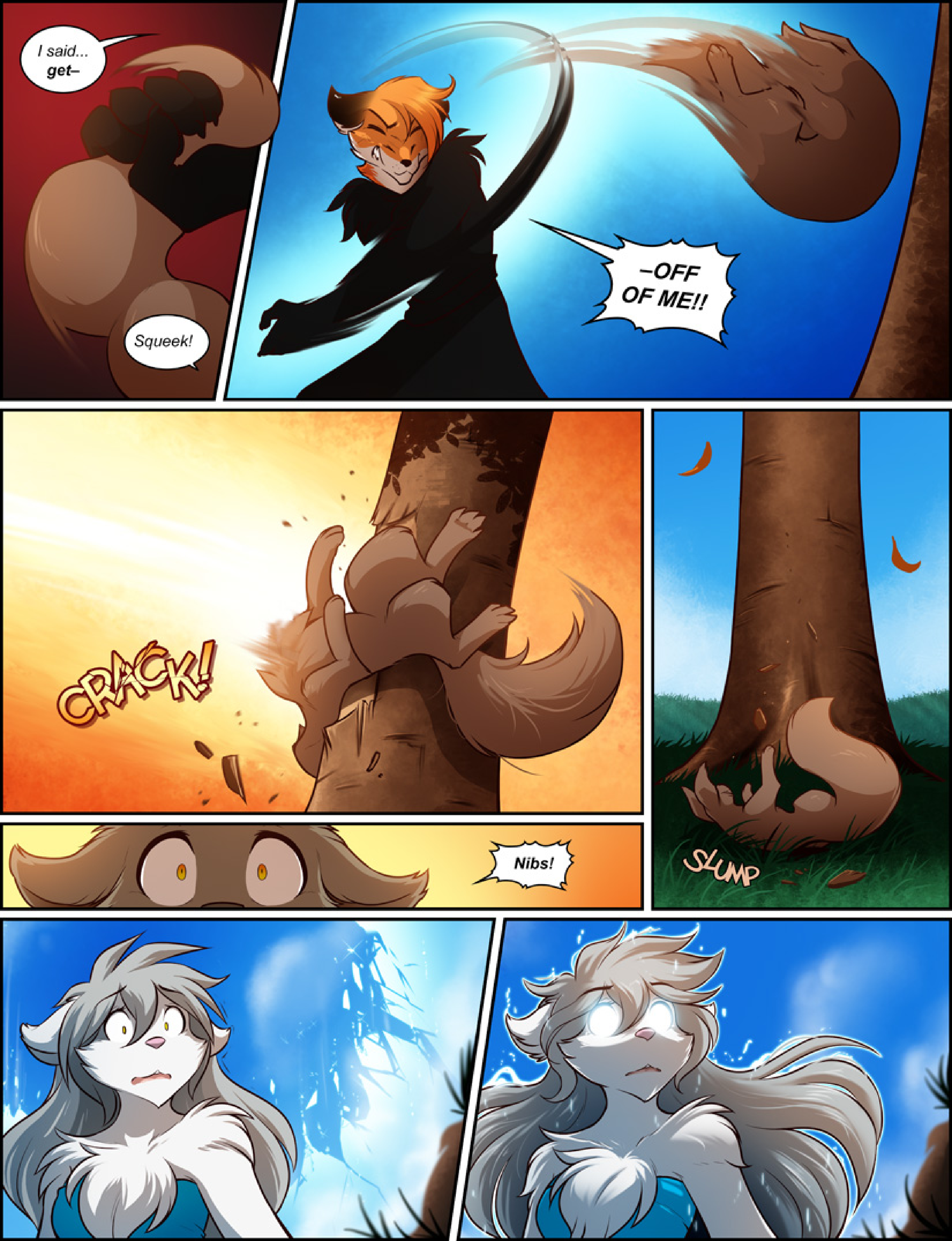

‹Hey, hang on!›
Oh, hello. You are the other wolf... uh...
‹N-Natani.
And what do you mean you can't speak Keidran? I can understand you right now!›
Oh, right. Yes. We dragons "speak" telepathically.
It's universal. You hear my intentions, and as you speak words, I can hear yours.
I **have** learned human. But even for me, speaking **this** way is a necessity.
I am limited by my biology just as any creature. If I were to try and speak human out loud in this form, it'd be... well...
Ehem...
Grash itsh griah! Rwar arrr rawrrawrarar!
Okay, we get it!
...Sorry. A-anyway, a lot of dragons just rely on telepathy.
But as I've discovered, the flaw with telepathy is that it only works in real time.
The people in a memory aren't real. They don't have minds for me to read.
Even the wolf whose mind I'm in doesn't translate. People remember their past but not **exactly** what they were thinking at any given time, usually.
All I hear are sounds.
It's frustrating and honestly pretty unnerving to suddenly not understand the sounds that people are making.
That being said, after listening for a while, one name does come up repeatedly.
A name I believe may be of importance in all of this...
Clovis.

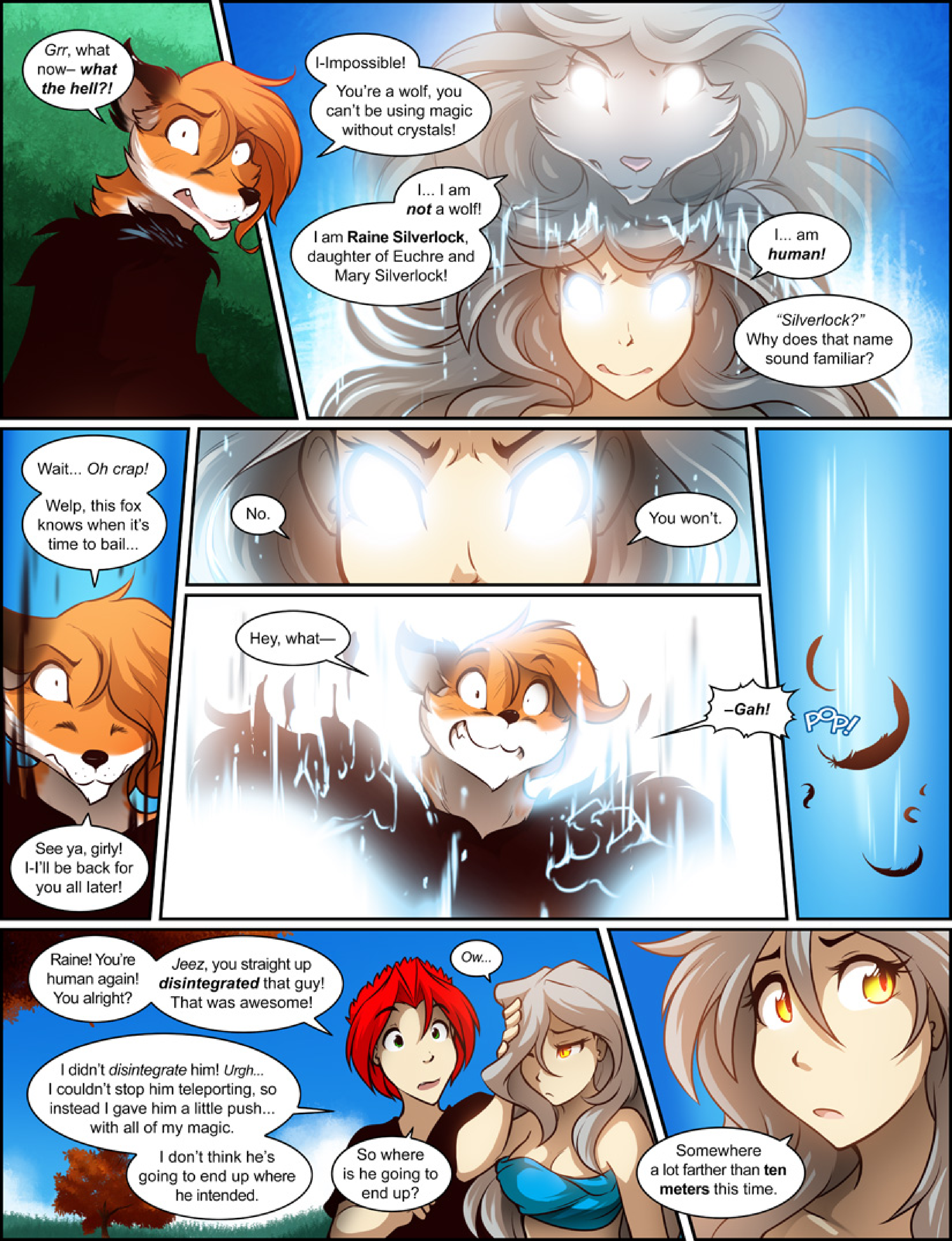

"Clovis"?
Who the hell is that? Another assassin?
‹He's the only guy I can think of who might have sent this little twit after me.
But no. Clovis isn't an assassin. He's worse.›
Worse than an assassin? What's worse than that?
In human, please!
A rich asshole! One I ..erm.. used to ‹owe money› to.
He's... well, he likes to call himself the ‹Prince of Greed.›
He uses his gold to force.. ‹desperate› to work for him.
The.. mind link I told you about, between me and my brother—
Supposed link.
—He helped create it.
So... you owe this Clovis your life?
‹Eugh! Don't remind me.
The thought of that slimy bastard poking around in my head...›
And you say you did jobs for him?
‹Not by choice!›
‹And before you ask, no, I don't work for him anymore, or know what he's up to now. We haven't crossed paths in years.
In fact, last I heard, he pretty much up and disappeared. Odd, considering how much of a playboy he was. I'd hoped he'd been offed by somebody.
But I can tell you if he is here, it's only because he has something to gain.›
And that means trouble...

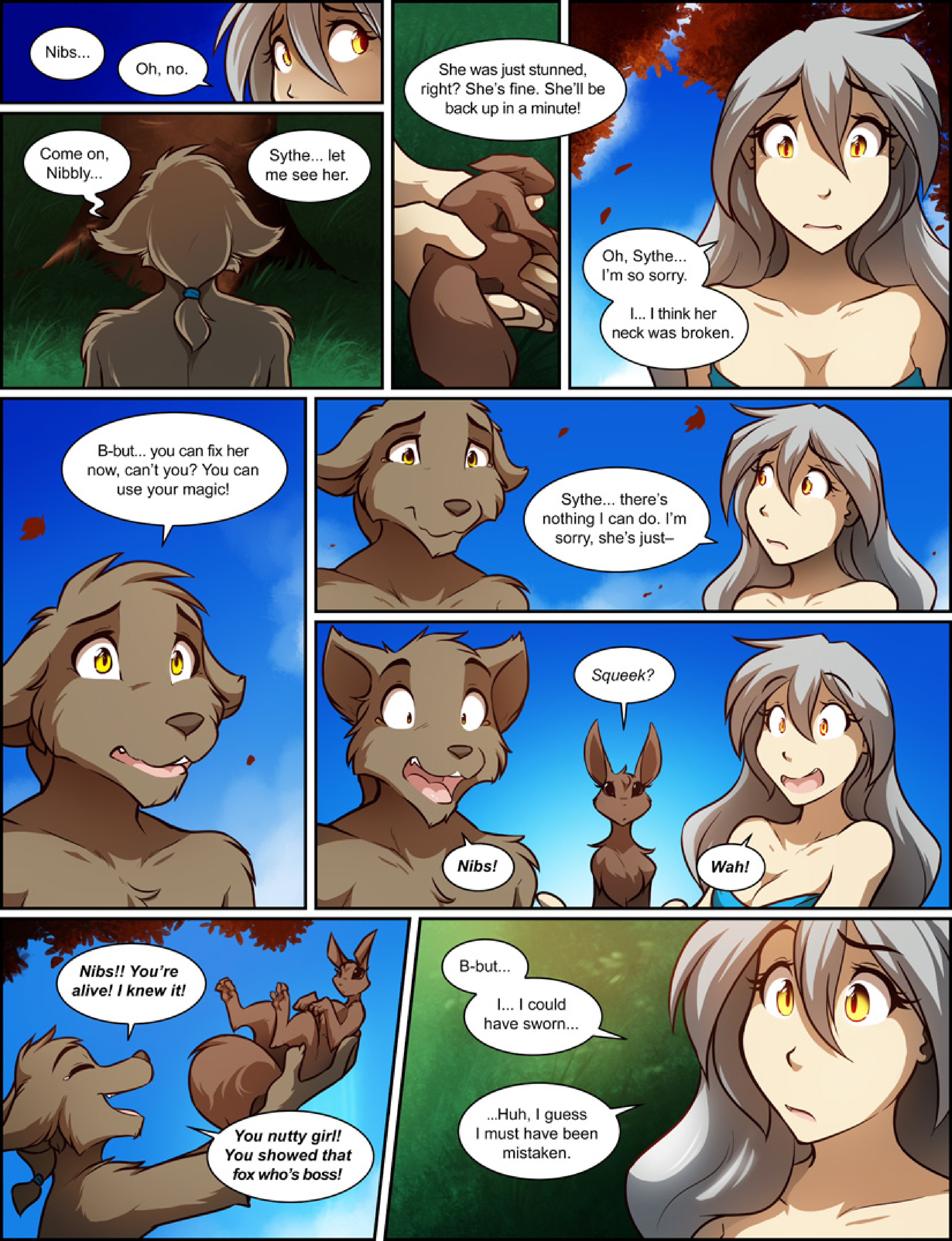

‹*Aw*, I'm sure Clovey will be pleased you still remember him!›
‹I *am* disappointed that your little sibling isn't here with you.
Don't worry, though, we'll catch that one too. And believe me...›
‹Clovis has special plans for ***her***.›
‹***I won't let any of you lay a hand on Natani, you son of a bitch!***›
BZZZT!
CRACKLE!
‹What the-?›
The shackle!
I... I think it's trying to nullify the magic!
‹A magic suppressor? Well isn't that just bloody inconvenient.
Still, it'll take you ages to get through like that. And I could just keep refreshing this barrier all day...›
‹But I think it's time to stop fooling around and wrap this up already!›

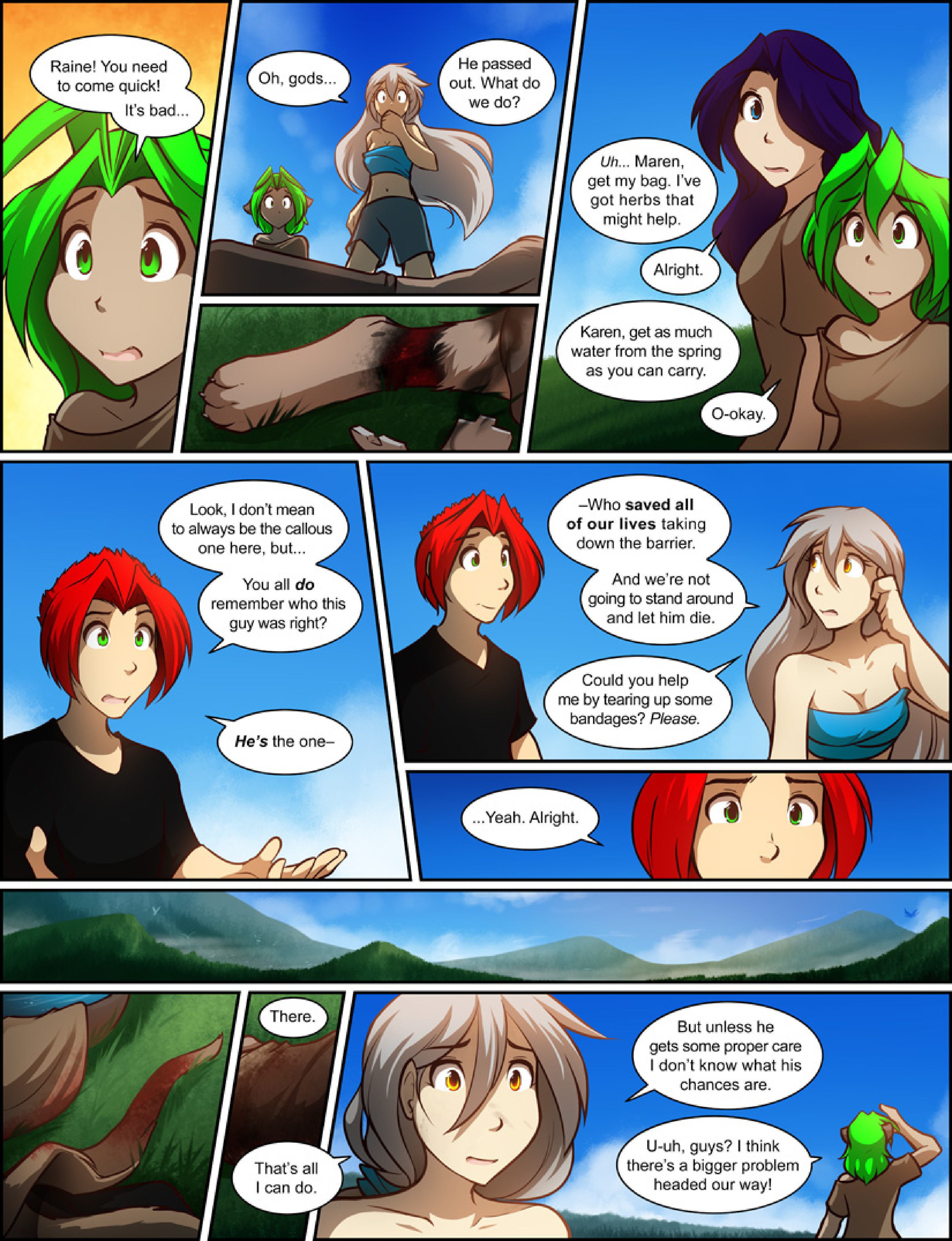

That it! That's what's holding up the barrier!
Hah! I like you, snowball! For a woman, you're pretty clever! All book-smarts, I can tell.
But I have a surprise for you! Remember when you thought I was bluffing about the air?
SPARK!
FWOOSH!
Ah!
What's going on?
I was going to wait until you realized it had been draining, but I figure it's time I sped things along.
THUD!
Not to worry though, my dear!
You're going with Zen! I'll have you both gift-wrapped and on your way to Clovis by the time you wake up!
But as for the rest of you, well...
Wait, is that–?!
...I suppose this is goodbye!
Screeeeeee—!
*Wha-**AUGH!!***
Nibbly!

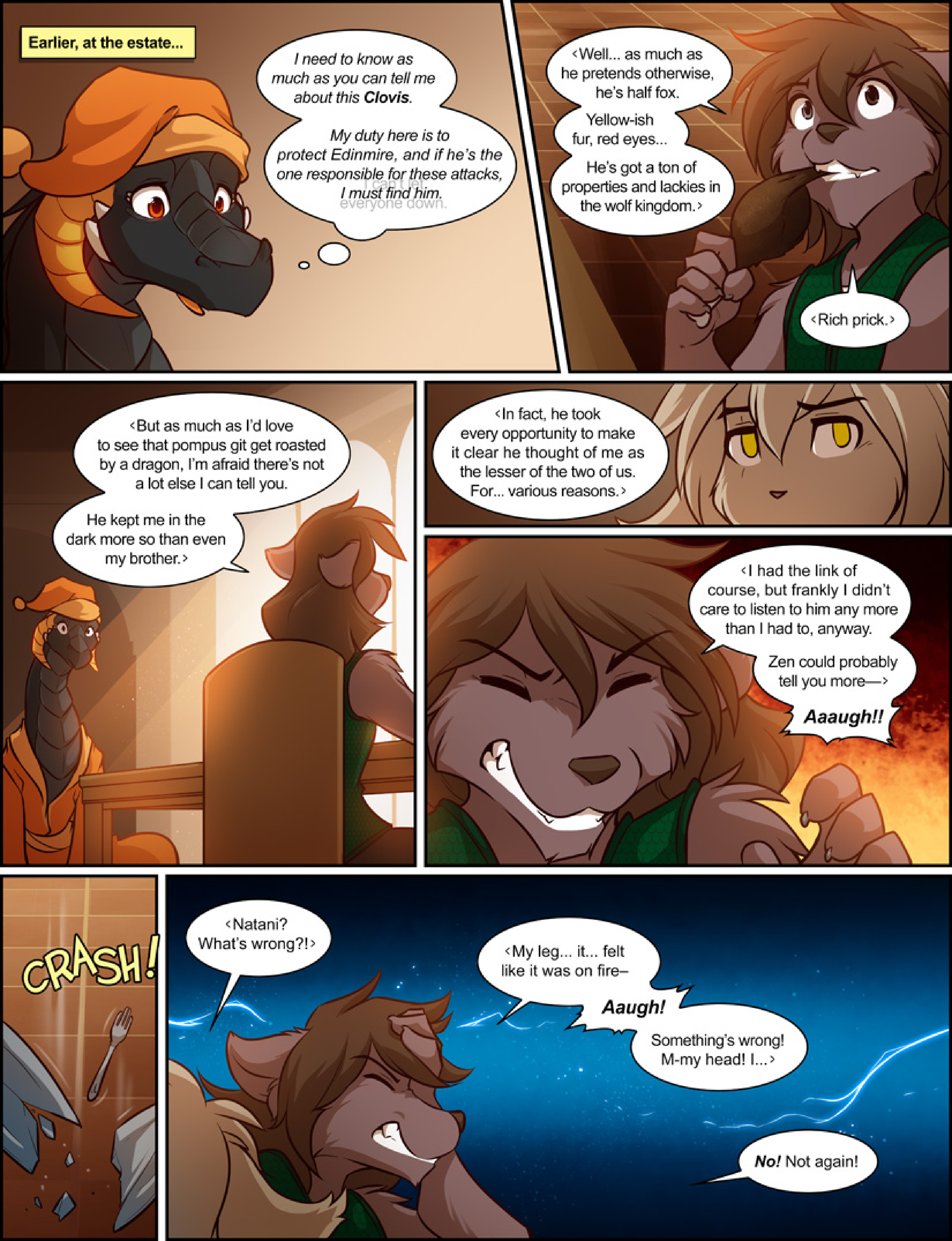

‹*The Rod!*›
‹If I could just reach...›
Eurgh!
‹It's right there!
Just... gotta get to it!›
VVWUM!
SSHHHFT!
‹Shackle's getting hot, but it's working!›
Get off me you bloody tree rat!
‹Come on!›
Almost there! *Come on!*
Come on!!
SSSSSSSSSHHH!
RAAAAHH!!
SMASH!

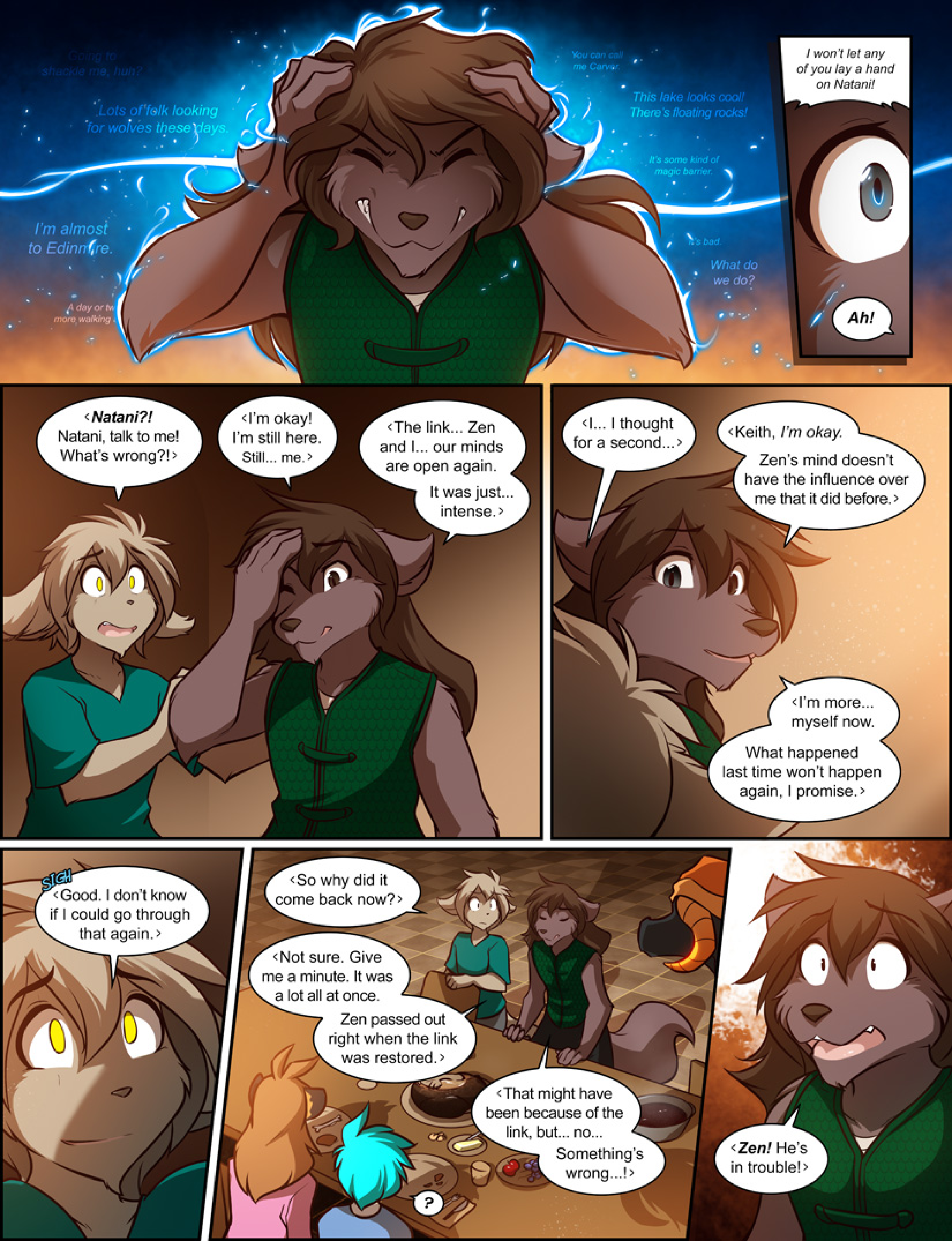

I said... **get–**
Squeek!
–OFF OF ME!!
CRACK!
SLUMP
Nibs!


Grr, what now– ***what the hell?!***
I-Impossible!
You're a wolf, you can't be using magic without crystals!
I... I am ***not*** a wolf!
I am **Raine Silverlock**, daughter of Euchre and Mary Silverlock!
I... am ***human!***
"Silverlock?" Why does that name sound familiar?
Wait... *Oh crap!*
Welp, this fox knows when it's time to bail...
See ya, girly! I-I'll be back for you all later!
No.
You won't.
Hey, what—
–Gah!
POP!
Raine! You're human again! You alright?
Jeez, you straight up ***disintegrated*** that guy! That was awesome!
Ow...
I didn't *disintegrate* him! *Urgh...* I couldn't stop him teleporting, so instead I gave him a little push... with all of my magic.
I don't think he's going to end up where he intended.
So where is he going to end up?
Somewhere a lot farther than **ten meters** this time.

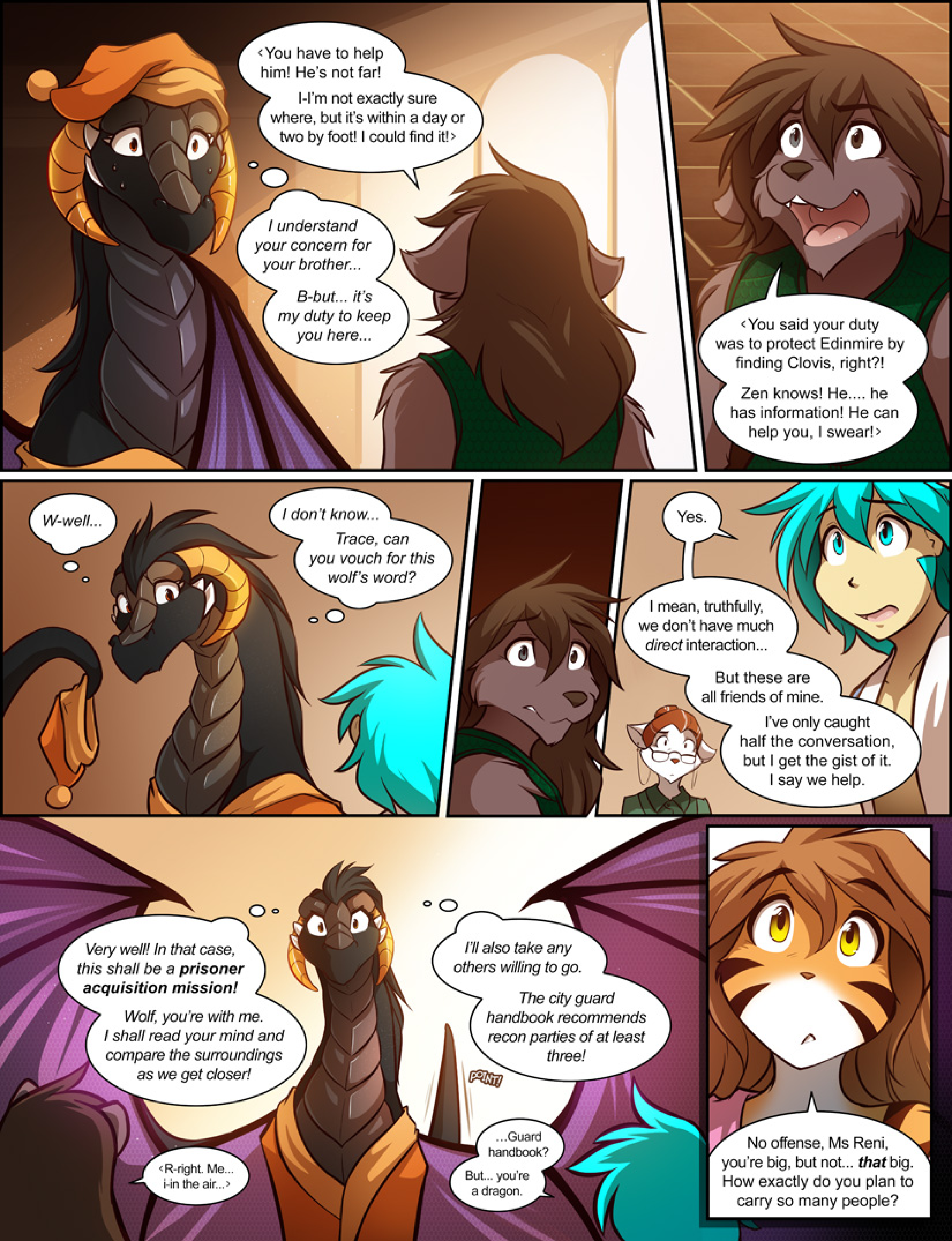

Nibs...
Oh, no.
Come on, Nibbly...
Sythe... let me see her.
She was just stunned, right? She's fine. She'll be back up in a minute!
Oh, Sythe... I'm so sorry.
I... I think her neck was broken.
B-but... you can fix her now, can't you? You can use your magic!
Sythe... there's nothing I can do. I'm sorry, she's just–
Squeek?
Nibs!
Wah!
Nibs!! You're alive! I knew it!
You nutty girl! You showed that fox who's boss!
B-but...
I... I could have sworn...
...Huh, I guess I must have been mistaken.

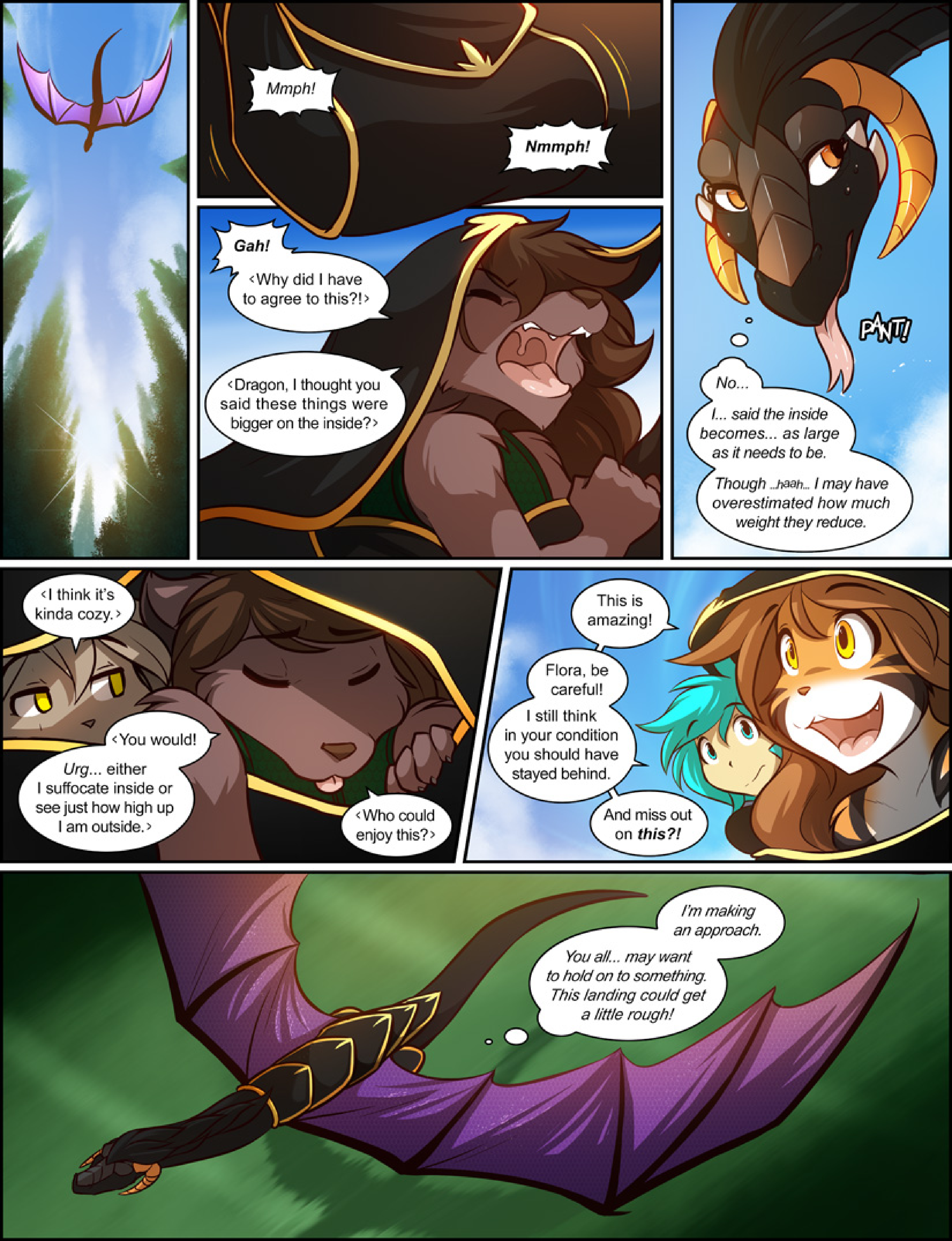

Raine! You need to come quick!
It's bad...
Oh, gods...
He passed out. What do we do?
Uh... Maren, get my bag. I've got herbs that might help.
Alright.
Karen, get as much water from the spring as you can carry.
O-okay.
Look, I don't mean to always be the callous one here, but...
You all ***do*** remember who this guy was right?
He's the one–
–Who **saved all of our lives** taking down the barrier.
And we're not going to stand around and let him die.
Could you help me by tearing up some bandages? *Please.*
...Yeah. Alright.
There.
That's all I can do.
But unless he gets some proper care I don't know what his chances are.
U-uh, guys? I think there's a bigger problem headed our way!

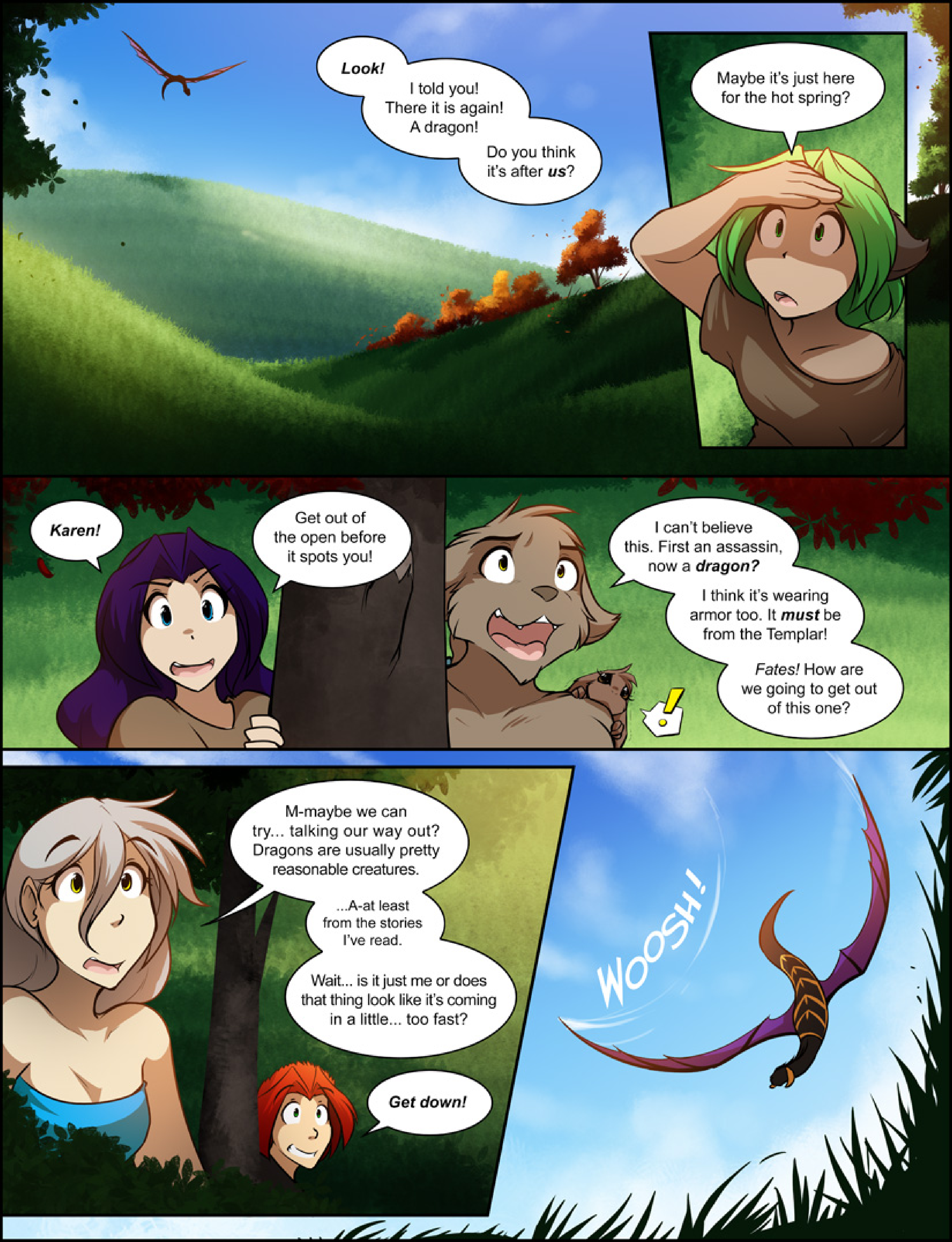

Earlier, at the estate...
I need to know as much as you can tell me about this ***Clovis****.*
My duty here is to protect Edinmire, and if he's the one responsible for these attacks, I must find him.
I can't let everyone down.
‹Well... as much as he pretends otherwise, he's half fox.
Yellow-ish fur, red eyes...
He's got a ton of properties and lackies in the wolf kingdom.›
‹Rich prick.›
‹But as much as I'd love to see that pompus git get roasted by a dragon, I'm afraid there's not a lot else I can tell you.
He kept me in the dark more so than even my brother.›
‹In fact, he took every opportunity to make it clear he thought of me as the lesser of the two of us. For... various reasons.›
‹I had the link of course, but frankly I didn't care to listen to him any more than I had to, anyway.
Zen could probably tell you more—›
Aaaugh!!
CRASH!
‹Natani? What's wrong?!›
‹My leg... it... felt like it was on fire–
Aaugh!
Something's wrong! M-my head! I...›
No! Not again!

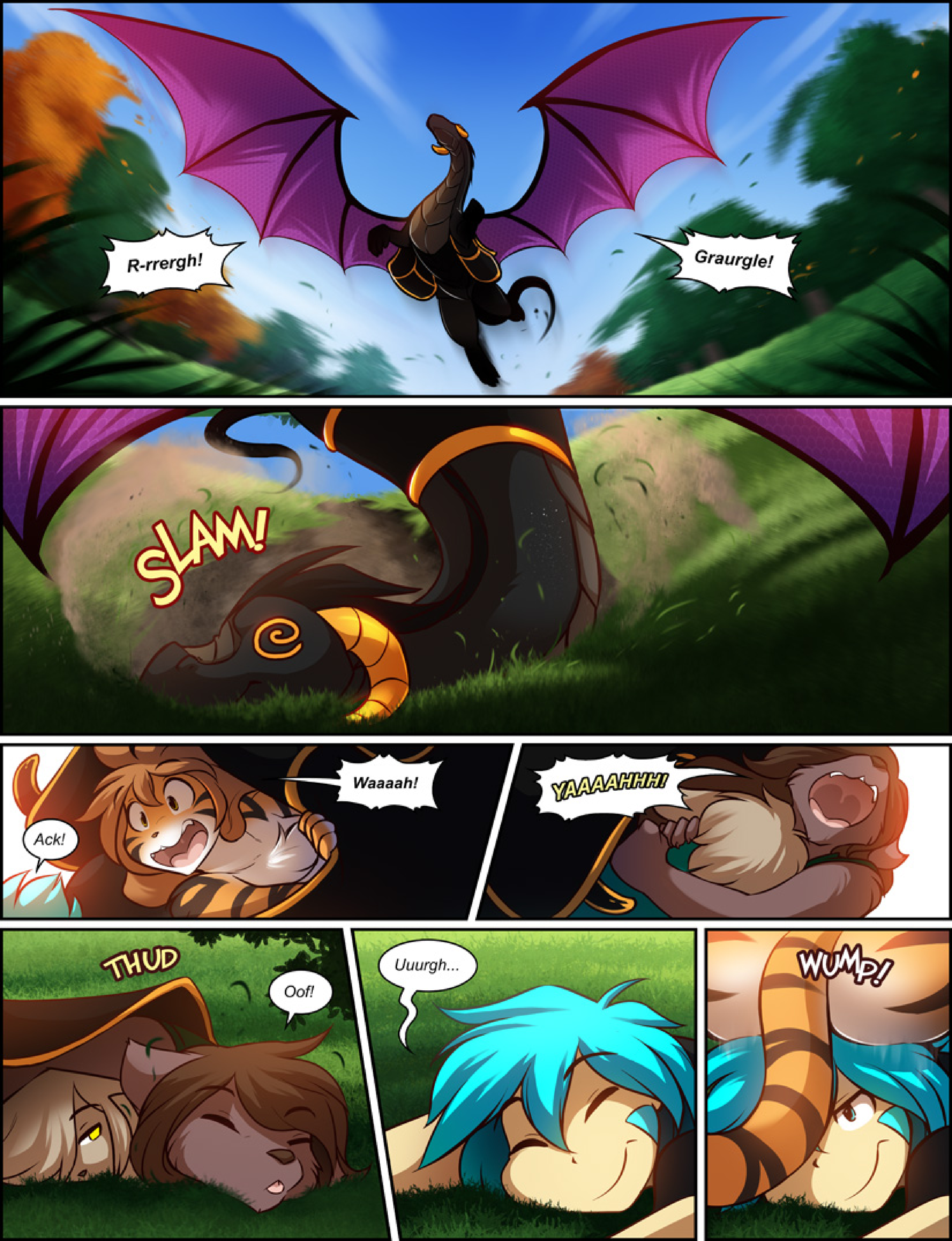

Going to shackle me, huh?
Lots of folk looking for wolves these days.
I'm almost to Edinmire.
A day or tw
more walking
You can call me Carver.
This lake looks cool! There's floating rocks!
It's some kind of magic barrier.
It's bad.
What do we do?
I won't let any of you lay a hand on Natani!
Ah!
‹*Natani?!* Natani, talk to me! What's wrong?!›
‹I'm okay! I'm still here. Still... me.›
‹The link... Zen and I... our minds are open again.
It was just... intense.›
‹I... I thought for a second...›
‹Keith, *I'm okay.*
Zen's mind doesn't have the influence over me that it did before.›
‹I'm more... myself now.
What happened last time won't happen again, I promise.›
SIGH
‹Good. I don't know if I could go through that again.›
‹So why did it come back now?›
‹Not sure. Give me a minute. It was a lot all at once.
Zen passed out right when the link was restored.›
‹That might have been because of the link, but... no...
Something's wrong...!›
?
‹*Zen!* He's in trouble!›

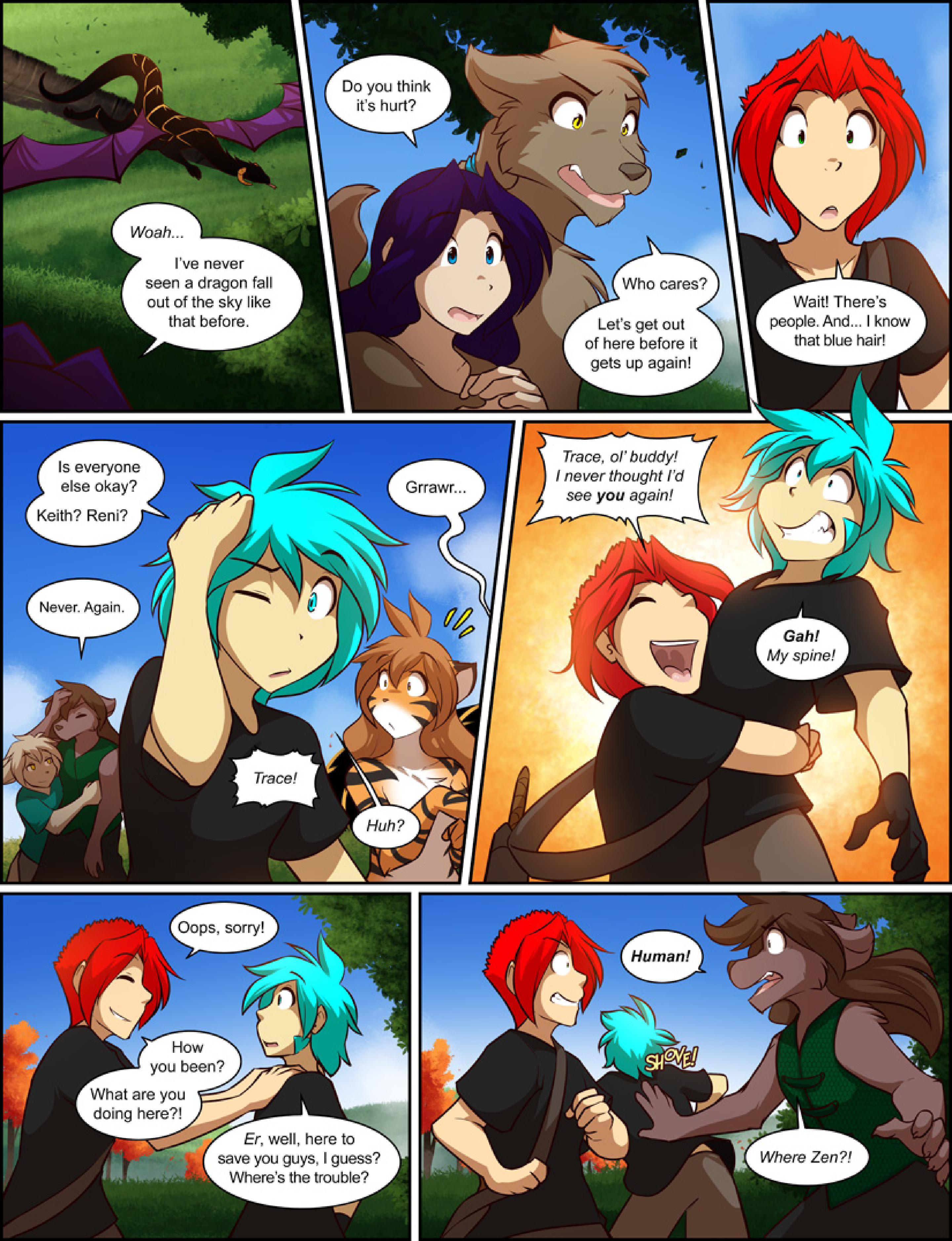
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

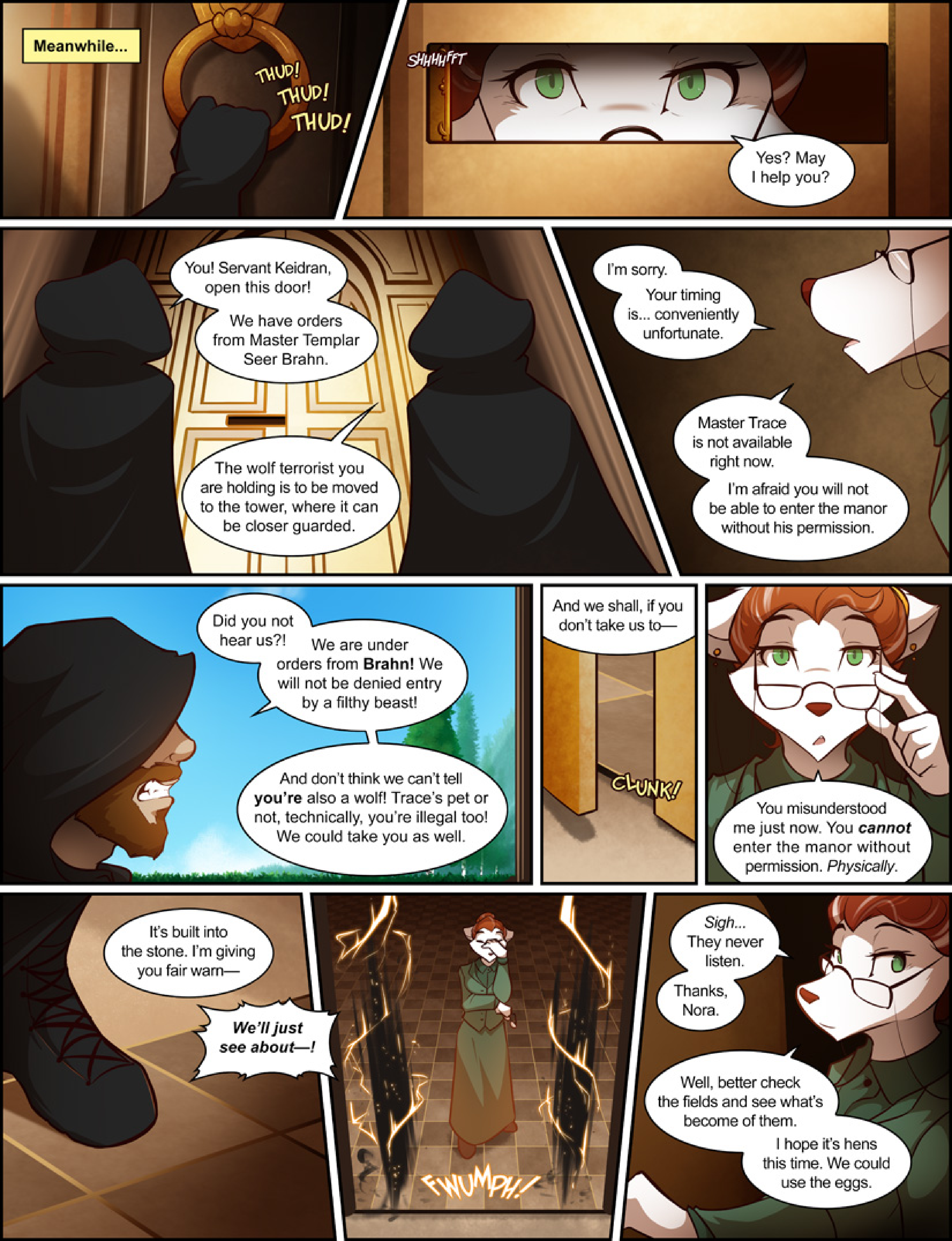

<You have to help him! He's not far!
I-I'm not exactly sure where, but it's within a day or two by foot! I could find it!>
I understand your concern for your brother...
B-but... it's my duty to keep you here...
<You said your duty was to protect Edinmire by finding Clovis, right?!
Zen knows! He.... he has information! He can help you, I swear!>
W-well...
I don't know...
Trace, can you vouch for this wolf's word?
Yes.
I mean, truthfully, we don't have much *direct* interaction...
But these are all friends of mine.
I've only caught half the conversation, but I get the gist of it. I say we help.
Very well! In that case, this shall be a **prisoner acquisition mission!**
Wolf, you're with me. I shall read your mind and compare the surroundings as we get closer!
I'll also take any others willing to go.
The city guard handbook recommends recon parties of at least three!
POINT!
<R-right. Me... i-in the air...>
...Guard handbook?
But... you're a dragon.
No offense, Ms Reni, you're big, but not... ***that*** big. How exactly do you plan to carry so many people?

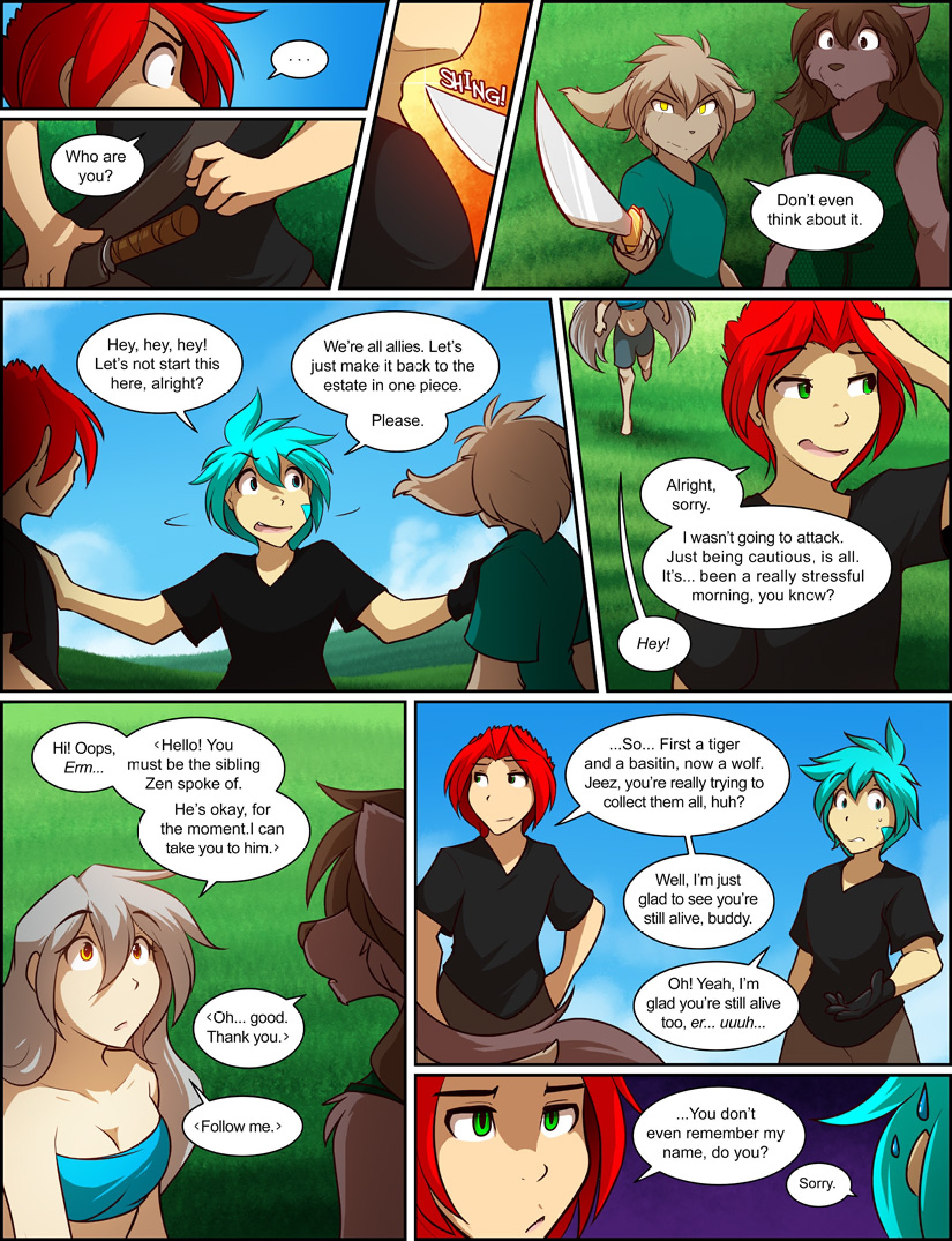

Mmph!
Nmmph!
Gah!
<Why did I have to agree to this?!>
<Dragon, I thought you said these things were bigger on the inside?>
PANT!
No...
I... said the inside becomes... as large as it needs to be.
Though ...haah... I may have overestimated how much weight they reduce.
<I think it's kinda cozy.>
<You would!
Urg... either I suffocate inside or see just how high up I am outside.>
<Who could enjoy this?>
This is amazing!
Flora, be careful!
I still think in your condition you should have stayed behind.
And miss out on this?!
I'm making an approach.
You all... may want to hold on to something. This landing could get a little rough!

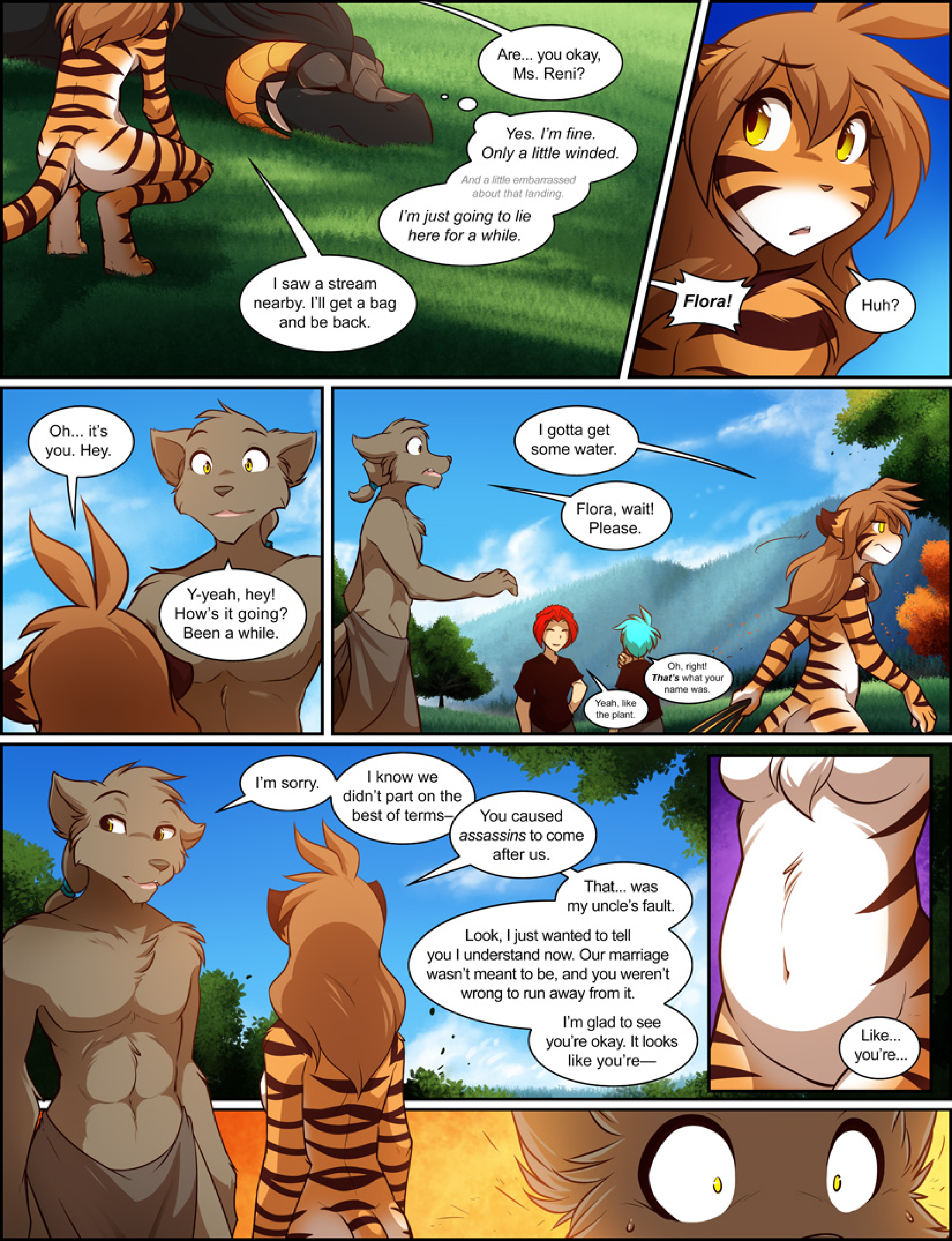

Look! I told you! There it is again! A dragon!
Do you think it's after *us*?
Maybe it's just here for the hot spring?
Karen!
Get out of the open before it spots you!
I can't believe this. First an assassin, now a *dragon?*
I think it's wearing armor too. It *must* be from the Templar!
Fates! How are we going to get out of this one?
!
M-maybe we can try... talking our way out? Dragons are usually pretty reasonable creatures.
...A-at least from the stories I've read.
Wait... is it just me or does that thing look like it's coming in a little... too fast?
Get down!
WOOSH!

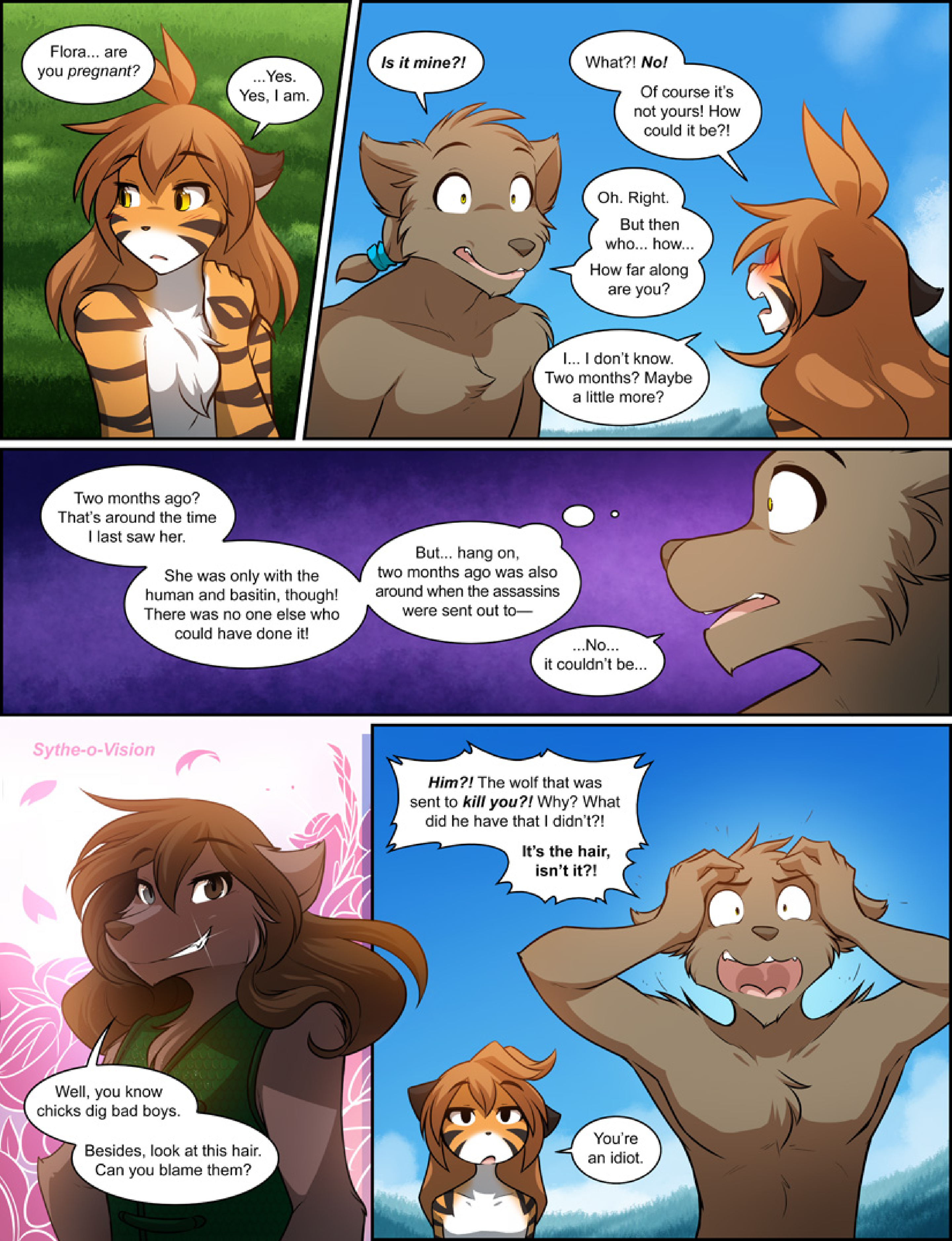

R-rrergh!
Graurgle!
SLAM!
Ack!
Waaaah!
YAAAAHHH!
THUD
Oof!
Uuurgh...
WUMP!

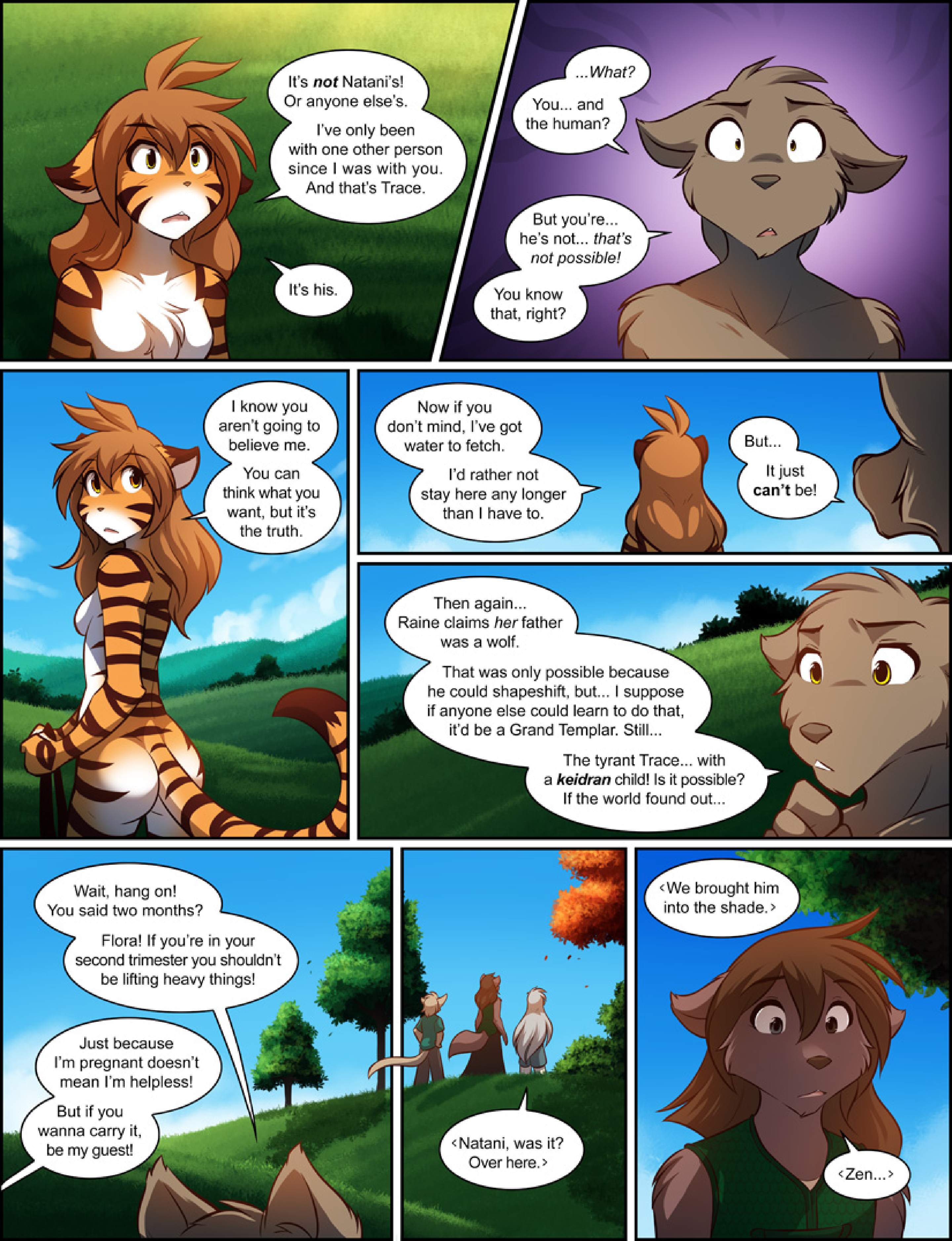

Woah...
I've never seen a dragon fall out of the sky like that before.
Do you think it's hurt?
Who cares?
Let's get out of here before it gets up again!
Wait! There's people. And... I know that blue hair!
Is everyone else okay? Keith? Reni?
Never. Again.
Grrawr...
Trace!
Huh?
*Trace, ol' buddy! I never thought I'd see **you** again!*
Gah! *My spine!*
Oops, sorry!
How you been?
What are you doing here?!
Er, well, here to save you guys, I guess? Where's the trouble?
Human!
SHOVE!
Where Zen?!

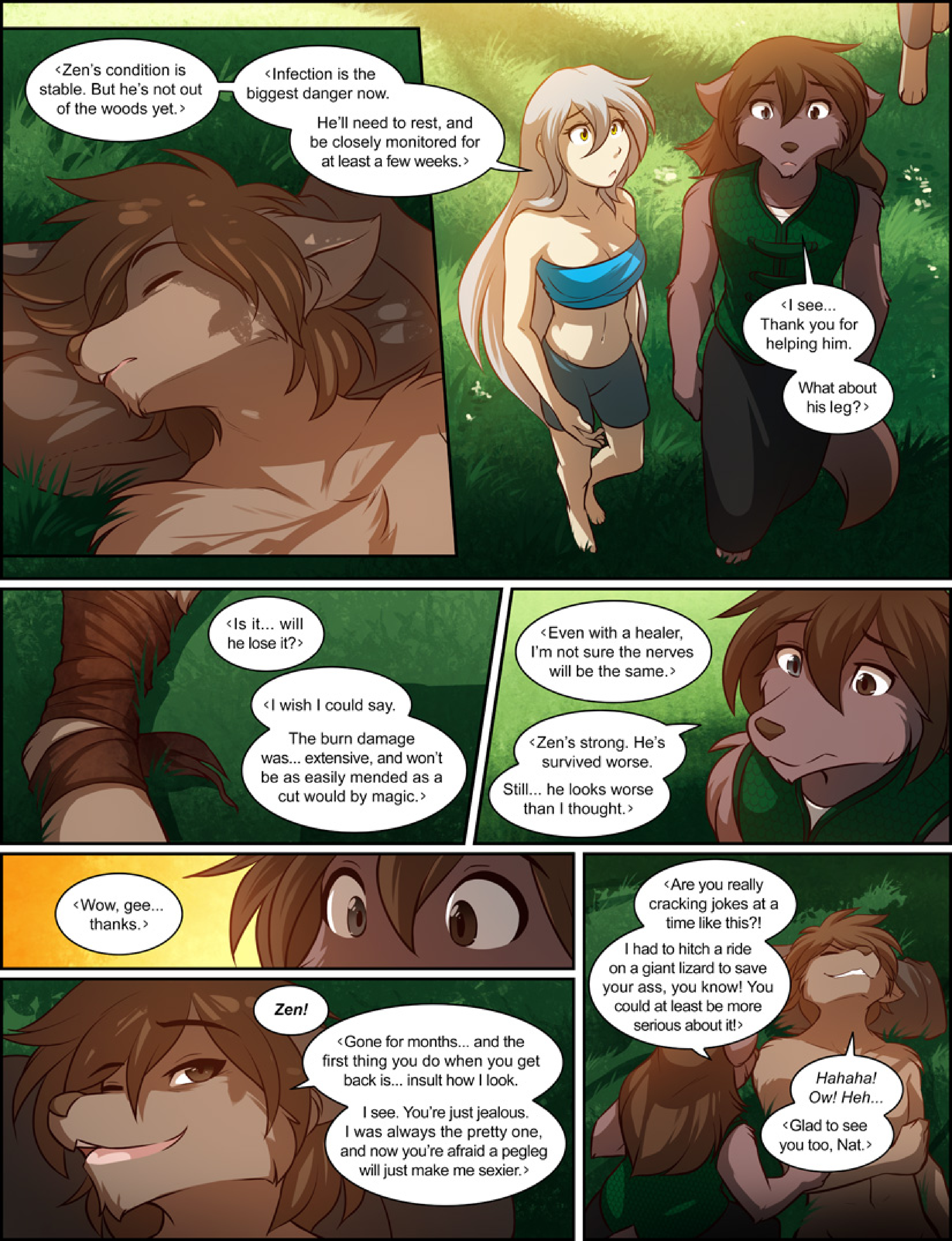

Meanwhile...
THUD!
THUD!
THUD!
SHHHFFT
Yes? May I help you?
You! Servant Keidran, open this door!
We have orders from Master Templar Seer Brahn.
The wolf terrorist you are holding is to be moved to the tower, where it can be closer guarded.
I'm sorry.
Your timing is... conveniently unfortunate.
Master Trace is not available right now.
I'm afraid you will not be able to enter the manor without his permission.
Did you not hear us?!
We are under orders from **Brahn!** We will not be denied entry by a filthy beast!
And don't think we can't tell **you're** also a wolf! Trace's pet or not, technically, you're illegal too! We could take you as well.
And we shall, if you don't take us to—
CLUNK!
You misunderstood me just now. You ***cannot*** enter the manor without permission. *Physically*.
It's built into the stone. I'm giving you fair warn—
We'll just see about—!
FWUMPH!
Sigh... They never listen.
Thanks, Nora.
Well, better check the fields and see what's become of them.
I hope it's hens this time. We could use the eggs.

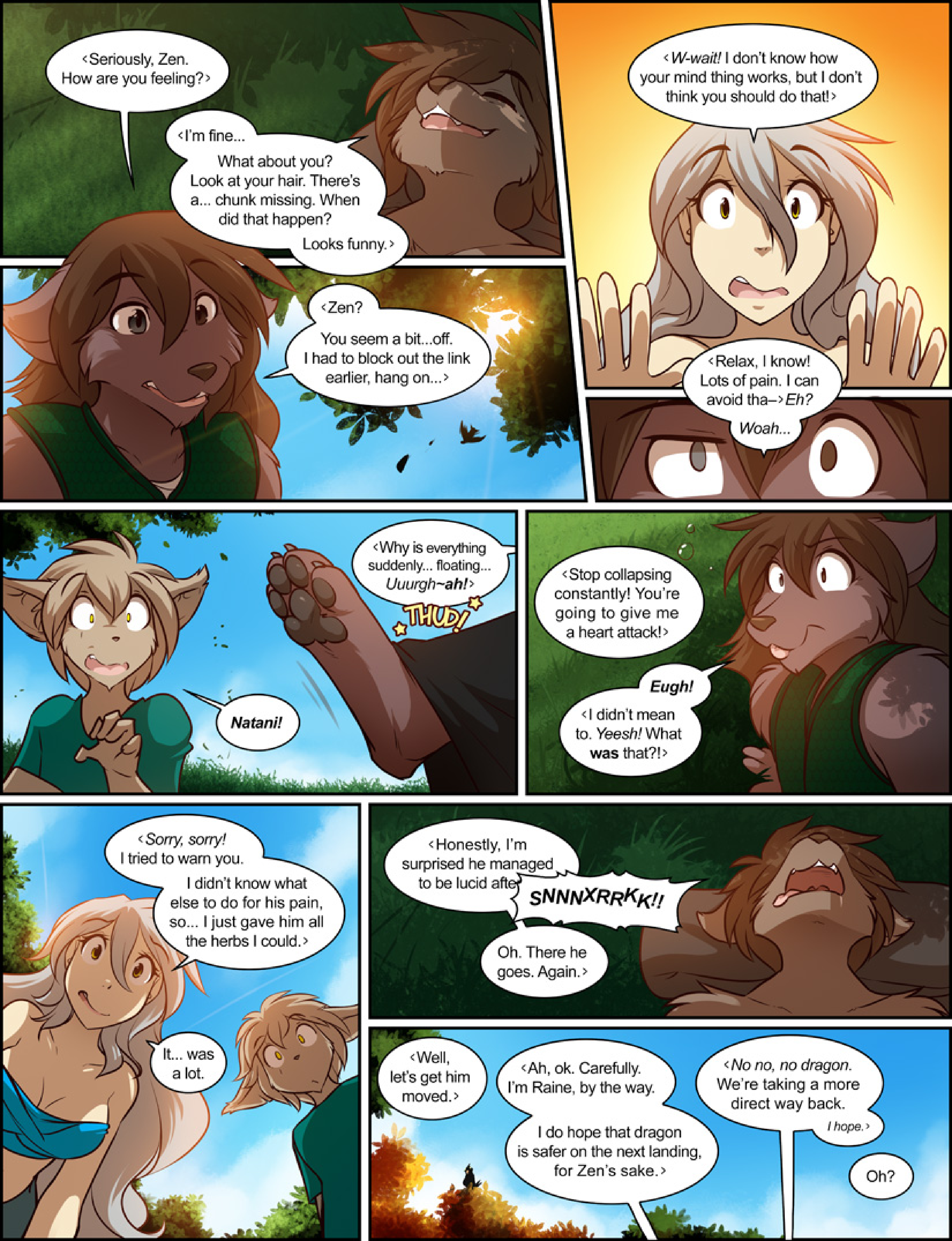

. . .
Who are you?
SHING!
Don't even think about it.
Hey, hey, hey! Let's not start this here, alright?
We're all allies. Let's just make it back to the estate in one piece.
Please.
Alright, sorry.
I wasn't going to attack. Just being cautious, is all. It's... been a really stressful morning, you know?
Hey!
Hi! Oops, *Erm...*
‹Hello! You must be the sibling Zen spoke of.
He's okay, for the moment.I can take you to him.›
‹Oh... good. Thank you.›
‹Follow me.›
...So... First a tiger and a basitin, now a wolf. Jeez, you're really trying to collect them all, huh?
Well, I'm just glad to see you're still alive, buddy.
Oh! Yeah, I'm glad you're still alive too, *er... uuuh...*
...You don't even remember my name, do you?
Sorry.

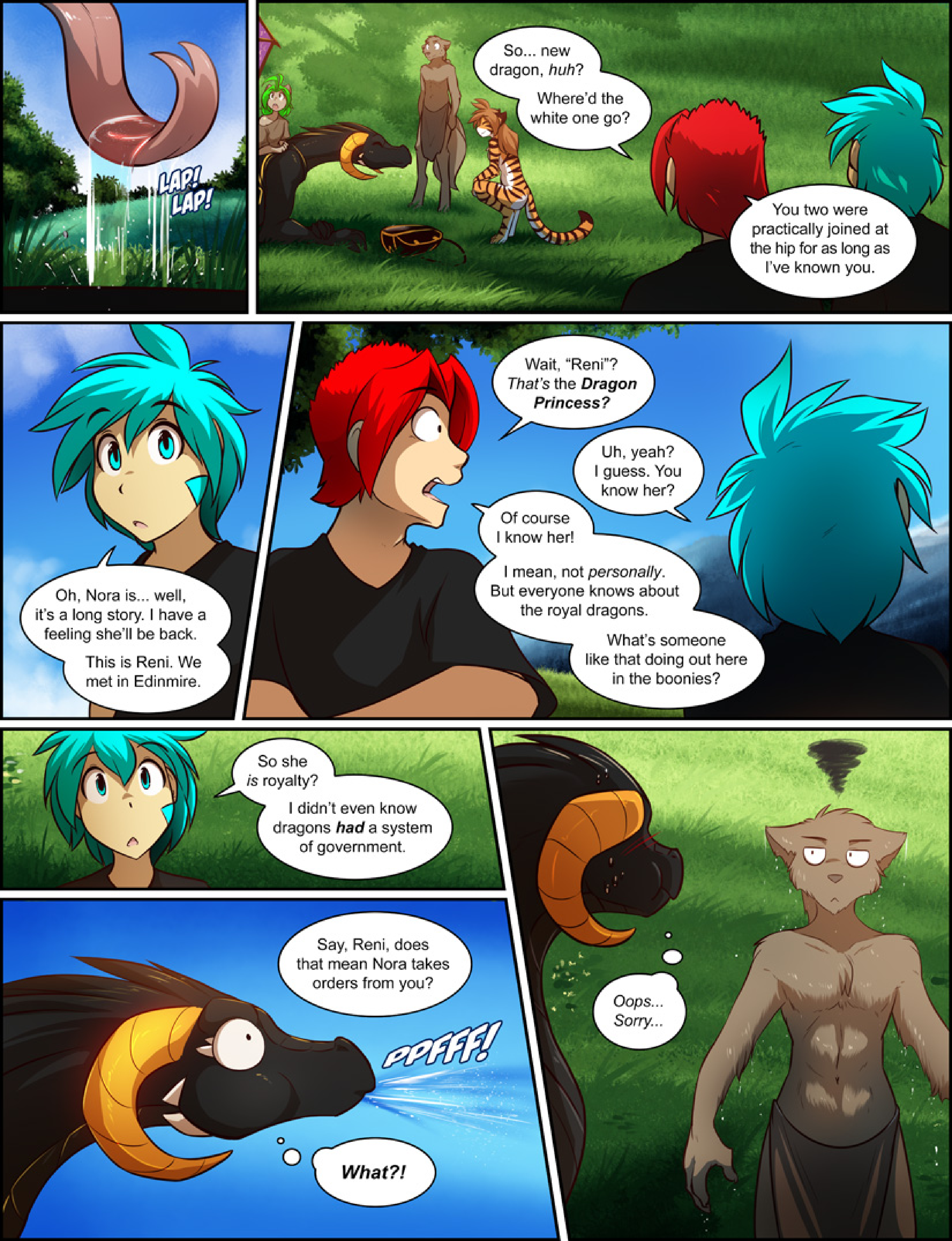

Are... you okay, Ms. Reni?
Yes. I'm fine. Only a little winded.
And a little embarrassed about that landing.
I'm just going to lie here for a while.
I saw a stream nearby. I'll get a bag and be back.
Flora!
Huh?
Oh... it's you. Hey.
Y-yeah, hey! How's it going? Been a while.
I gotta get some water.
Flora, wait! Please.
Yeah, like the plant.
Oh, right! ***That's*** what your name was.
I'm sorry.
I know we didn't part on the best of terms–
You caused *assassins* to come after us.
That... was my uncle's fault.
Look, I just wanted to tell you I understand now. Our marriage wasn't meant to be, and you weren't wrong to run away from it.
I'm glad to see you're okay. It looks like you're—
Like... you're...

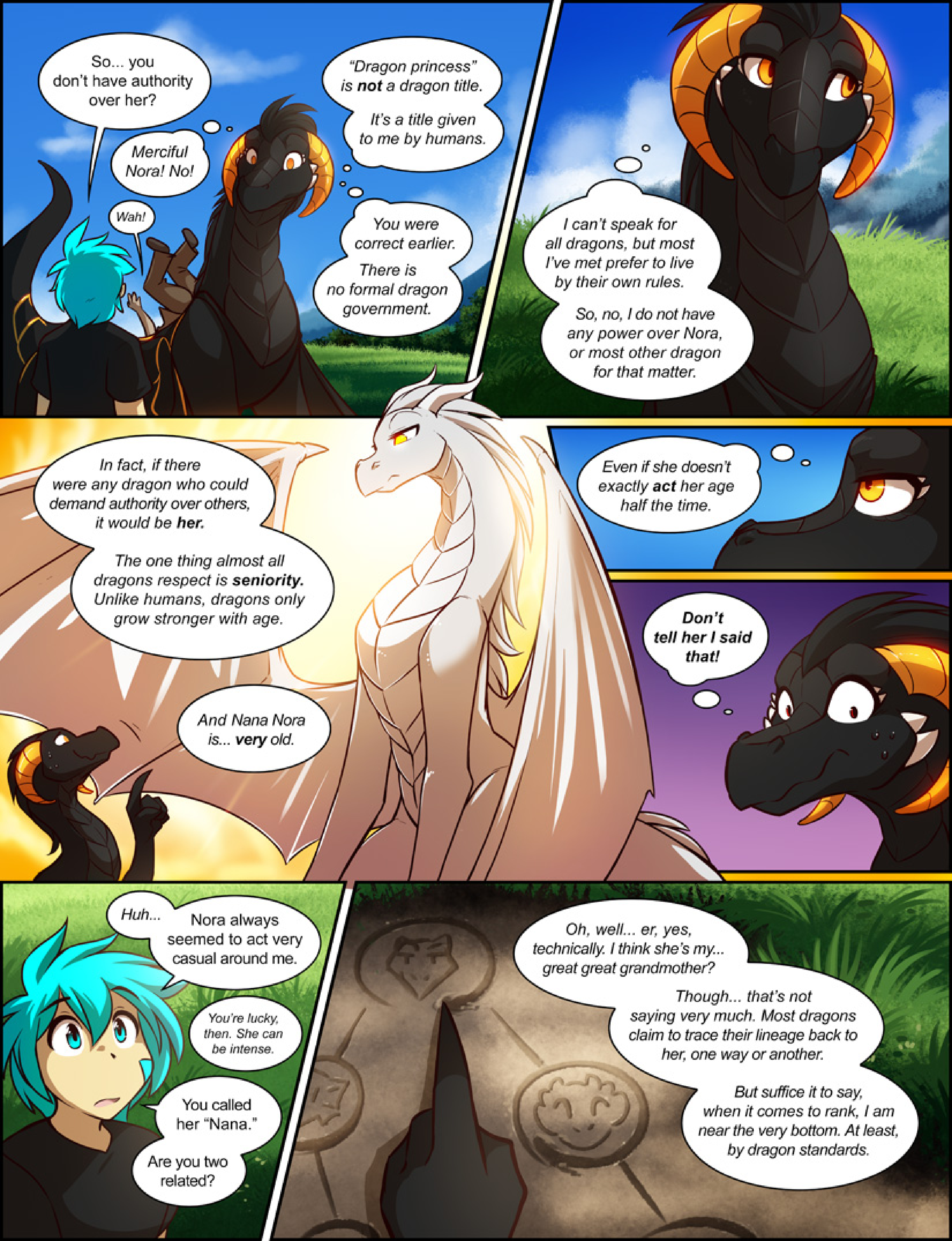

Flora... are you *pregnant?*
...Yes. Yes, I am.
Is it mine?!
What?! ***No!***
Of course it's not yours! How could it be?!
Oh. Right.
But then who... how...
How far along are you?
I... I don't know. Two months? Maybe a little more?
Two months ago? That's around the time I last saw her.
She was only with the human and basitin, though! There was no one else who could have done it!
But... hang on, two months ago was also around when the assassins were sent out to—
...No... it couldn't be...
Sythe-o-Vision
Well, you know chicks dig bad boys.
Besides, look at this hair. Can you blame them?
Him?! The wolf that was sent to ***kill you?!*** Why? What did he have that I didn't?!
It's the hair, isn't it?!
You're an idiot.

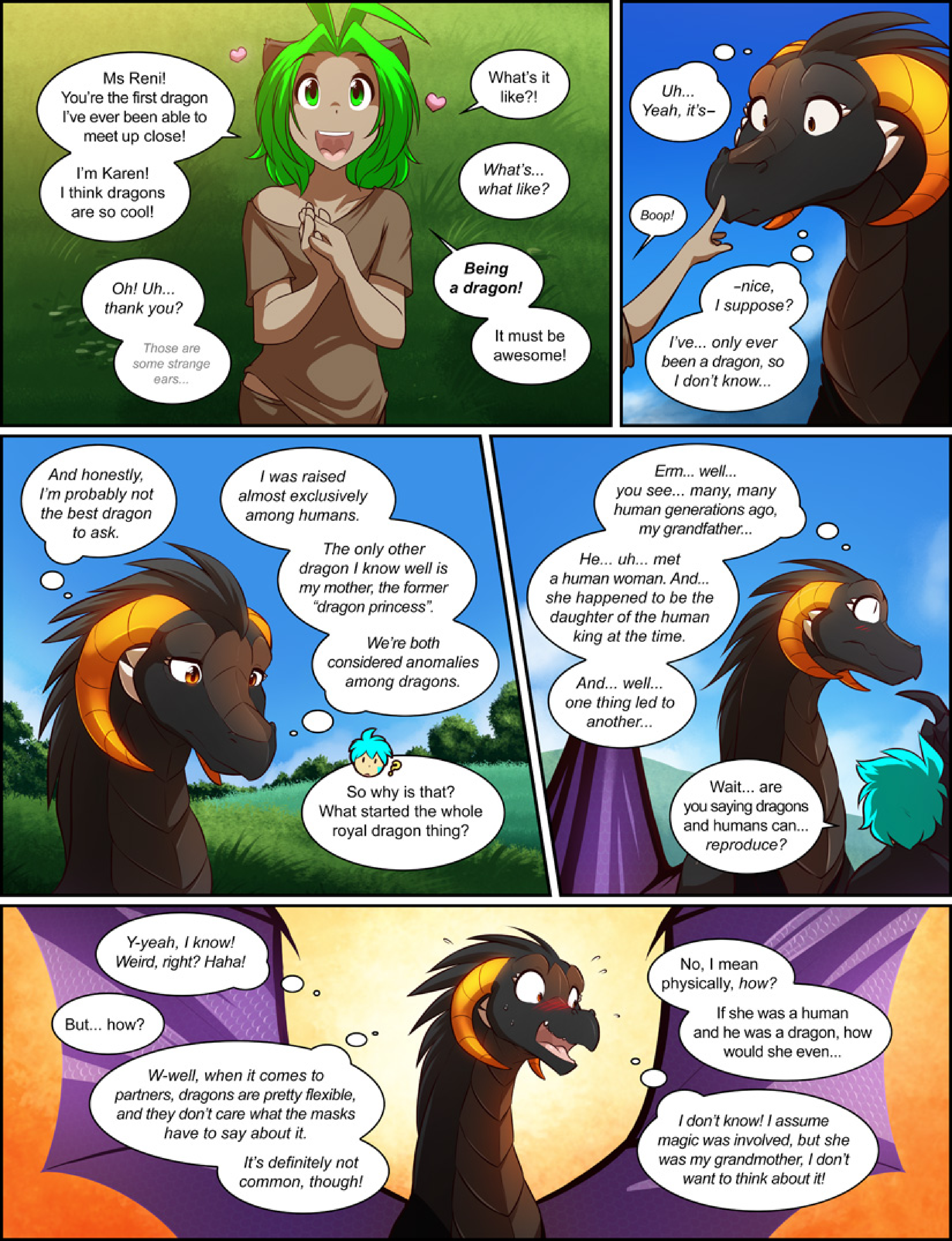

It's *not* Natani's! Or anyone else's.
I've only been with one other person since I was with you. And that's Trace.
It's his.
...What?
You... and the human?
But you're... he's not... *that's not possible!*
You know that, right?
I know you aren't going to believe me.
You can think what you want, but it's the truth.
Now if you don't mind, I've got water to fetch.
I'd rather not stay here any longer than I have to.
But...
It just **can't** be!
Then again... Raine claims *her* father was a wolf.
That was only possible because he could shapeshift, but... I suppose if anyone else could learn to do that, it'd be a Grand Templar. Still...
The tyrant Trace... with a ***keidran*** child! Is it possible? If the world found out...
Wait, hang on! You said two months?
Flora! If you're in your second trimester you shouldn't be lifting heavy things!
Just because I'm pregnant doesn't mean I'm helpless!
But if you wanna carry it, be my guest!
‹Natani, was it? Over here.›
‹We brought him into the shade.›
‹Zen...›

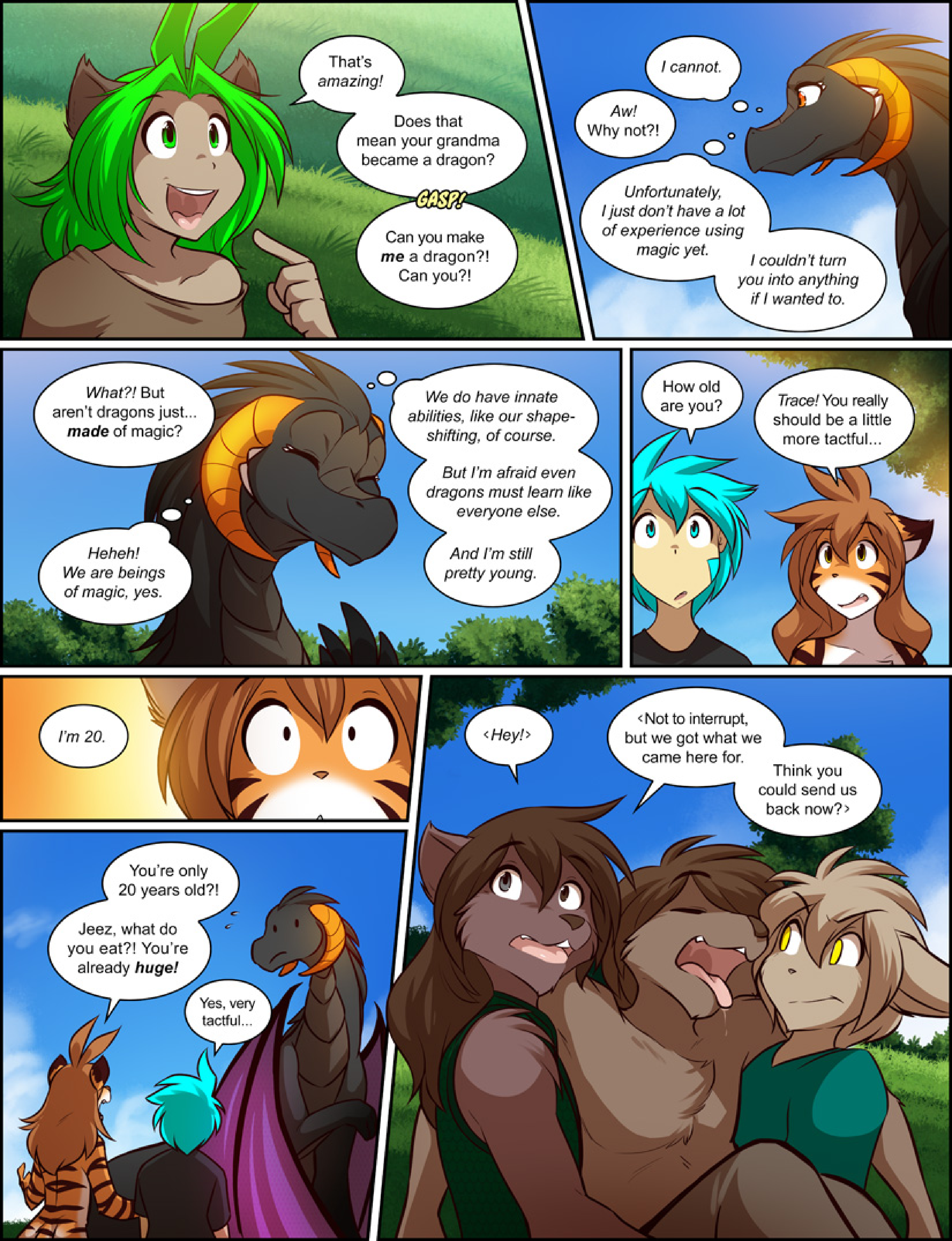

<Zen's condition is stable. But he's not out of the woods yet.>
<Infection is the biggest danger now.
He'll need to rest, and be closely monitored for at least a few weeks.>
<I see... Thank you for helping him.
What about his leg?>
<Is it... will he lose it?>
<I wish I could say.
The burn damage was... extensive, and won't be as easily mended as a cut would by magic.>
<Even with a healer, I'm not sure the nerves will be the same.>
<Zen's strong. He's survived worse.
Still... he looks worse than I thought.>
<Wow, gee... thanks.>
Zen!
<Gone for months... and the first thing you do when you get back is... insult how I look.
I see. You're just jealous. I was always the pretty one, and now you're afraid a pegleg will just make me sexier.>
<Are you really cracking jokes at a time like this?!
I had to hitch a ride on a giant lizard to save your ass, you know! You could at least be more serious about it!>
Hahaha! Ow! Heh...
<Glad to see you too, Nat.>

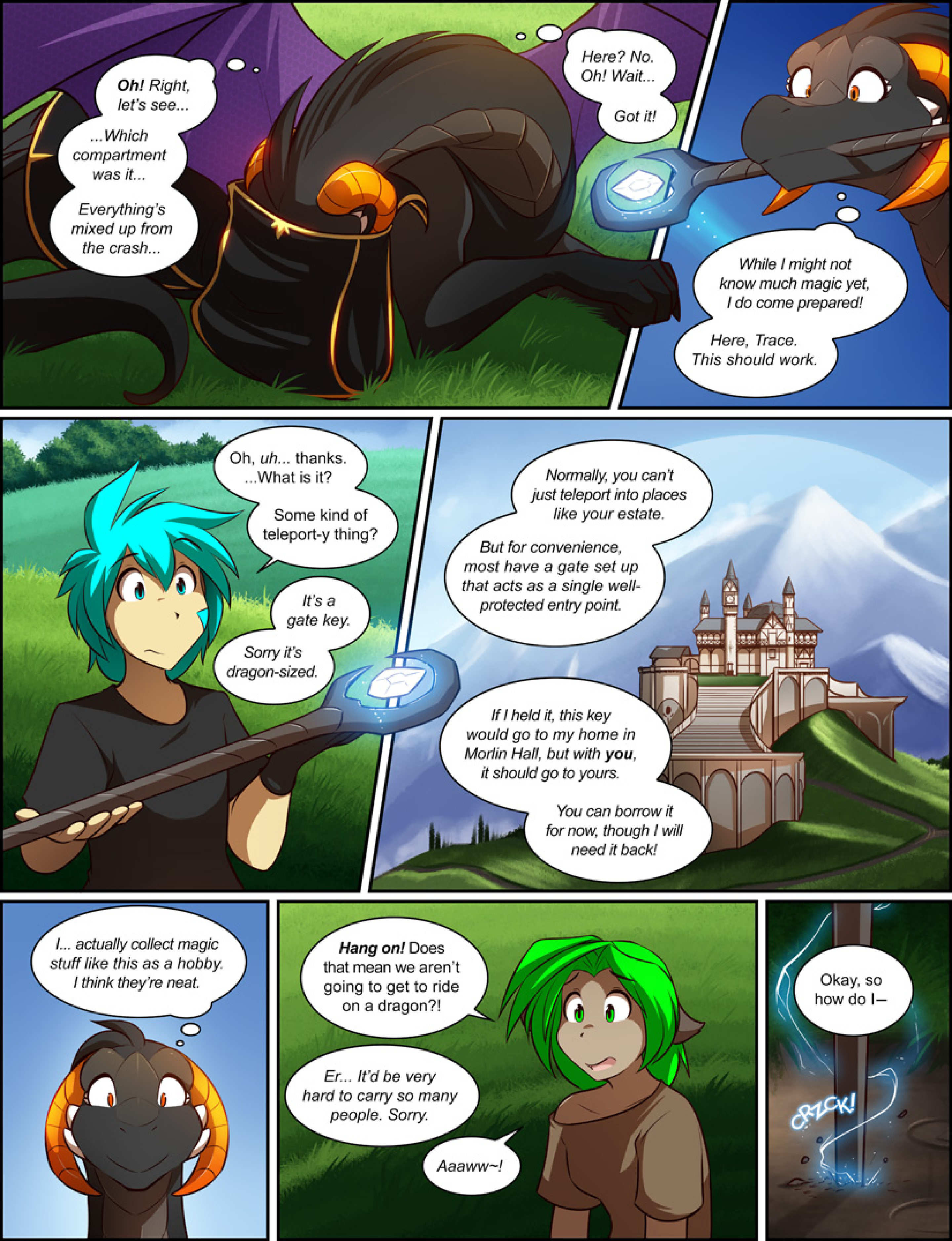

‹Seriously, Zen. How are you feeling?›
‹I'm fine...
What about you? Look at your hair. There's a... chunk missing. When did that happen?
Looks funny.›
‹Zen?
You seem a bit...off. I had to block out the link earlier, hang on...›
‹*W-wait!* I don't know how your mind thing works, but I don't think you should do that!›
‹Relax, I know! Lots of pain. I can avoid tha–›*Eh?*
Woah...
‹Why is everything suddenly... floating... *Uuurgh~**ah!***›
THUD!
Natani!
‹Stop collapsing constantly! You're going to give me a heart attack!›
Eugh!
‹I didn't mean to. *Yeesh!* What **was** that?!›
‹*Sorry, sorry!* I tried to warn you.
I didn't know what else to do for his pain, so... I just gave him all the herbs I could.›
It... was a lot.
‹Honestly, I'm surprised he managed to be lucid afte
SNNNXRRKK!!
Oh. There he goes. Again.›
‹Well, let's get him moved.›
‹Ah, ok. Carefully. I'm Raine, by the way.
I do hope that dragon is safer on the next landing, for Zen's sake.›
‹*No no, no dragon.* We're taking a more direct way back.
I hope.›
Oh?

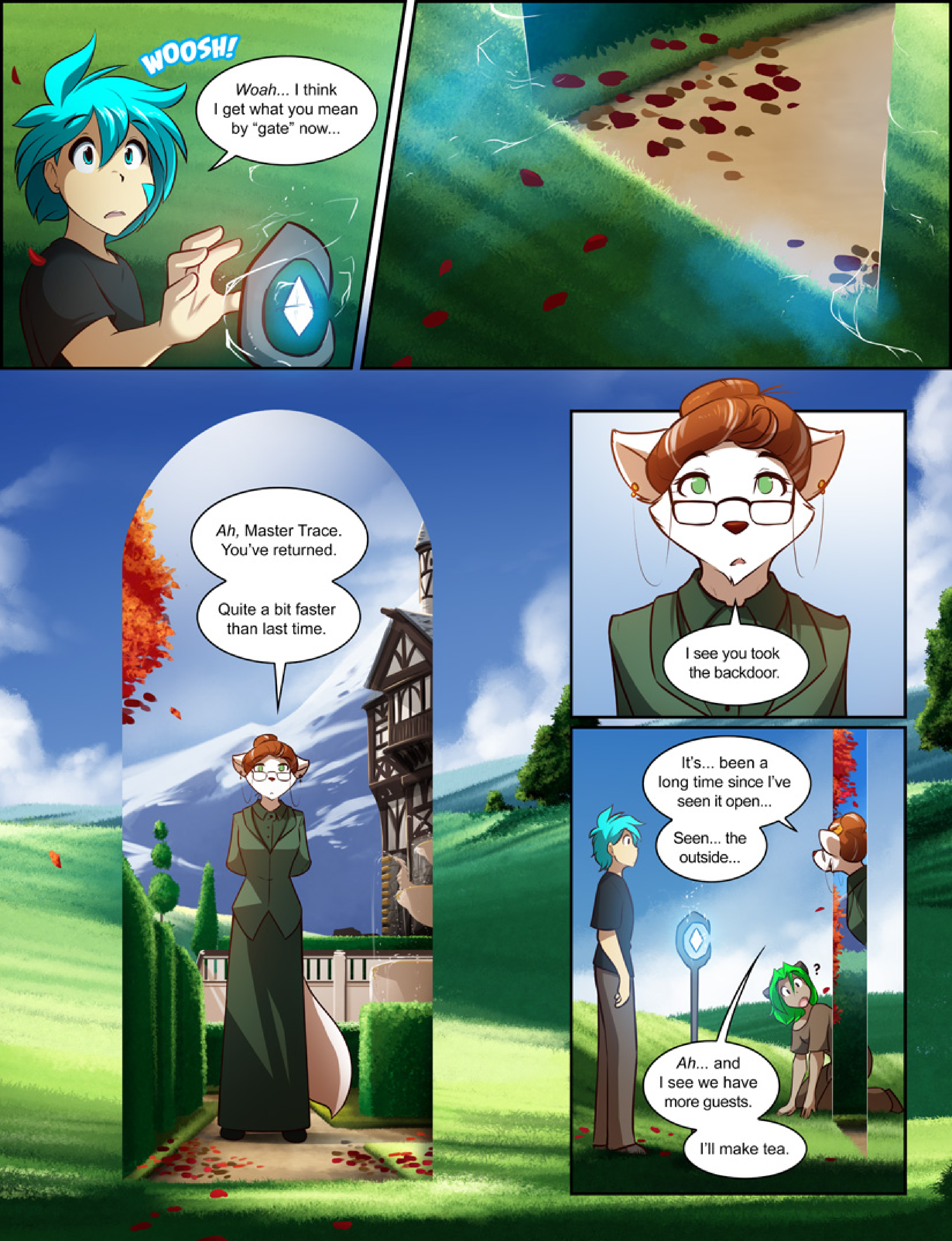

LAP! LAP!
So... new dragon, *huh*?
Where'd the white one go?
You two were practically joined at the hip for as long as I've known you.
Oh, Nora is... well, it's a long story. I have a feeling she'll be back.
This is Reni. We met in Edinmire.
Wait, "Reni"? *That's* the ***Dragon Princess?***
Uh, yeah? I guess. You know her?
Of course I know her!
I mean, not *personally*. But everyone knows about the royal dragons.
What's someone like that doing out here in the boonies?
So she *is* royalty?
I didn't even know dragons ***had*** a system of government.
Say, Reni, does that mean Nora takes orders from you?
PPFFF!
What?!
Oops... Sorry...

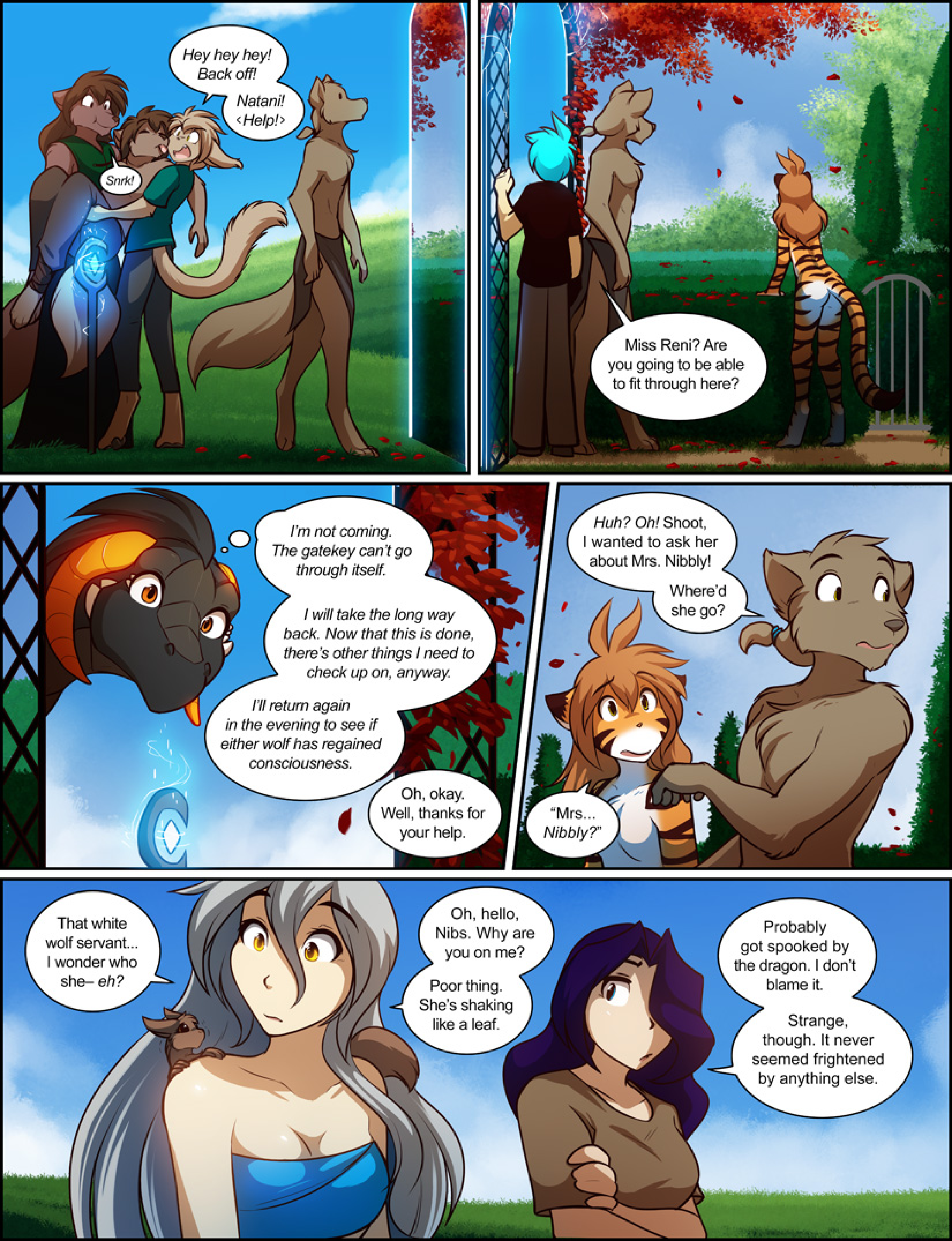

So... you don't have authority over her?
Merciful Nora! No!
Wah!
"Dragon princess" is **not** a dragon title.
It's a title given to me by humans.
You were correct earlier.
There is no formal dragon government.
I can't speak for all dragons, but most I've met prefer to live by their own rules.
So, no, I do not have any power over Nora, or most other dragon for that matter.
In fact, if there were any dragon who could demand authority over others, it would be **her.**
The one thing almost all dragons respect is **seniority.** Unlike humans, dragons only grow stronger with age.
And Nana Nora is... **very** old.
Even if she doesn't exactly **act** her age half the time.
Don't tell her I said that!
Huh...
Nora always seemed to act very casual around me.
You're lucky, then. She can be intense.
You called her "Nana."
Are you two related?
Oh, well... er, yes, technically. I think she's my... great great grandmother?
Though... that's not saying very much. Most dragons claim to trace their lineage back to her, one way or another.
But suffice it to say, when it comes to rank, I am near the very bottom. At least, by dragon standards.

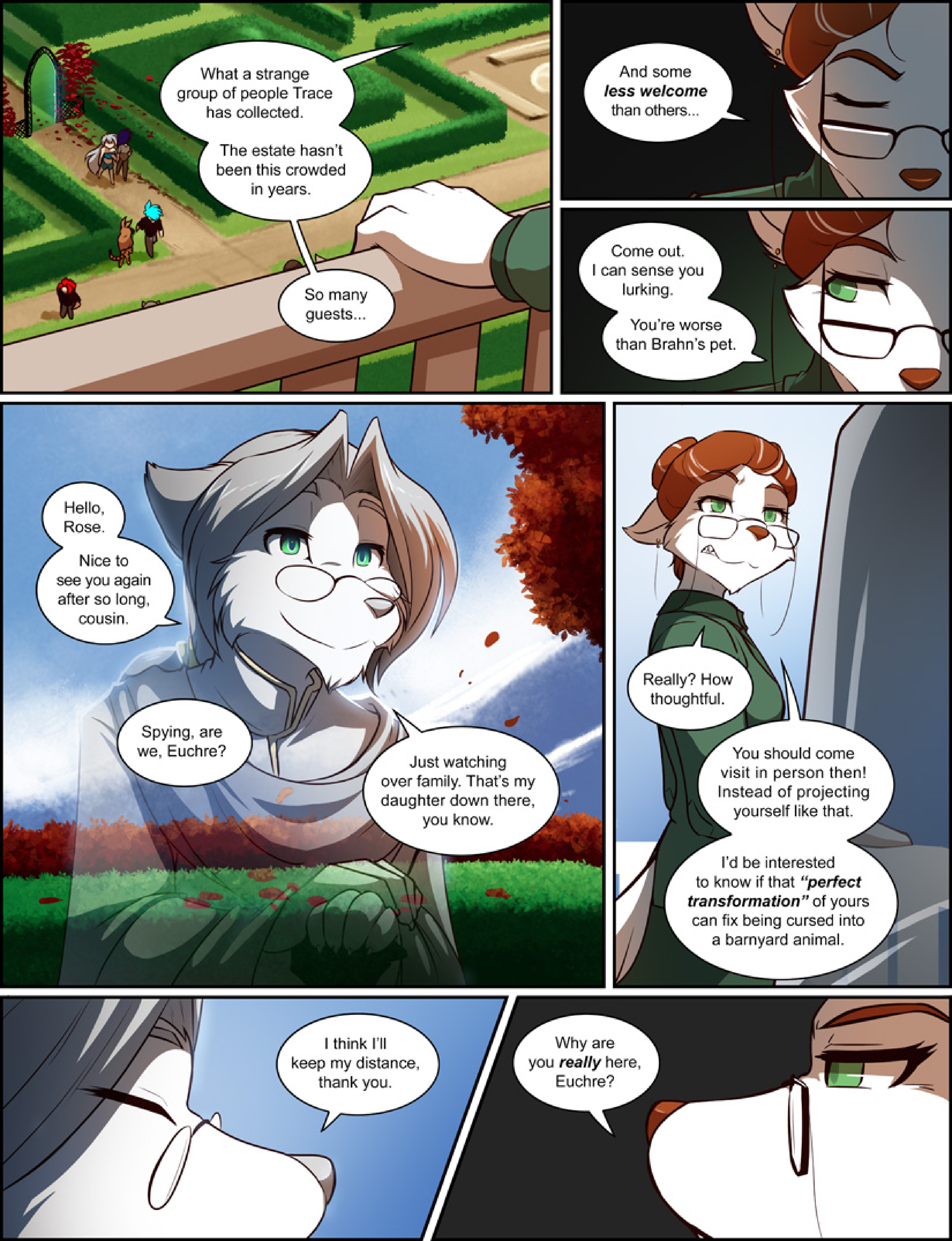

Ms Reni! You're the first dragon I've ever been able to meet up close!
I'm Karen! I think dragons are so cool!
What's it like?!
Oh! Uh... thank you?
Those are some strange ears...
What's... what like?
Being a dragon!
It must be awesome!
Uh... Yeah, it's–
Boop!
–nice, I suppose?
I've... only ever been a dragon, so I don't know...
And honestly, I'm probably not the best dragon to ask.
I was raised almost exclusively among humans.
The only other dragon I know well is my mother, the former "dragon princess".
We're both considered anomalies among dragons.
So why is that? What started the whole royal dragon thing?
Erm... well... you see... many, many human generations ago, my grandfather...
He... uh... met a human woman. And... she happened to be the daughter of the human king at the time.
And... well... one thing led to another...
Wait... are you saying dragons and humans can... *reproduce?*
Y-yeah, I know! Weird, right? Haha!
But... how?
W-well, when it comes to partners, dragons are pretty flexible, and they don't care what the masks have to say about it.
It's definitely not common, though!
No, I mean physically, *how?*
If she was a human and he was a dragon, how would she even...
I don't know! I assume magic was involved, but she was my grandmother, I don't want to think about it!

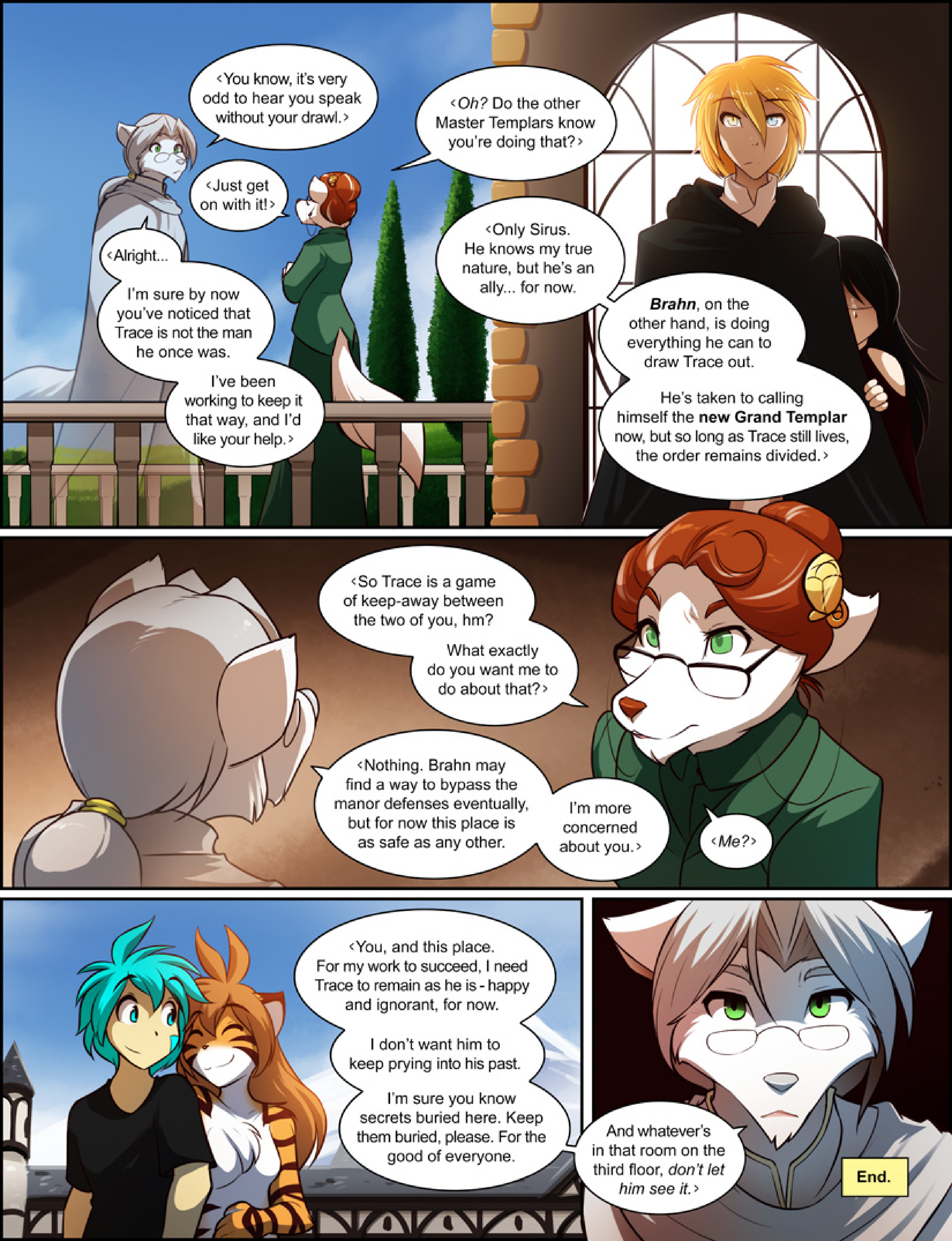

That's *amazing!*
Does that mean your grandma became a dragon?
GASP!
Can you make ***me*** a dragon?! Can you?!
I cannot.
Aw! Why not?!
Unfortunately, I just don't have a lot of experience using magic yet.
I couldn't turn you into anything if I wanted to.
What?! But aren't dragons just... ***made*** of magic?
Heheh! We are beings of magic, yes.
We do have innate abilities, like our shape-shifting, of course.
But I'm afraid even dragons must learn like everyone else.
And I'm still pretty young.
How old are you?
Trace! You really should be a little more tactful...
I'm 20.
You're only 20 years old?!
Jeez, what do you eat?! You're already ***huge!***
Yes, very tactful...
‹*Hey!*›
‹Not to interrupt, but we got what we came here for.
Think you could send us back now?›

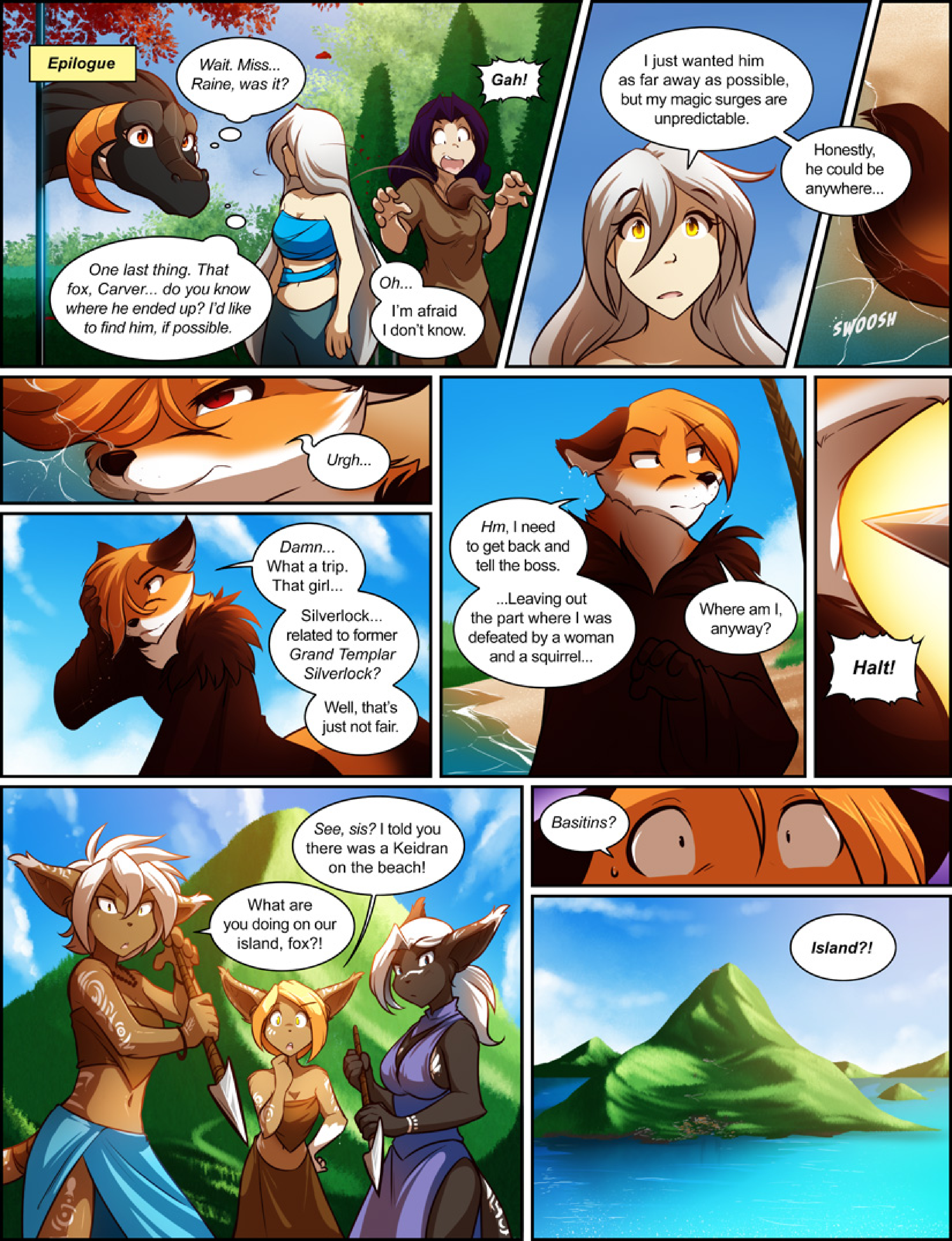

Oh! Right, let's see...
...Which compartment was it...
Everything's mixed up from the crash...
Here? No. Oh! Wait...
Got it!
While I might not know much magic yet, I do come prepared!
Here, Trace. This should work.
Oh, *uh*... thanks. ...What is it?
Some kind of teleport-y thing?
It's a gate key.
Sorry it's dragon-sized.
Normally, you can't just teleport into places like your estate.
But for convenience, most have a gate set up that acts as a single well-protected entry point.
If I held it, this key would go to my home in Morlin Hall, but with **you**, it should go to yours.
You can borrow it for now, though I will need it back!
I... actually collect magic stuff like this as a hobby. I think they're neat.
Hang on! Does that mean we aren't going to get to ride on a dragon?!
Er... It'd be very hard to carry so many people. Sorry.
Aaaww~!
Okay, so how do I—
CRZCK!


WOOSH!
Woah... I think I get what you mean by "gate" now...
Ah, Master Trace. You've returned.
Quite a bit faster than last time.
I see you took the backdoor.
It's... been a long time since I've seen it open...
Seen... the outside...
?
Ah... and I see we have more guests.
I'll make tea.


Hey hey hey! Back off!
Natani! ‹Help!›
Snrk!
Miss Reni? Are you going to be able to fit through here?
I'm not coming. The gatekey can't go through itself.
I will take the long way back. Now that this is done, there's other things I need to check up on, anyway.
I'll return again in the evening to see if either wolf has regained consciousness.
Oh, okay. Well, thanks for your help.
Huh? Oh! Shoot, I wanted to ask her about Mrs. Nibbly!
Where'd she go?
"Mrs... Nibbly?"
That white wolf servant... I wonder who she– eh?
Oh, hello, Nibs. Why are you on me?
Poor thing. She's shaking like a leaf.
Probably got spooked by the dragon. I don't blame it.
Strange, though. It never seemed frightened by anything else.


What a strange group of people Trace has collected.
The estate hasn't been this crowded in years.
So many guests...
And some ***less welcome*** than others...
Come out. I can sense you lurking.
You're worse than Brahn's pet.
Hello, Rose.
Nice to see you again after so long, cousin.
Spying, are we, Euchre?
Just watching over family. That's my daughter down there, you know.
Really? How thoughtful.
You should come visit in person then! Instead of projecting yourself like that.
I'd be interested to know if that ***"perfect transformation"*** of yours can fix being cursed into a barnyard animal.
I think I'll keep my distance, thank you.
Why are you ***really*** here, Euchre?


‹You know, it's very odd to hear you speak without your drawl.›
‹Just get on with it!›
‹Alright...
I'm sure by now you've noticed that Trace is not the man he once was.
I've been working to keep it that way, and I'd like your help.›
‹*Oh?* Do the other Master Templars know you're doing that?›
‹Only Sirus. He knows my true nature, but he's an ally... for now.
Brahn, on the other hand, is doing everything he can to draw Trace out.
He's taken to calling himself the **new Grand Templar** now, but so long as Trace still lives, the order remains divided.›
‹So Trace is a game of keep-away between the two of you, hm?
What exactly do you want me to do about that?›
‹Nothing. Brahn may find a way to bypass the manor defenses eventually, but for now this place is as safe as any other.
I'm more concerned about you.›
‹*Me?*›
‹You, and this place. For my work to succeed, I need Trace to remain as he is - happy and ignorant, for now.
I don't want him to keep prying into his past.
I'm sure you know secrets buried here. Keep them buried, please. For the good of everyone.
And whatever's in that room on the third floor, *don't let him see it.*›
End.


Epilogue
Wait. Miss... Raine, was it?
Gah!
One last thing. That fox, Carver... do you know where he ended up? I'd like to find him, if possible.
Oh...
I'm afraid I don't know.
I just wanted him as far away as possible, but my magic surges are unpredictable.
Honestly, he could be anywhere...
SWOOSH
Urgh...
Damn... What a trip. That girl...
Silverlock... related to former Grand Templar Silverlock?
Well, that's just not fair.
Hm, I need to get back and tell the boss.
...Leaving out the part where I was defeated by a woman and a squirrel...
Where am I, anyway?
Halt!
See, sis? I told you there was a Keidran on the beach!
What are you doing on our island, fox?!
Basitins?
Island?!

TWOKINDS: VOLUME 4

THE BASITIN ISLAND ARC PART 2

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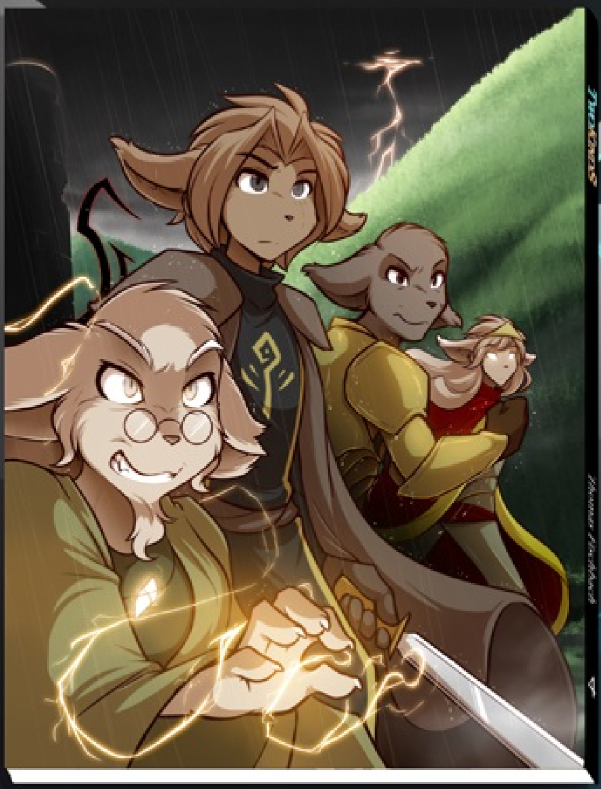
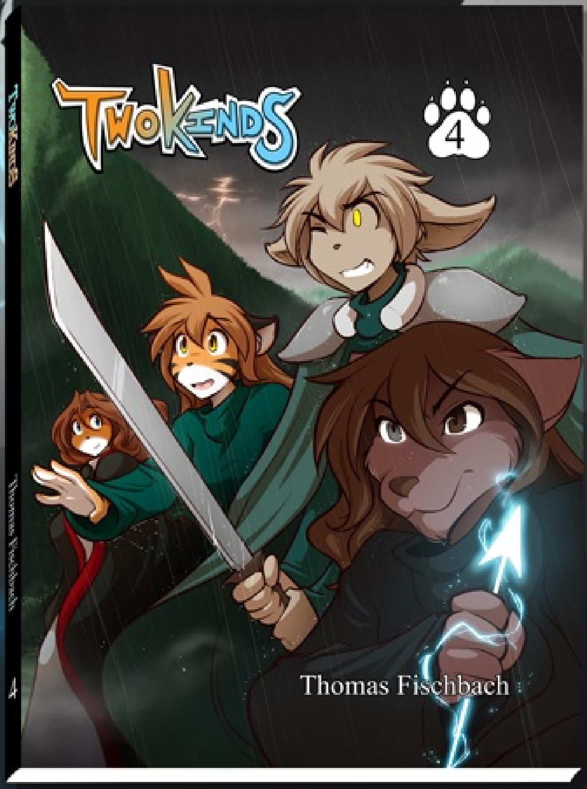

TwoKinds
Thomas Fischbach
4


TwoKinds
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176 pages, chronicling the second half of the Basitin Island arc. It's like the comic on your computer, only in a strange, book-like format. Weird!

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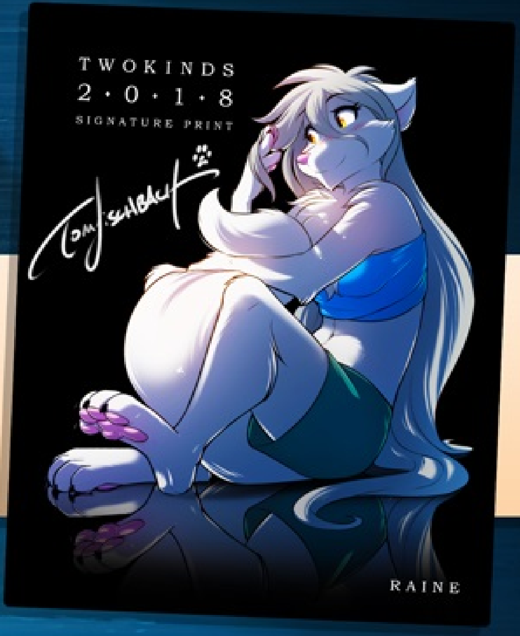
A glossy print of Raine, signed by yours truly! Optionally available for those that preorder Volume 4, while supplies last. The amount is limited (for the sake of my poor signing hand) so get them while you can!


TWOKINDS
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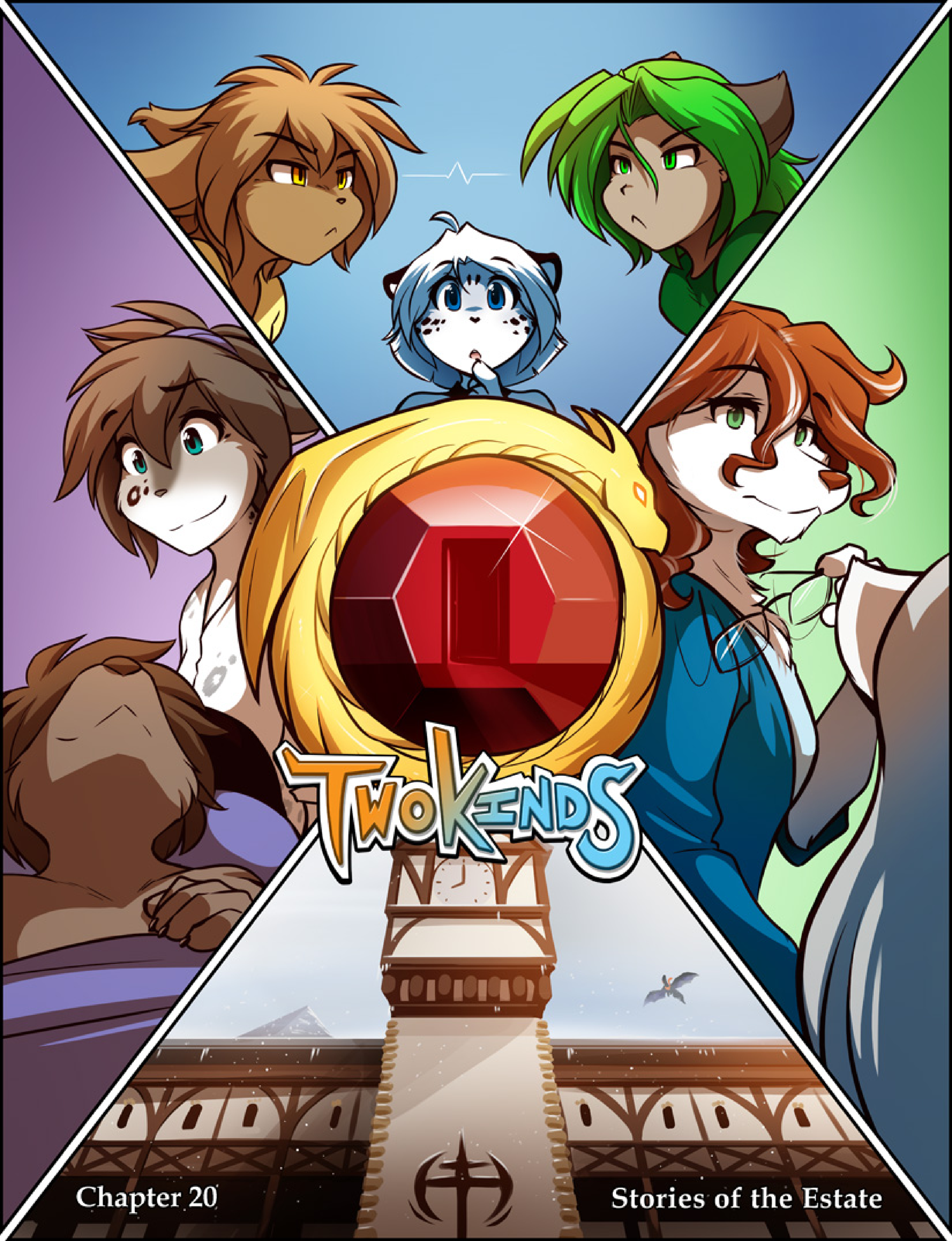
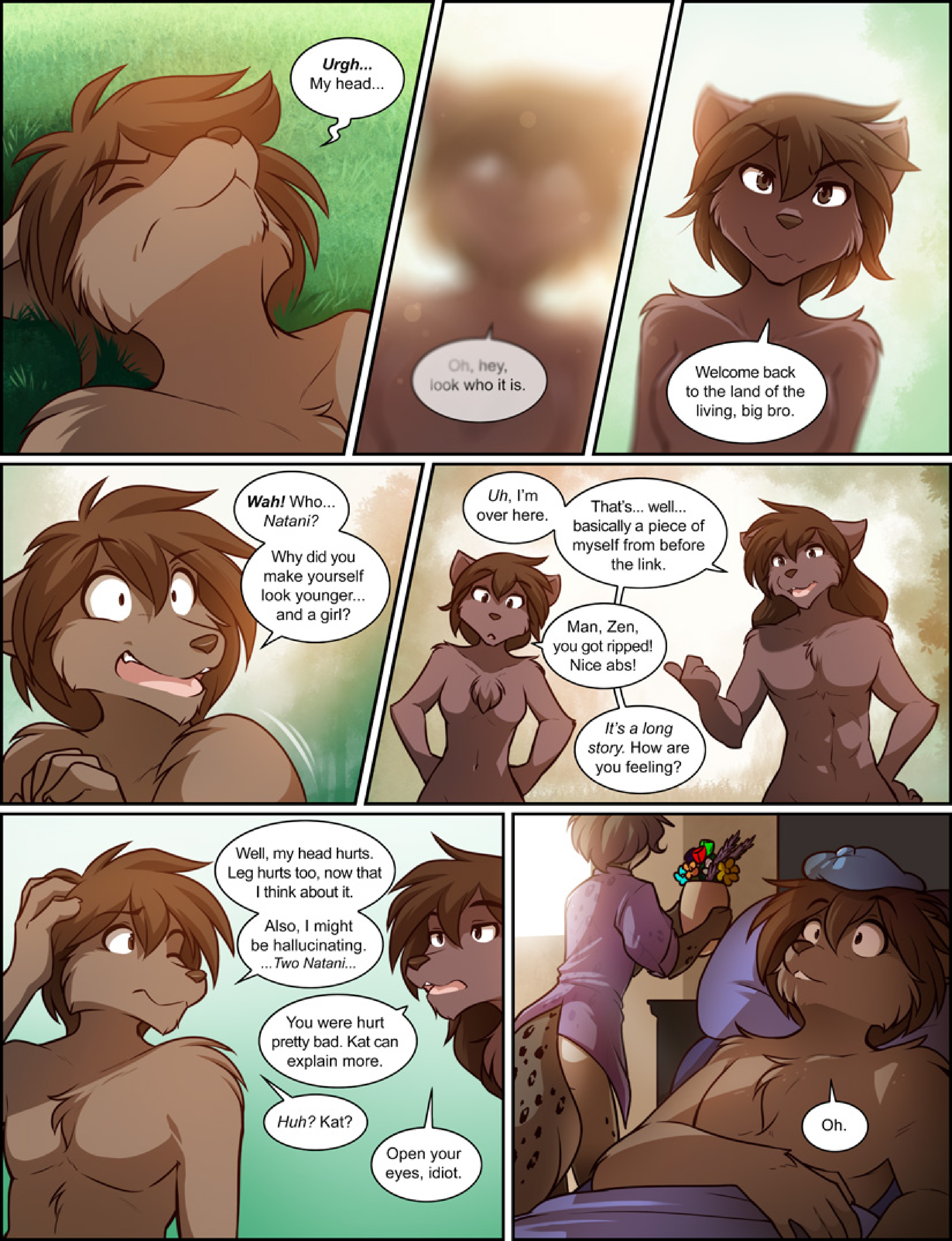
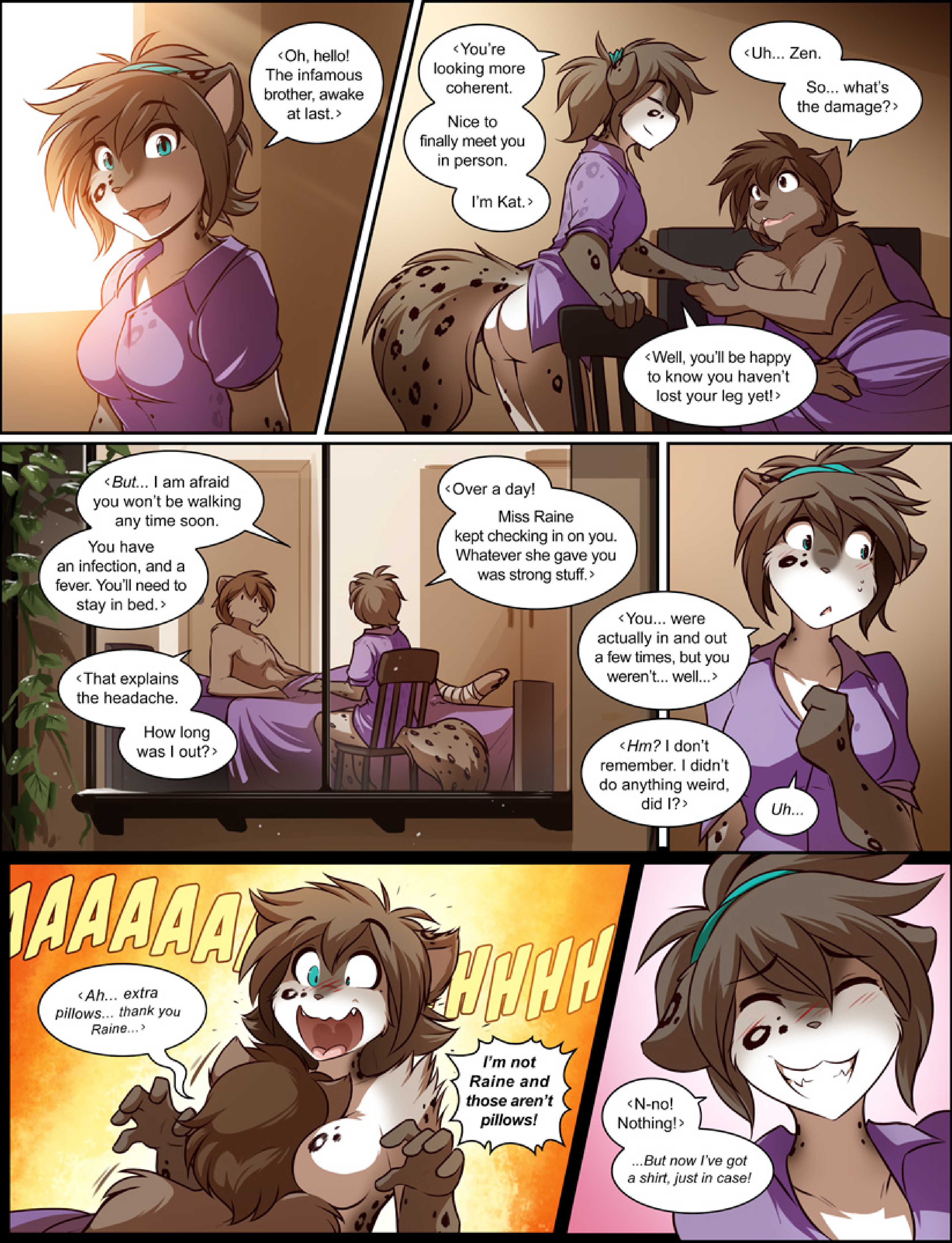
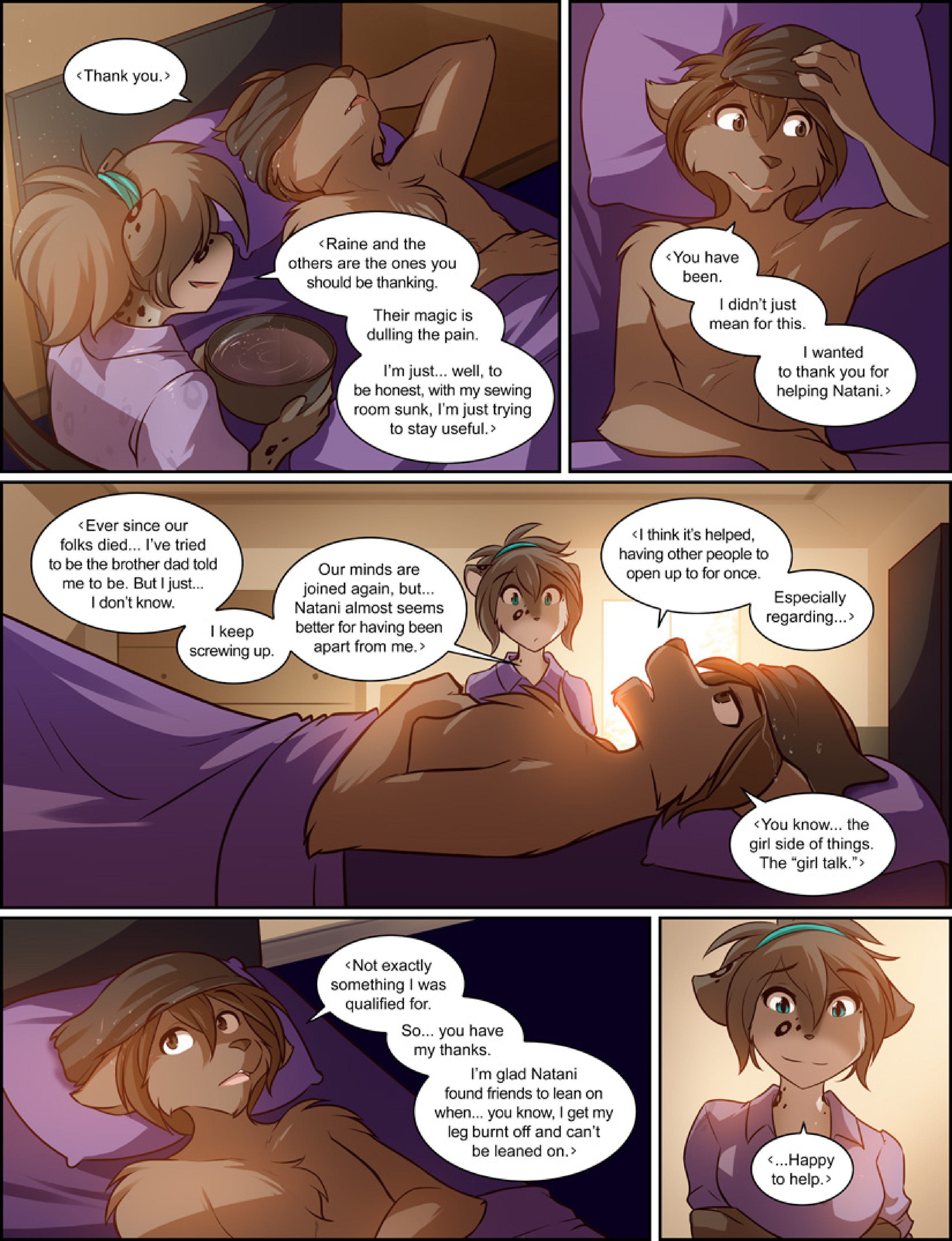
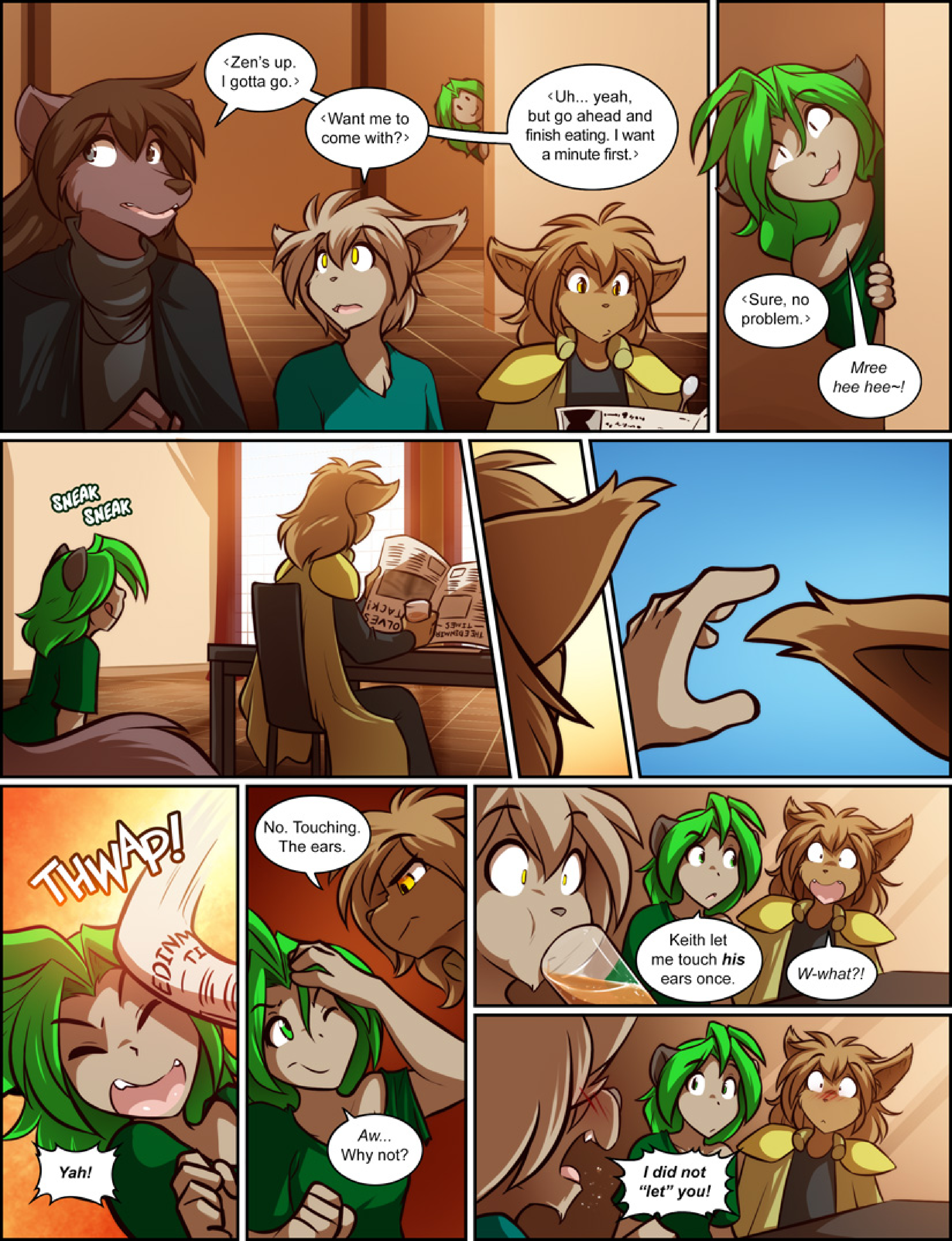
RAINE

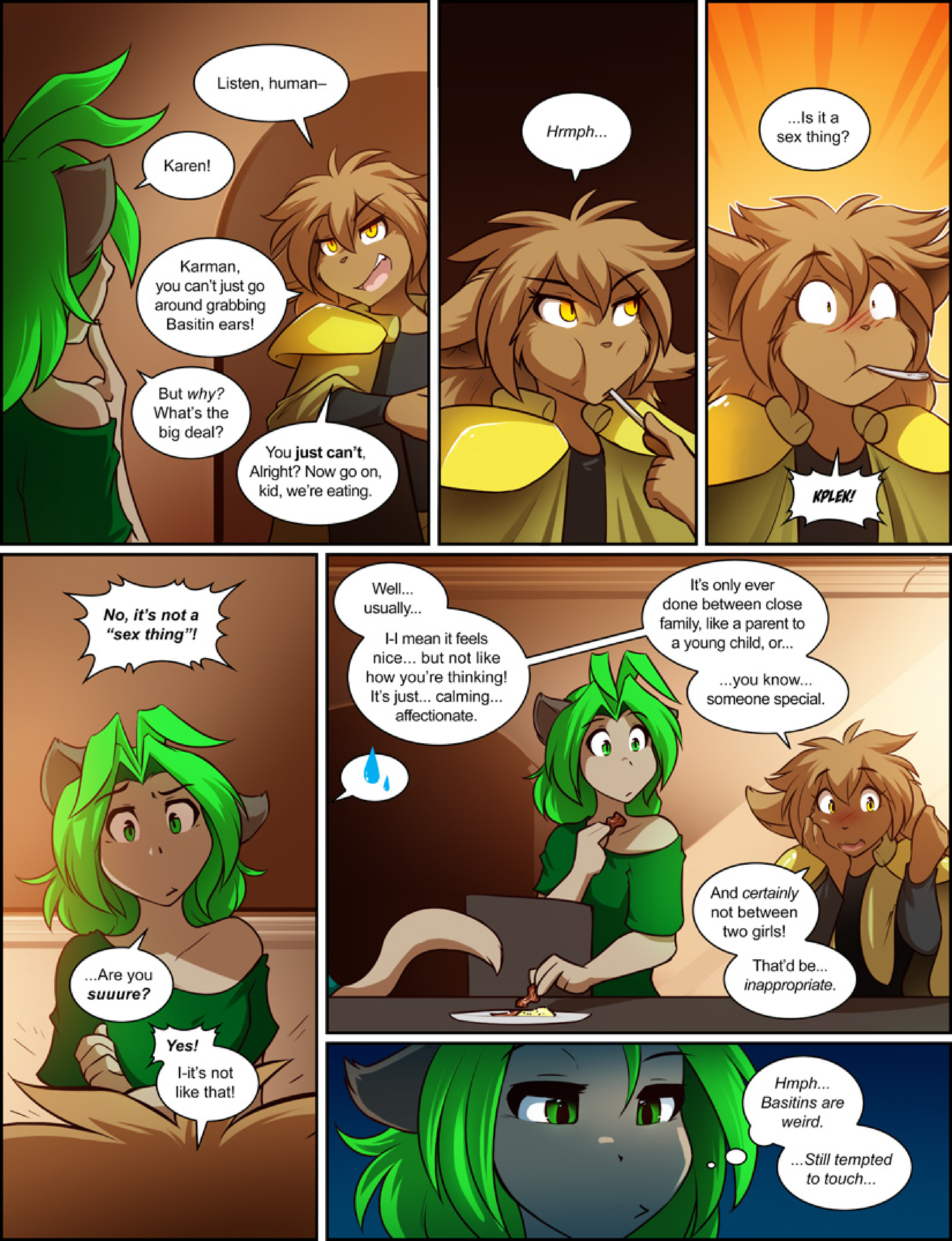

TwoKinds
Chapter 20
Stories of the Estate

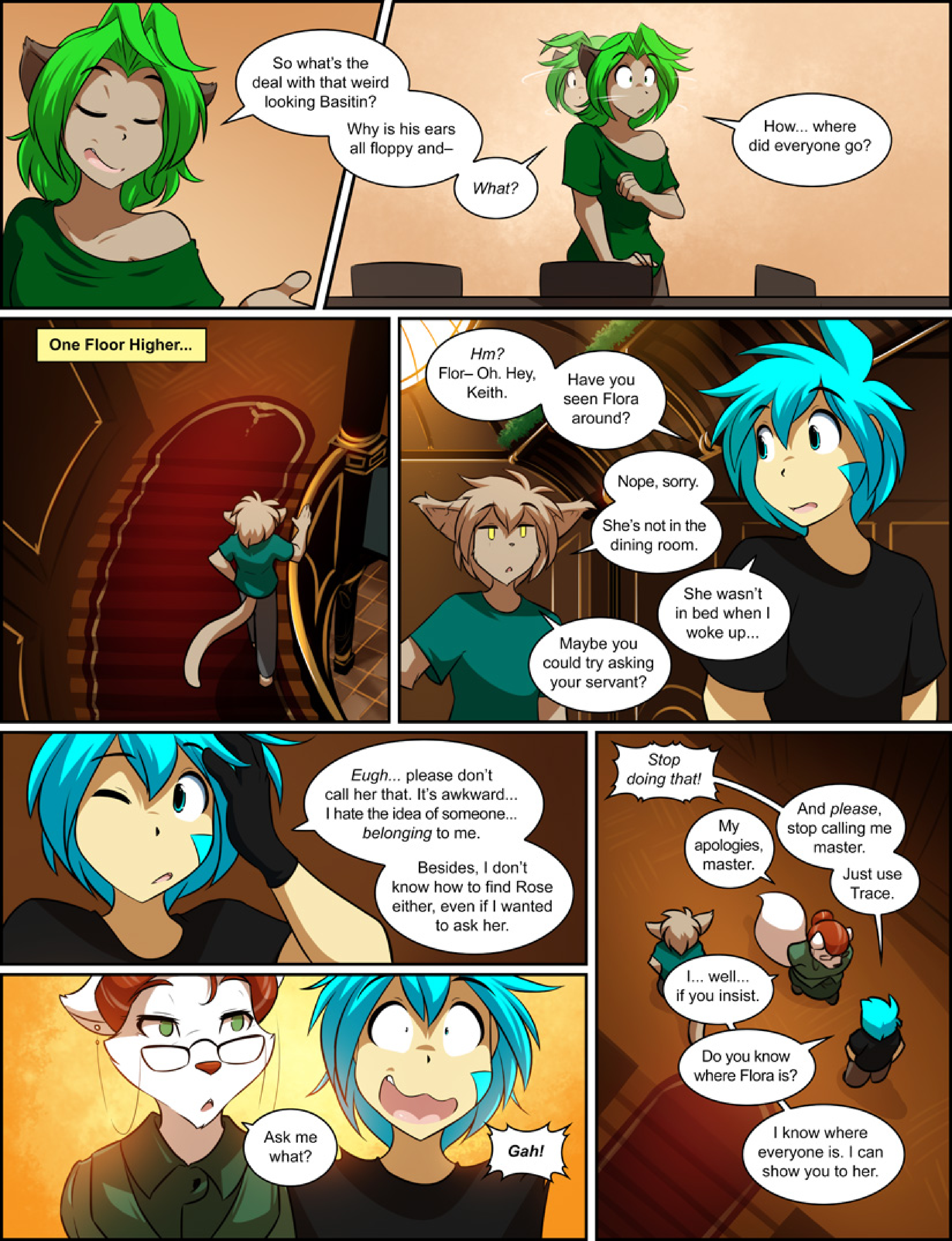

Urgh... My head...
Oh, hey, look who it is.
Welcome back to the land of the living, big bro.
Wah! Who... *Natani?*
Why did you make yourself look younger... and a girl?
Uh, I'm over here.
That's... well... basically a piece of myself from before the link.
Man, Zen, you got ripped! Nice abs!
It's a long story. How are you feeling?
Well, my head hurts. Leg hurts too, now that I think about it.
Also, I might be hallucinating. *...Two Natani...*
You were hurt pretty bad. Kat can explain more.
Huh? Kat?
Open your eyes, idiot.
Oh.

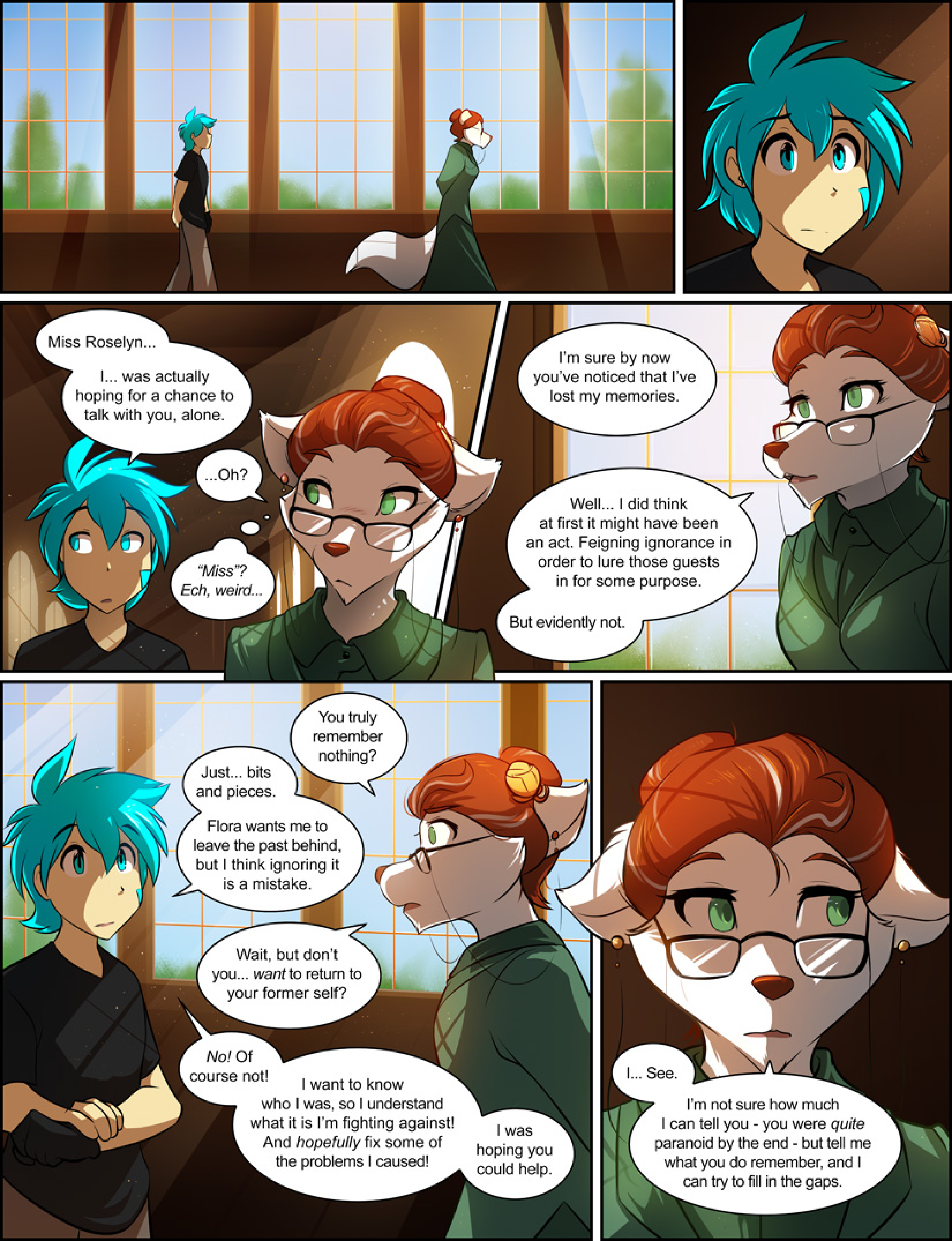

<Oh, hello! The infamous brother, awake at last.>
<You're looking more coherent.
Nice to finally meet you in person.
I'm Kat.>
<Uh... Zen.
So... what's the damage?>
<Well, you'll be happy to know you haven't lost your leg yet!>
<*But*... I am afraid you won't be walking any time soon.
You have an infection, and a fever. You'll need to stay in bed.>
<That explains the headache.
How long was I out?>
<Over a day!
Miss Raine kept checking in on you. Whatever she gave you was strong stuff.>
<You... were actually in and out a few times, but you weren't... well...>
<*Hm?* I don't remember. I didn't do anything weird, did I?>
Uh...
AAAAAAAHHHHH
<Ah... extra pillows... thank you Raine...>
I'm not Raine and those aren't pillows!
<N-no! Nothing!>
...But now I've got a shirt, just in case!

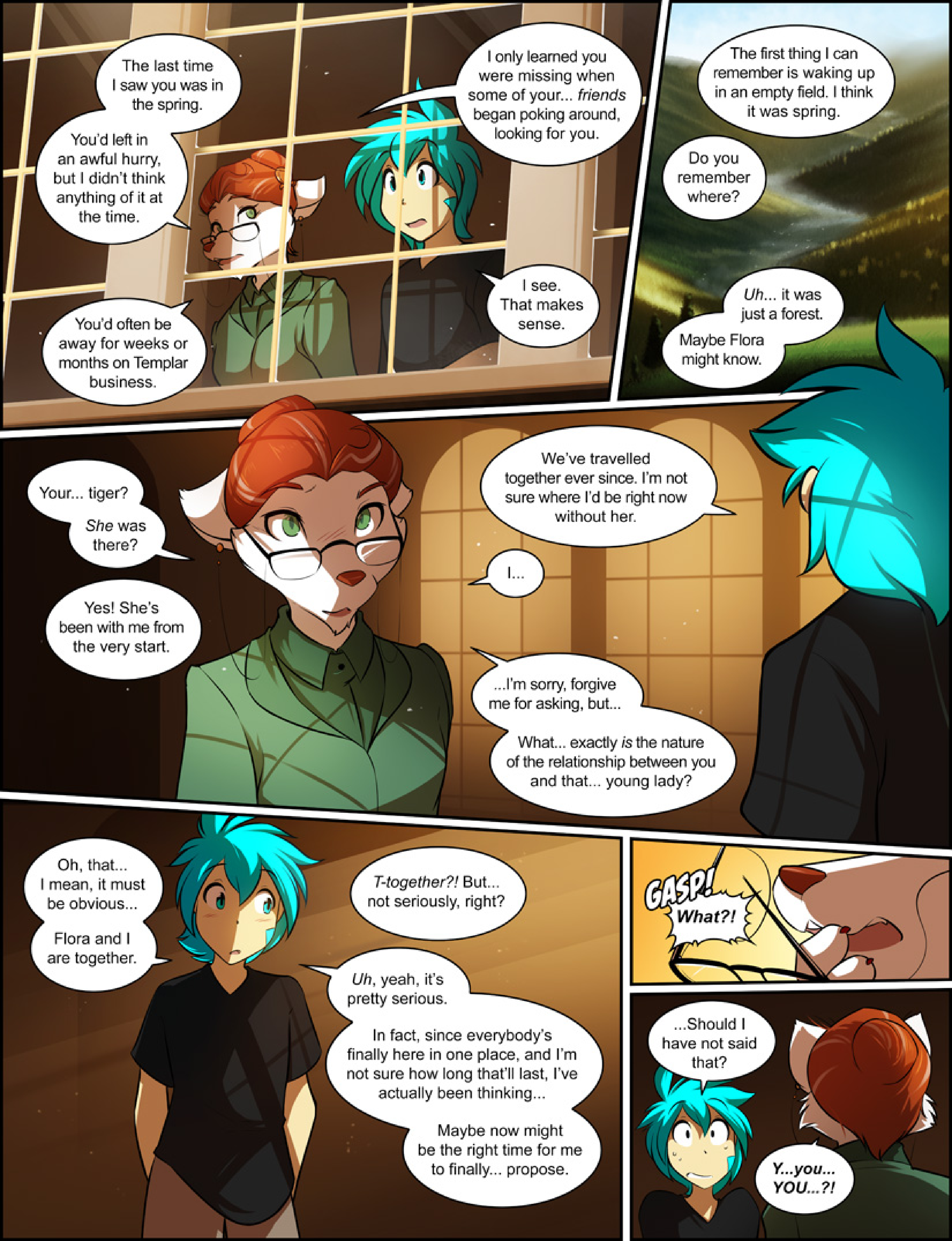

<Thank you.>
<Raine and the others are the ones you should be thanking.
Their magic is dulling the pain.
I'm just... well, to be honest, with my sewing room sunk, I'm just trying to stay useful.>
<You have been.
I didn't just mean for this.
I wanted to thank you for helping Natani.>
<Ever since our folks died... I've tried to be the brother dad told me to be. But I just... I don't know.
I keep screwing up.
Our minds are joined again, but... Natani almost seems better for having been apart from me.>
<I think it's helped, having other people to open up to for once.
Especially regarding...>
<You know... the girl side of things. The "girl talk.">
<Not exactly something I was qualified for.
So... you have my thanks.
I'm glad Natani found friends to lean on when... you know, I get my leg burnt off and can't be leaned on.>
<...Happy to help.>

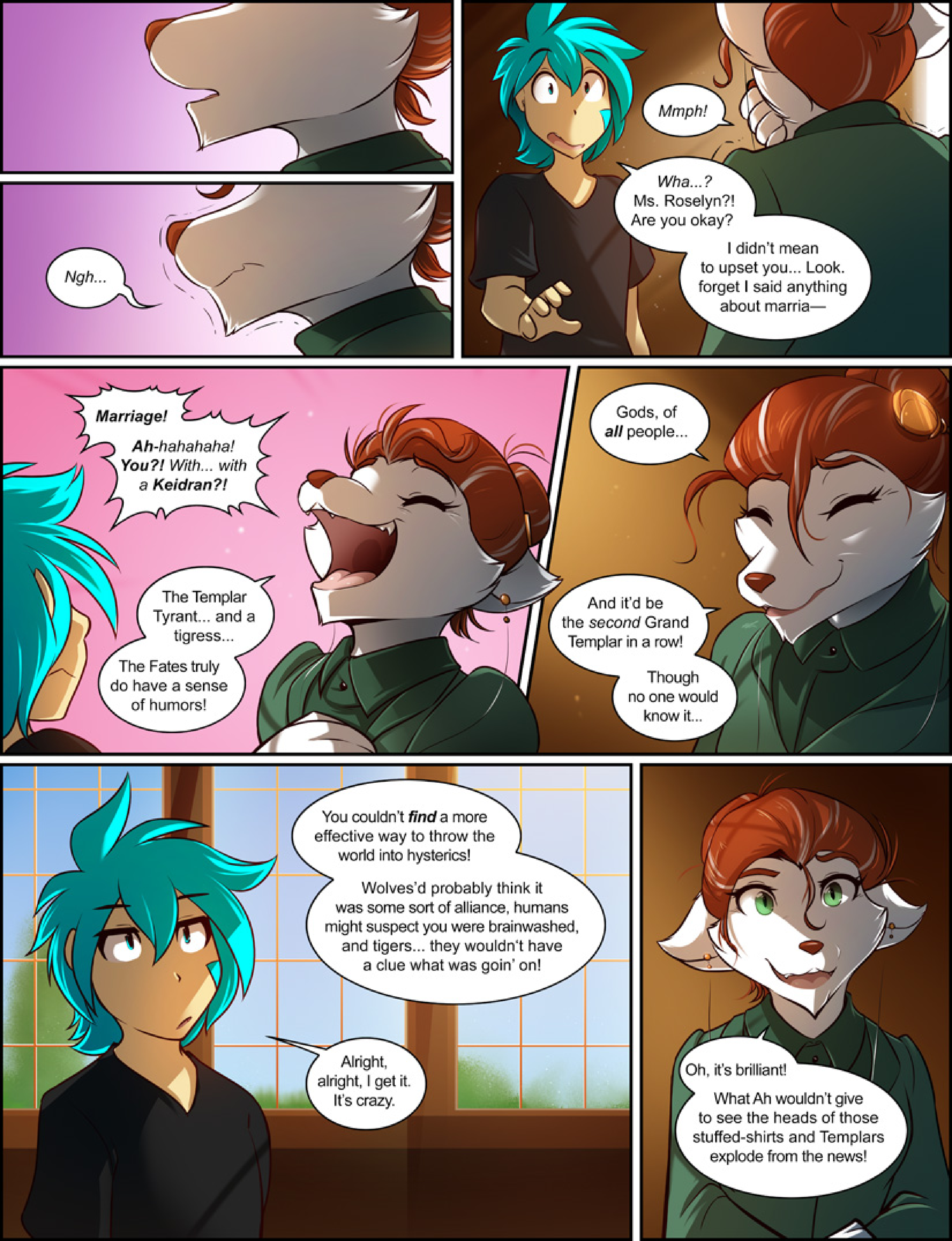

‹Zen's up. I gotta go.›
‹Want me to come with?›
‹Uh... yeah, but go ahead and finish eating. I want a minute first.›
‹Sure, no problem.›
Mree hee hee~!
SNEAK SNEAK
THWAP!
Yah!
No. Touching. The ears.
Aw... Why not?
Keith let me touch ***his*** ears once.
W-what?!
I did not "let" you!

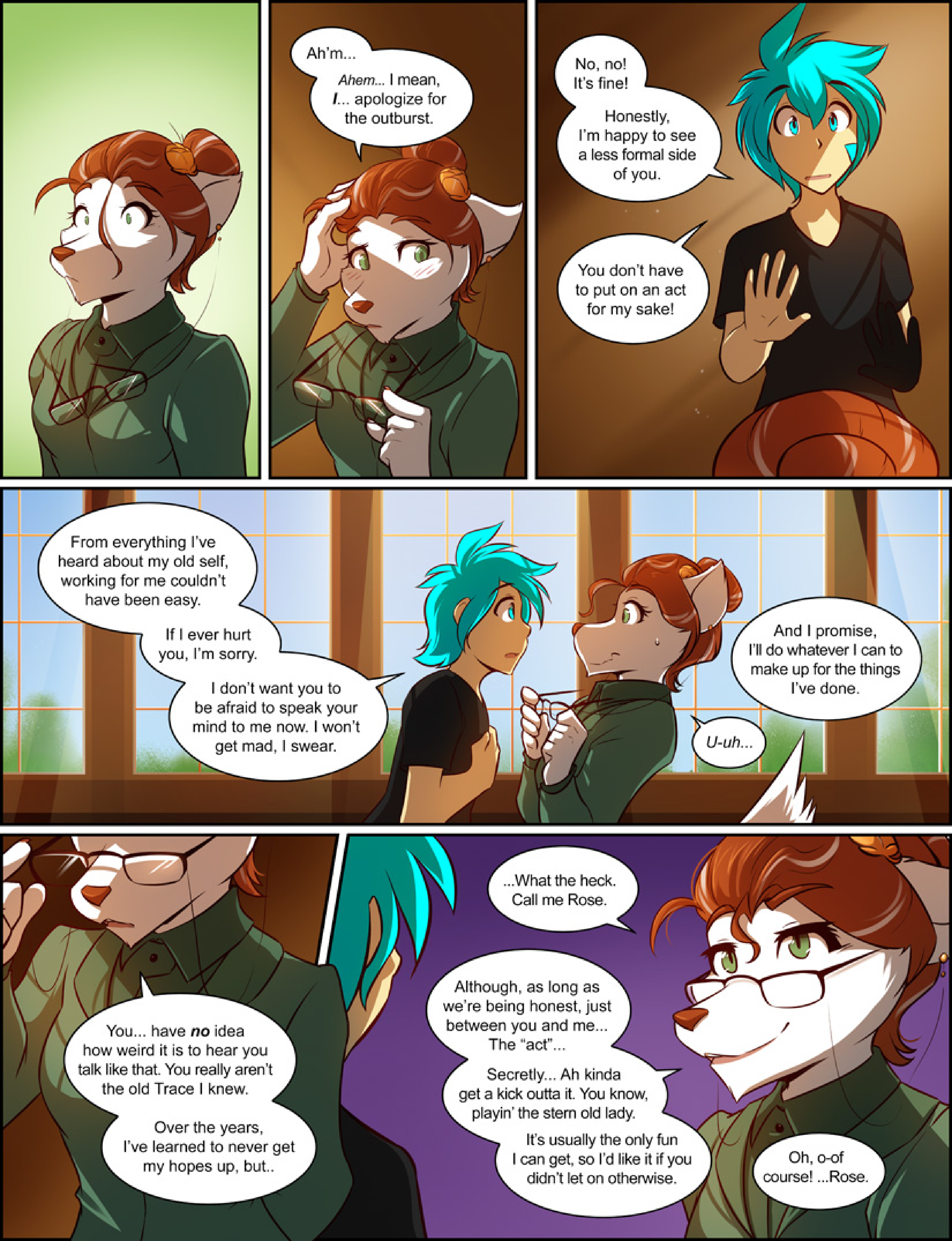

Listen, human–
Karen!
Karman, you can't just go around grabbing Basitin ears!
But *why?* What's the big deal?
You **just can't**, Alright? Now go on, kid, we're eating.
Hrmph...
...Is it a sex thing?
KPLEK!
No, it's not a "sex thing"!
...Are you ***suuure?***
Yes!
I-it's not like that!
Well... usually...
I-I mean it feels nice... but not like how you're thinking! It's just... calming... affectionate.
It's only ever done between close family, like a parent to a young child, or...
...you know... someone special.
And *certainly* not between two girls!
That'd be... *inappropriate.*
Hmph... Basitins are weird.
...Still tempted to touch...

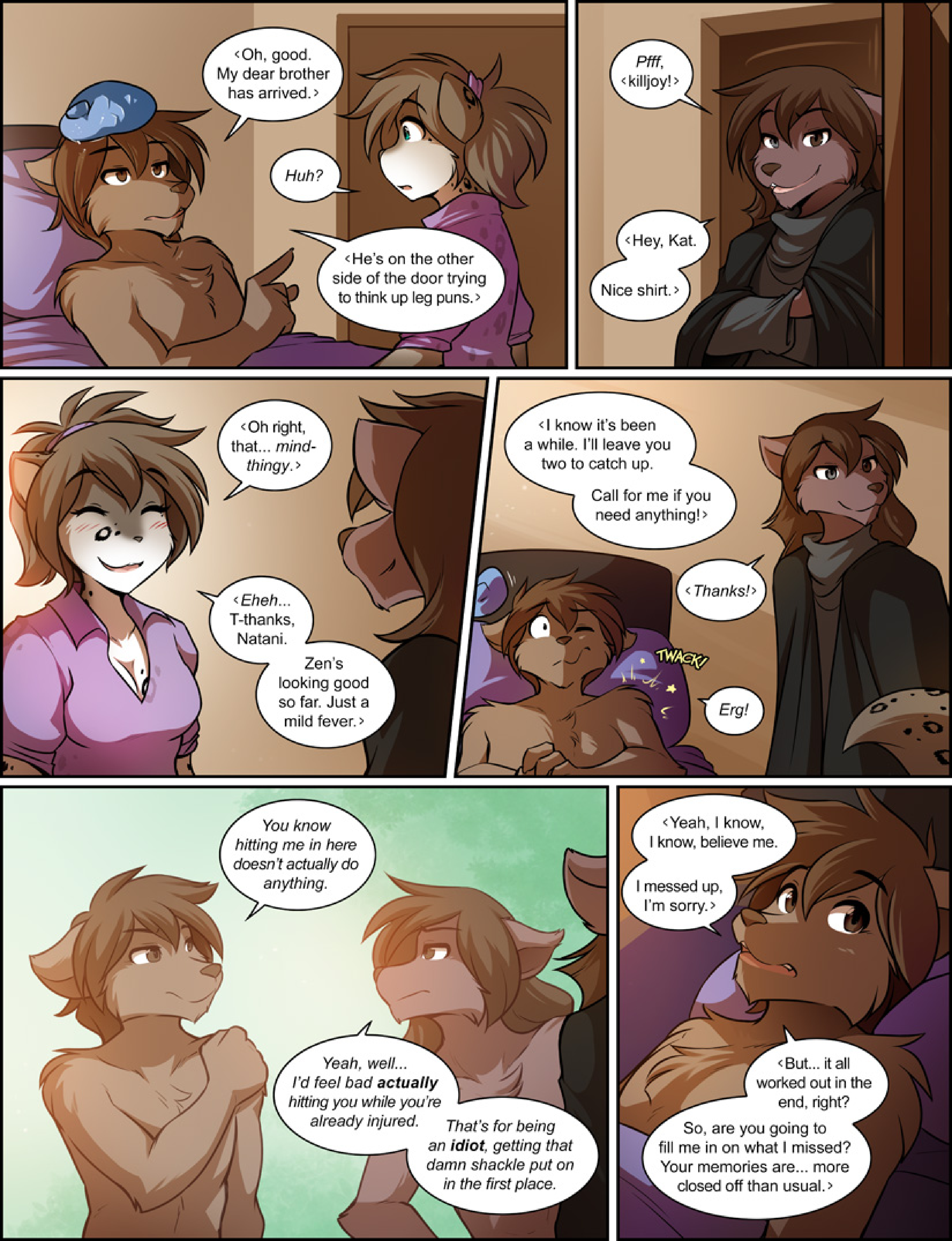

So what's the deal with that weird looking Basitin?
Why is his ears all floppy and–
What?
How... where did everyone go?
One Floor Higher...
Hm? Flor– Oh. Hey, Keith.
Have you seen Flora around?
Nope, sorry.
She's not in the dining room.
She wasn't in bed when I woke up...
Maybe you could try asking your servant?
Eugh... please don't call her that. It's awkward... I hate the idea of someone... *belonging* to me.
Besides, I don't know how to find Rose either, even if I wanted to ask her.
Ask me what?
Gah!
Stop doing that!
And *please*, stop calling me master.
My apologies, master.
Just use Trace.
I... well... if you insist.
Do you know where Flora is?
I know where everyone is. I can show you to her.

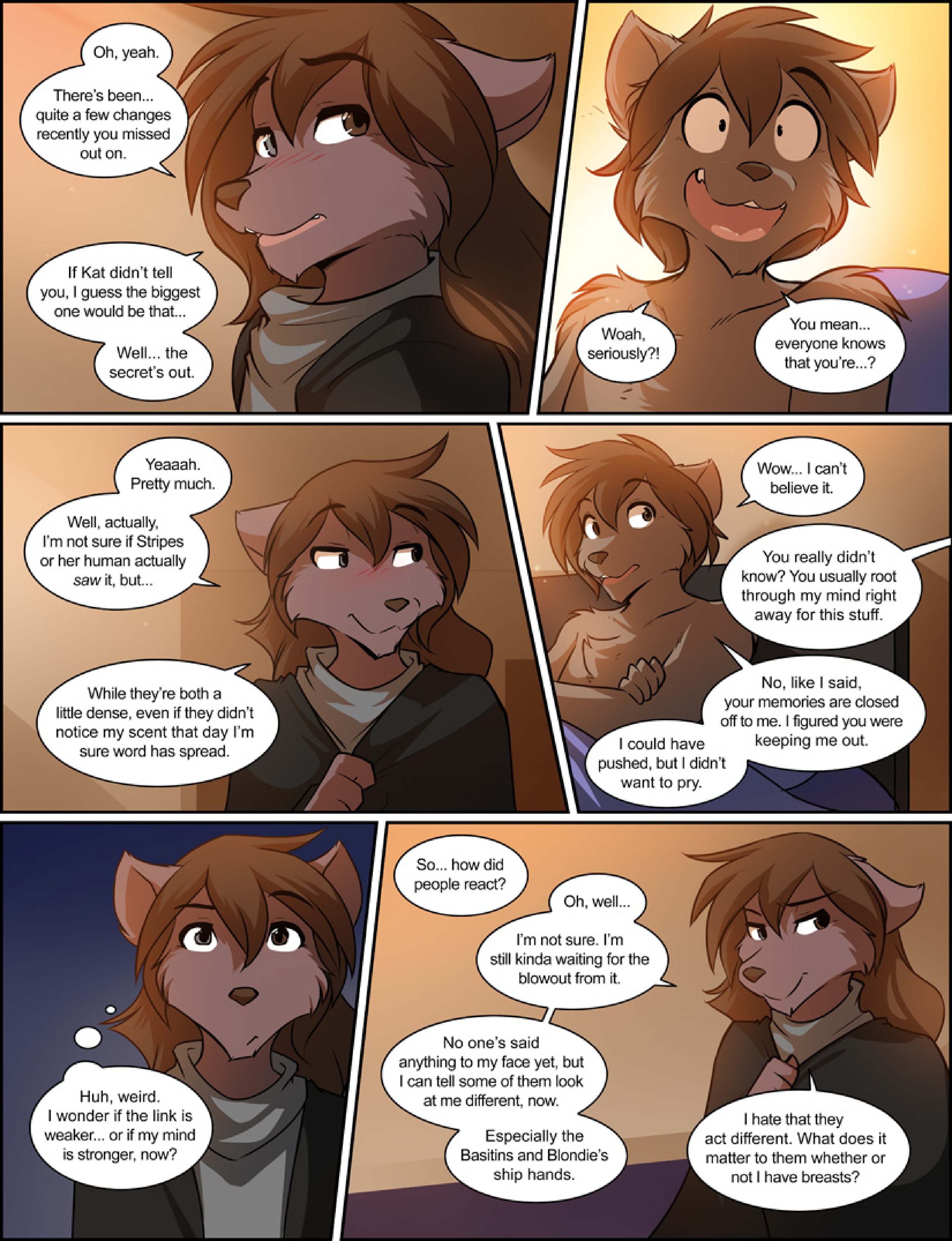

Miss Roselyn...
I... was actually hoping for a chance to talk with you, alone.
...Oh?
"Miss"? Ech, weird...
I'm sure by now you've noticed that I've lost my memories.
Well... I did think at first it might have been an act. Feigning ignorance in order to lure those guests in for some purpose.
But evidently not.
You truly remember nothing?
Just... bits and pieces.
Flora wants me to leave the past behind, but I think ignoring it is a mistake.
Wait, but don't you... *want* to return to your former self?
No! Of course not!
I want to know who I was, so I understand what it is I'm fighting against! And *hopefully* fix some of the problems I caused!
I was hoping you could help.
I... See.
I'm not sure how much I can tell you - you were *quite* paranoid by the end - but tell me what you do remember, and I can try to fill in the gaps.

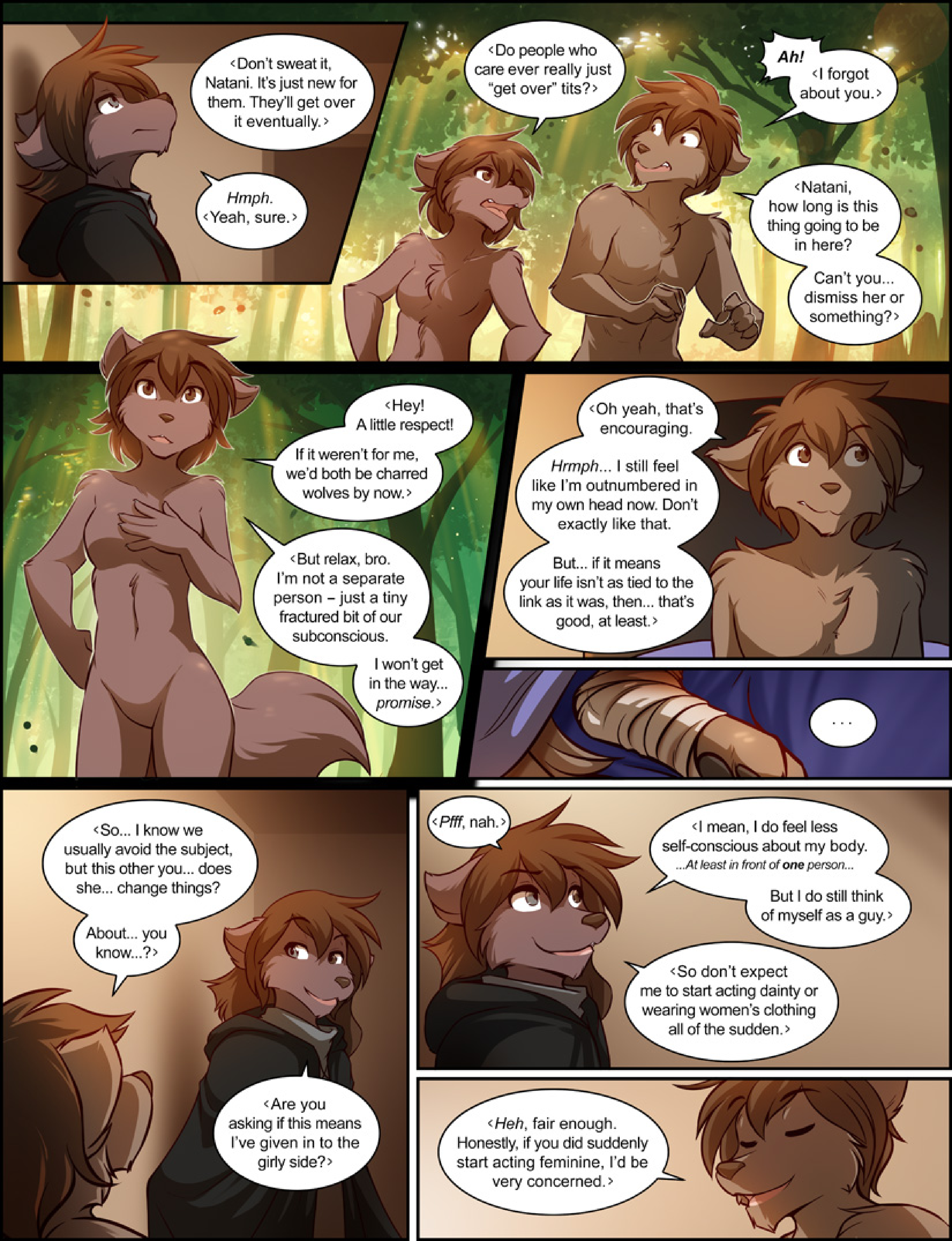

The last time I saw you was in the spring.
You'd left in an awful hurry, but I didn't think anything of it at the time.
I only learned you were missing when some of your... *friends* began poking around, looking for you.
You'd often be away for weeks or months on Templar business.
I see. That makes sense.
The first thing I can remember is waking up in an empty field. I think it was spring.
Do you remember where?
Uh... it was just a forest.
Maybe Flora might know.
Your... tiger?
She was there?
Yes! She's been with me from the very start.
We've travelled together ever since. I'm not sure where I'd be right now without her.
I...
...I'm sorry, forgive me for asking, but...
What... exactly *is* the nature of the relationship between you and that... young lady?
Oh, that... I mean, it must be obvious...
Flora and I are together.
T-together?! But... not seriously, right?
Uh, yeah, it's pretty serious.
In fact, since everybody's finally here in one place, and I'm not sure how long that'll last, I've actually been thinking...
Maybe now might be the right time for me to finally... propose.
GASP!
What?!
...Should I have not said that?
Y...you... YOU...?!

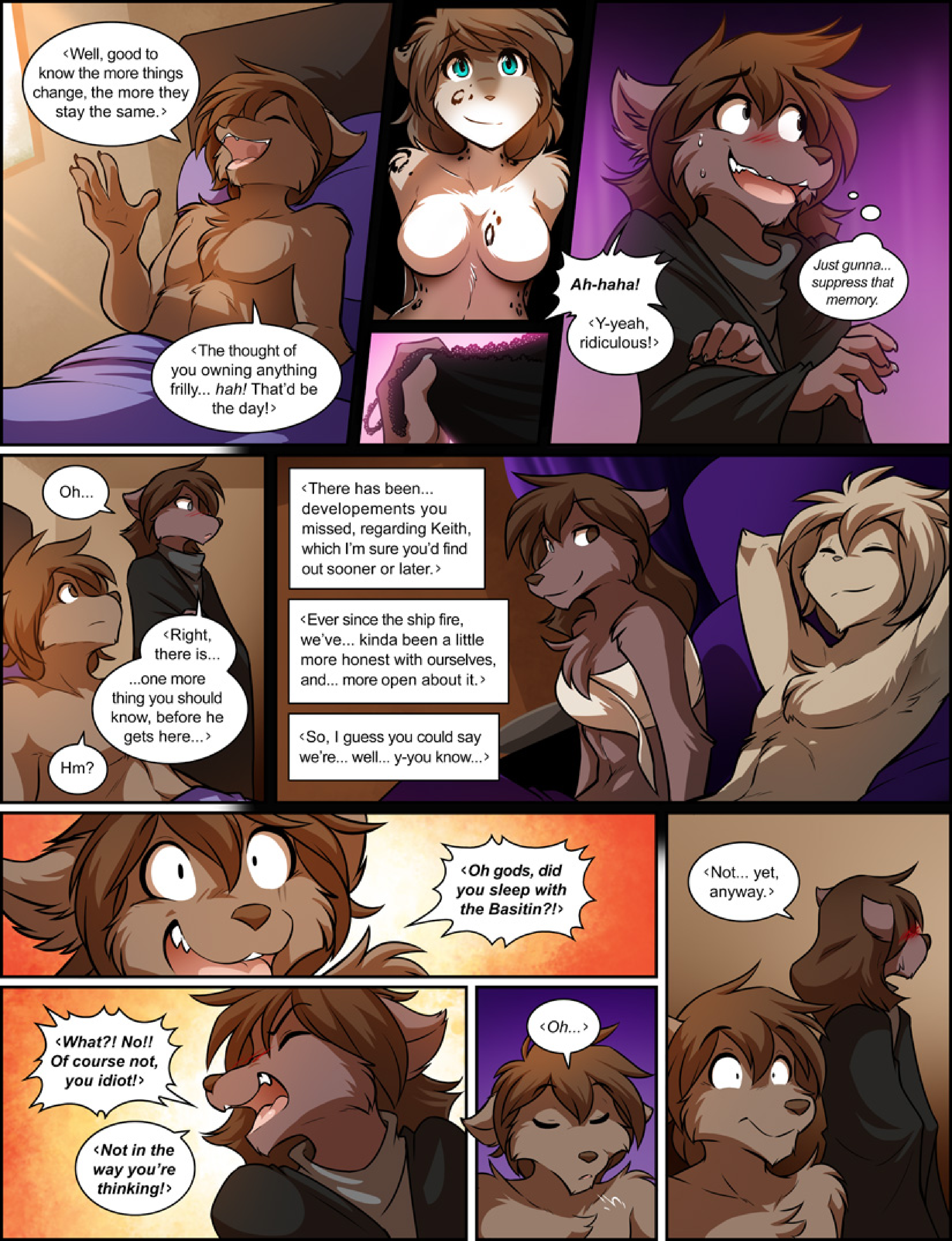

Ngh...
Mmph!
Wha...? Ms. Roselyn?! Are you okay?
I didn't mean to upset you... Look. forget I said anything about marria—
Marriage!
Ah-hahahaha! You?! With... with a Keidran?!
The Templar Tyrant... and a tigress...
The Fates truly do have a sense of humors!
Gods, of all people...
And it'd be the second Grand Templar in a row!
Though no one would know it...
You couldn't find a more effective way to throw the world into hysterics!
Wolves'd probably think it was some sort of alliance, humans might suspect you were brainwashed, and tigers... they wouldn't have a clue what was goin' on!
Alright, alright, I get it. It's crazy.
Oh, it's brilliant!
What Ah wouldn't give to see the heads of those stuffed-shirts and Templars explode from the news!

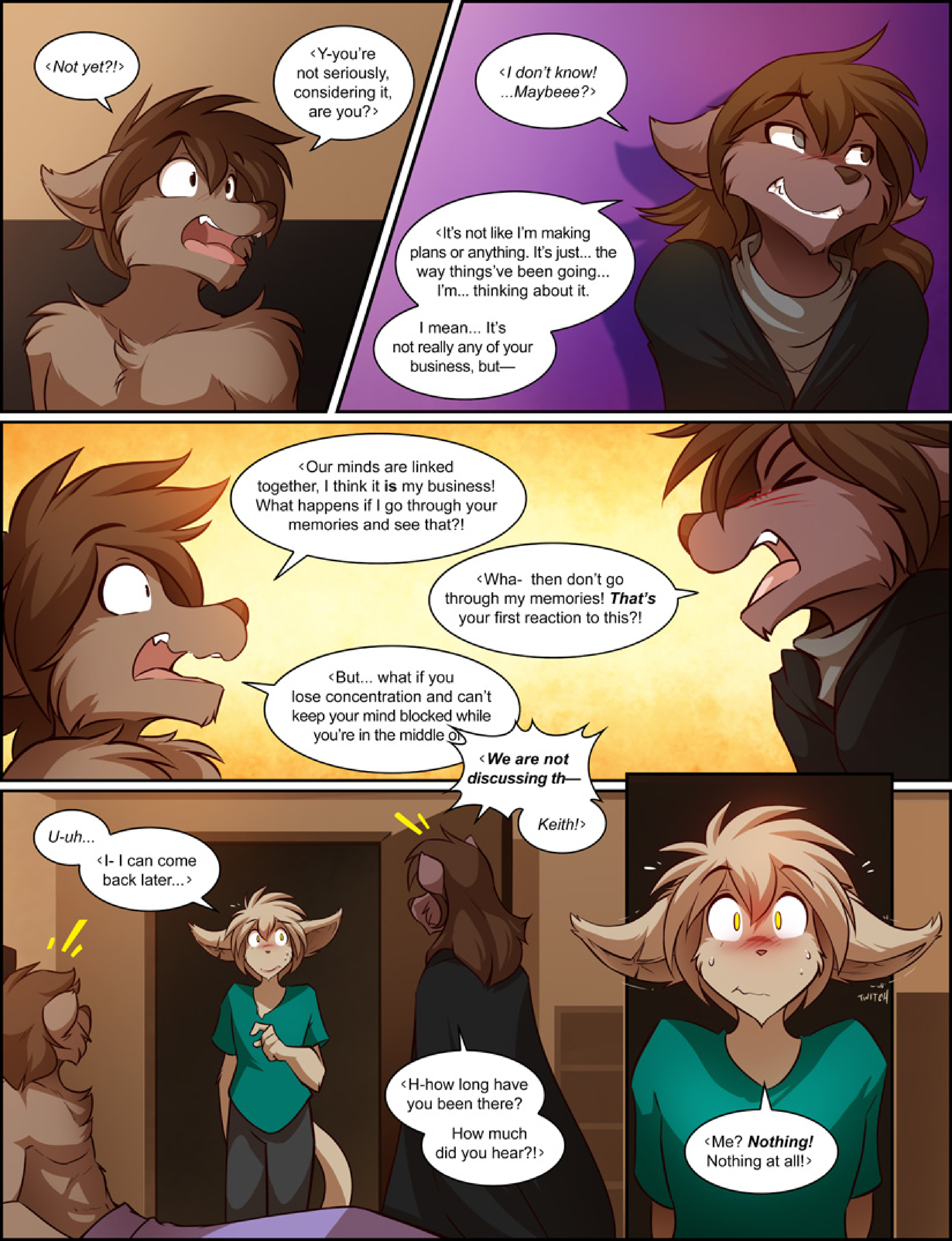

Ah'm...
Ahem... I mean, ***I***... apologize for the outburst.
No, no! It's fine!
Honestly, I'm happy to see a less formal side of you.
You don't have to put on an act for my sake!
From everything I've heard about my old self, working for me couldn't have been easy.
If I ever hurt you, I'm sorry.
I don't want you to be afraid to speak your mind to me now. I won't get mad, I swear.
And I promise, I'll do whatever I can to make up for the things I've done.
U-uh...
You... have ***no*** idea how weird it is to hear you talk like that. You really aren't the old Trace I knew.
Over the years, I've learned to never get my hopes up, but..
...What the heck. Call me Rose.
Although, as long as we're being honest, just between you and me... The "act"...
Secretly... Ah kinda get a kick outta it. You know, playin' the stern old lady.
It's usually the only fun I can get, so I'd like it if you didn't let on otherwise.
Oh, o-of course! ...Rose.

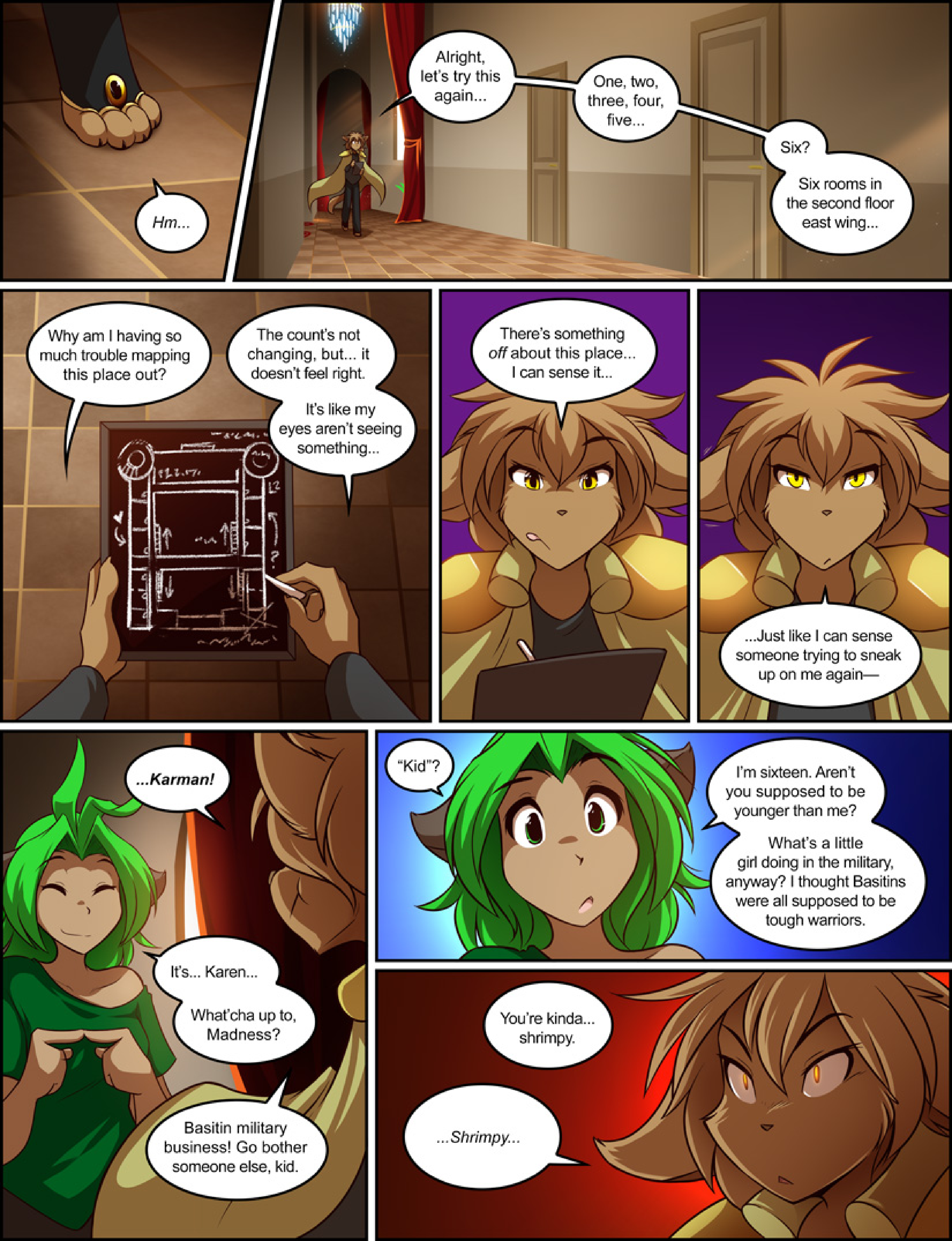

‹Oh, good. My dear brother has arrived.›
Huh?
‹He's on the other side of the door trying to think up leg puns.›
Pfff, ‹killjoy!›
‹Hey, Kat.
Nice shirt.›
‹Oh right, that... *mind-thingy*.›
‹*Eheh...* T-thanks, Natani.
Zen's looking good so far. Just a mild fever.›
‹I know it's been a while. I'll leave you two to catch up.
Call for me if you need anything!›
‹*Thanks!*›
TWACK!
Erg!
You know hitting me in here doesn't actually do anything.
*Yeah, well... I'd feel bad **actually** hitting you while you're already injured.*
*That's for being an **idiot**, getting that damn shackle put on in the first place.*
‹Yeah, I know, I know, believe me.
I messed up, I'm sorry.›
‹But... it all worked out in the end, right?
So, are you going to fill me in on what I missed? Your memories are... more closed off than usual.›


Oh, yeah.
There's been... quite a few changes recently you missed out on.
If Kat didn't tell you, I guess the biggest one would be that...
Well... the secret's out.
Woah, seriously?!
You mean... everyone knows that you're...?
Yeaaah. Pretty much.
Well, actually, I'm not sure if Stripes or her human actually *saw* it, but...
While they're both a little dense, even if they didn't notice my scent that day I'm sure word has spread.
Wow... I can't believe it.
You really didn't know? You usually root through my mind right away for this stuff.
No, like I said, your memories are closed off to me. I figured you were keeping me out.
I could have pushed, but I didn't want to pry.
Huh, weird. I wonder if the link is weaker... or if my mind is stronger, now?
So... how did people react?
Oh, well...
I'm not sure. I'm still kinda waiting for the blowout from it.
No one's said anything to my face yet, but I can tell some of them look at me different, now.
Especially the Basitins and Blondie's ship hands.
I hate that they act different. What does it matter to them whether or not I have breasts?


‹Don't sweat it, Natani. It's just new for them. They'll get over it eventually.›
Hmph. ‹Yeah, sure.›
‹Do people who care ever really just "get over" tits?›
Ah! ‹I forgot about you.›
‹Natani, how long is this thing going to be in here?
Can't you... dismiss her or something?›
‹Hey! A little respect!
If it weren't for me, we'd both be charred wolves by now.›
‹But relax, bro. I'm not a separate person – just a tiny fractured bit of our subconscious.
I won't get in the way... *promise*.›
‹Oh yeah, that's encouraging.
Hrmph... I still feel like I'm outnumbered in my own head now. Don't exactly like that.
But... if it means your life isn't as tied to the link as it was, then... that's good, at least.›
. . .
‹So... I know we usually avoid the subject, but this other you... does she... change things?
About... you know...?›
‹Are you asking if this means I've given in to the girly side?›
‹*Pfff*, nah.›
‹I mean, I do feel less self-conscious about my body. *...At least in front of* ***one*** *person...*
But I do still think of myself as a guy.›
‹So don't expect me to start acting dainty or wearing women's clothing all of the sudden.›
‹*Heh*, fair enough. Honestly, if you did suddenly start acting feminine, I'd be very concerned.›


‹Well, good to know the more things change, the more they stay the same.›
‹The thought of you owning anything frilly... *hah!* That'd be the day!›
Ah-haha!
‹Y-yeah, ridiculous!›
Just gunna... suppress that memory.
Oh...
‹Right, there is...
...one more thing you should know, before he gets here...›
Hm?
‹There has been... developements you missed, regarding Keith, which I'm sure you'd find out sooner or later.›
‹Ever since the ship fire, we've... kinda been a little more honest with ourselves, and... more open about it.›
‹So, I guess you could say we're... well... y-you know...›
‹Oh gods, did you sleep with the Basitin?!›
‹Not... yet, anyway.›
‹What?! No!! Of course not, you idiot!›
‹Not in the way you're thinking!›
‹Oh...›

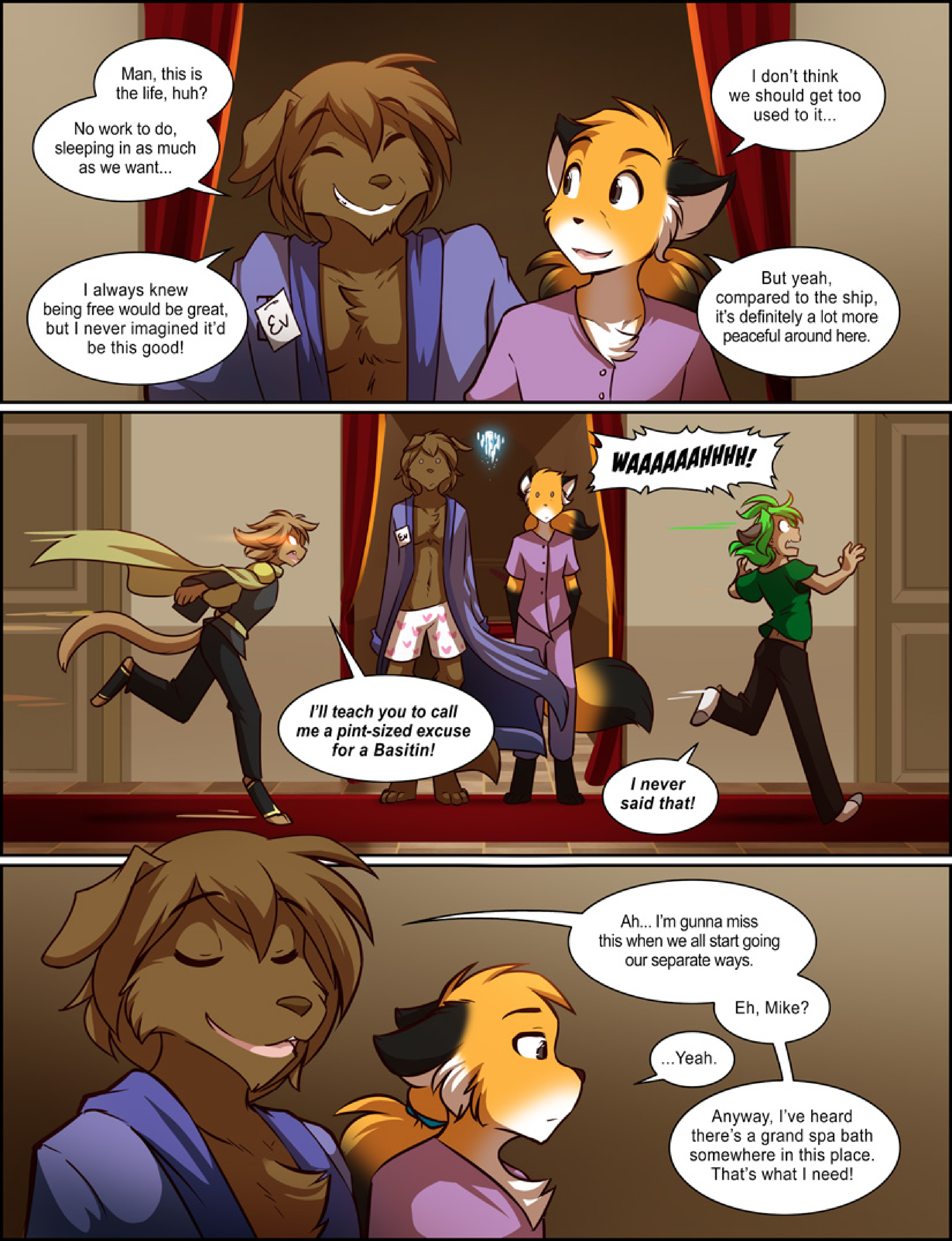

‹Not yet?!›
‹Y-you're not seriously, considering it, are you?›
‹I don't know! ...Maybeee?›
‹It's not like I'm making plans or anything. It's just... the way things've been going... I'm... thinking about it.
I mean... It's not really any of your business, but—
‹Our minds are linked together, I think it **is** my business! What happens if I go through your memories and see that?!
‹Wha- then don't go through my memories! ***That's*** your first reaction to this?!
‹But... what if you lose concentration and can't keep your mind blocked while you're in the middle of
‹***We are not discussing th—***
Keith!›
U-uh...
‹I- I can come back later...›
‹H-how long have you been there?
How much did you hear?!›
TWITCH
‹Me? ***Nothing!*** Nothing at all!›

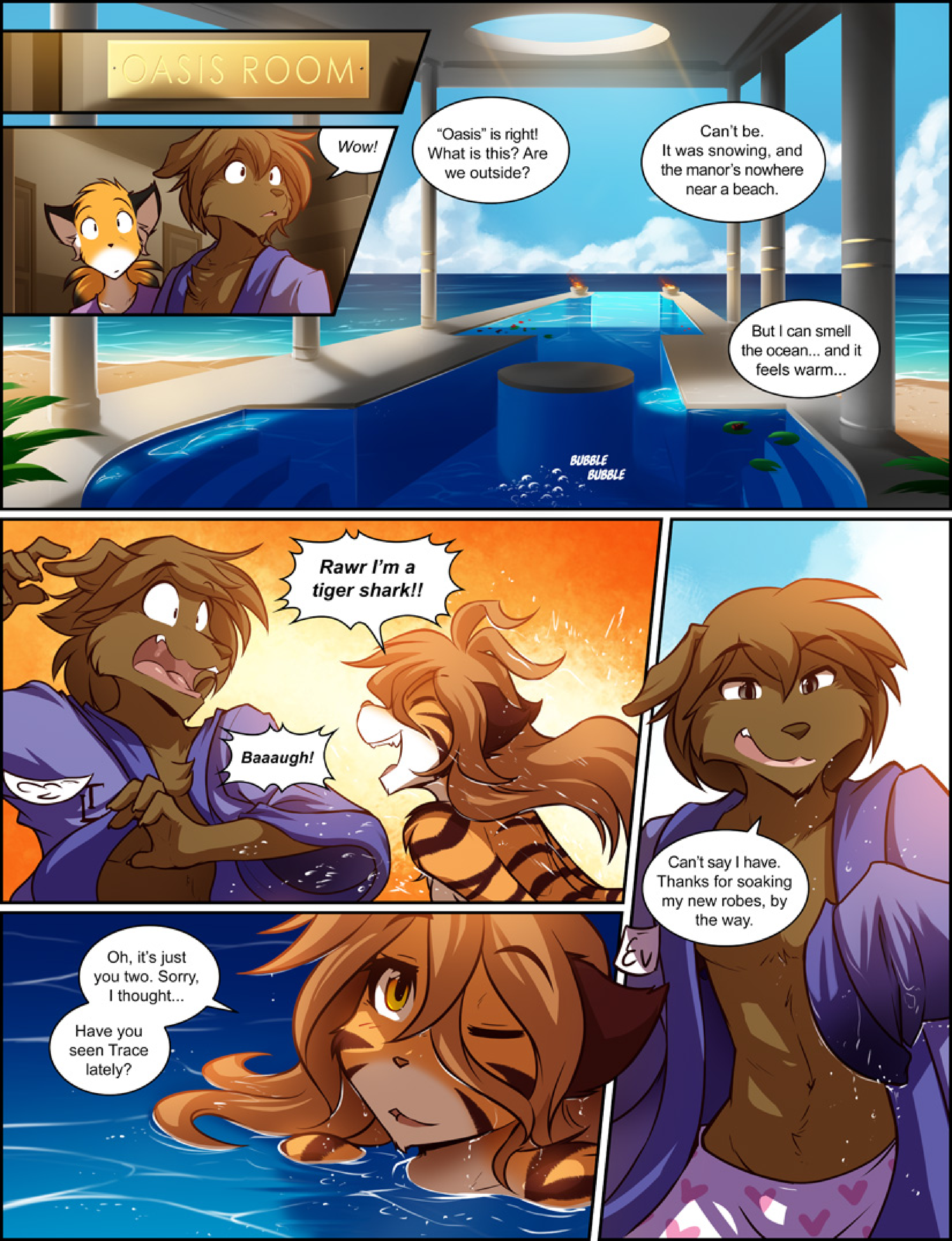

Hm...
Alright, let's try this again...
One, two, three, four, five...
Six?
Six rooms in the second floor east wing...
Why am I having so much trouble mapping this place out?
The count's not changing, but... it doesn't feel right.
It's like my eyes aren't seeing something...
There's something *off* about this place... I can sense it...
...Just like I can sense someone trying to sneak up on me again—
...Karman!
It's... Karen...
What'cha up to, Madness?
Basitin military business! Go bother someone else, kid.
"Kid"?
I'm sixteen. Aren't you supposed to be younger than me?
What's a little girl doing in the military, anyway? I thought Basitins were all supposed to be tough warriors.
You're kinda... shrimpy.
...Shrimpy...

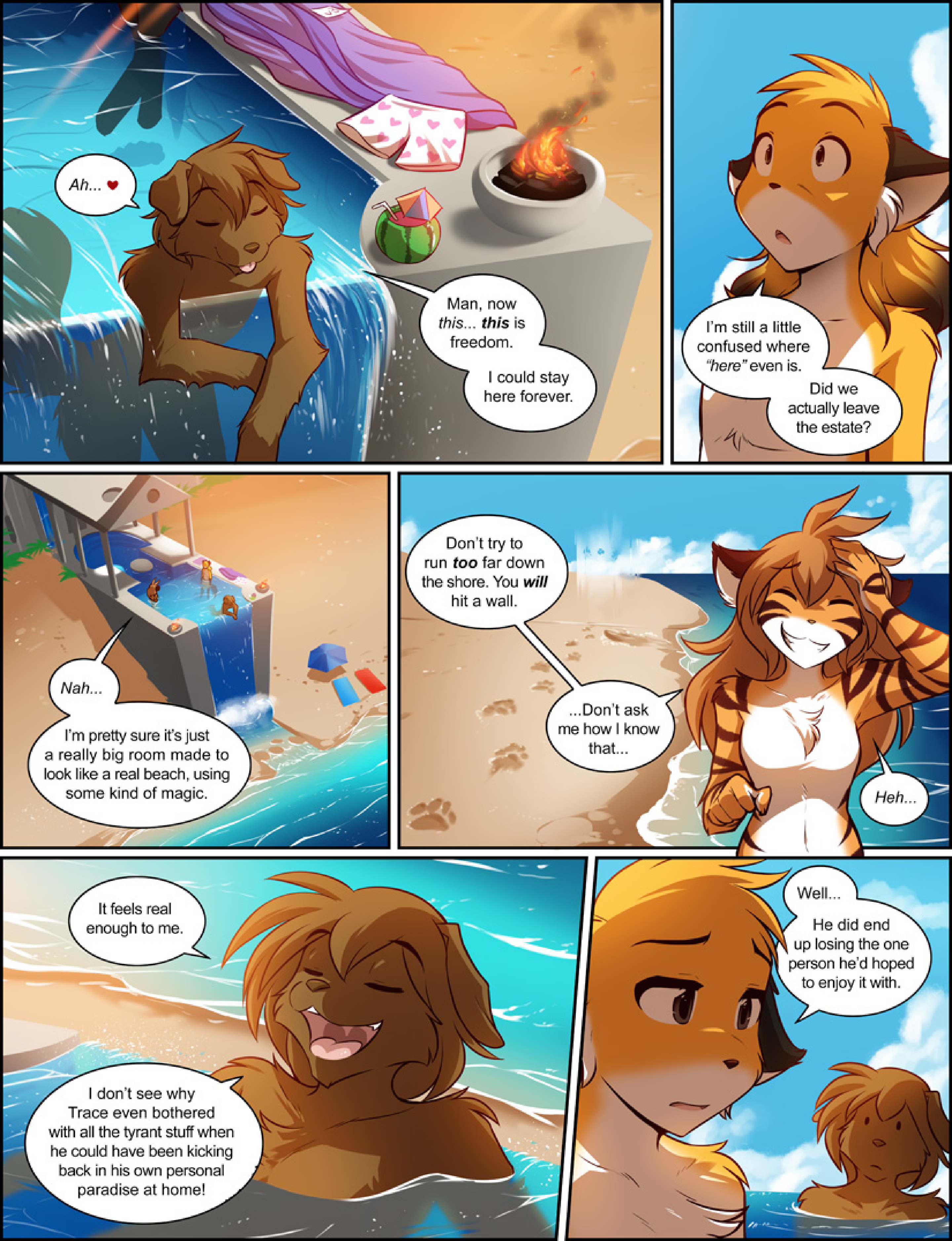
GREETINGS FROM KOREA!

MY FAMILY AND I ARE CURRENTLY VISITING OUR EXTENDED FAMILY IN KOREA!

I PLANNED TO TRY AND UPDATE WHILE HERE, BUT HONESTY, IT'S UNLIKELY I'LL FIND ENOUGH FREE TIME. SO, FOR NOW, THE COMIC WILL BE TAKING A BRIEF REST, AND TWOKINDS WILL RETURN TO REGULAR UPDATES IN TWO WEEKS, ON OCT 5TH! THERE'LL BE A LOT TO SHARE WHEN WE GET BACK, SO SEE YA THEN! :)

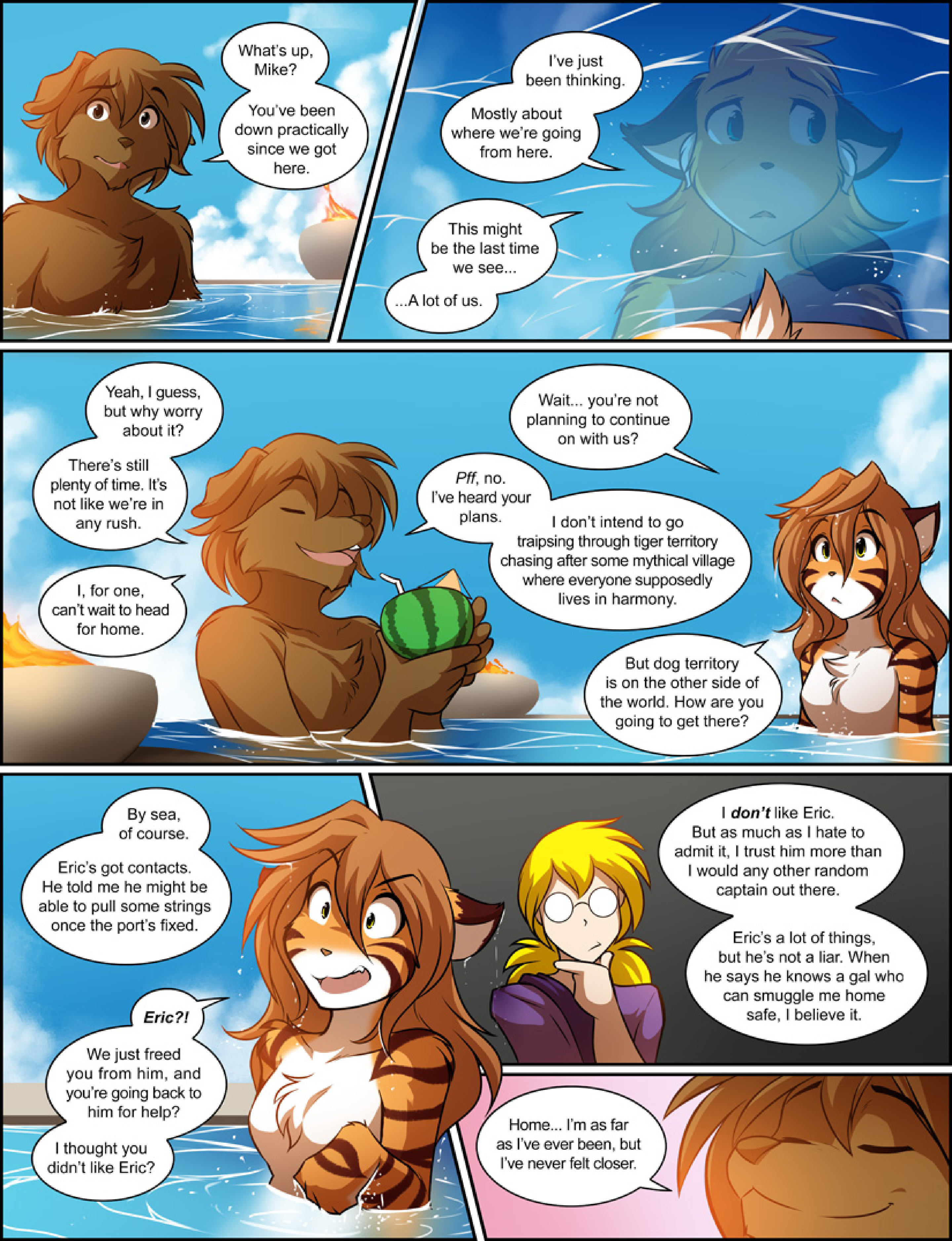

Man, this is the life, huh?
No work to do, sleeping in as much as we want...
I always knew being free would be great, but I never imagined it'd be this good!
I don't think we should get too used to it...
But yeah, compared to the ship, it's definitely a lot more peaceful around here.
WAAAAAAHHHH!
I'll teach you to call me a pint-sized excuse for a Basitin!
I never said that!
Ah... I'm gunna miss this when we all start going our separate ways.
Eh, Mike?
...Yeah.
Anyway, I've heard there's a grand spa bath somewhere in this place. That's what I need!

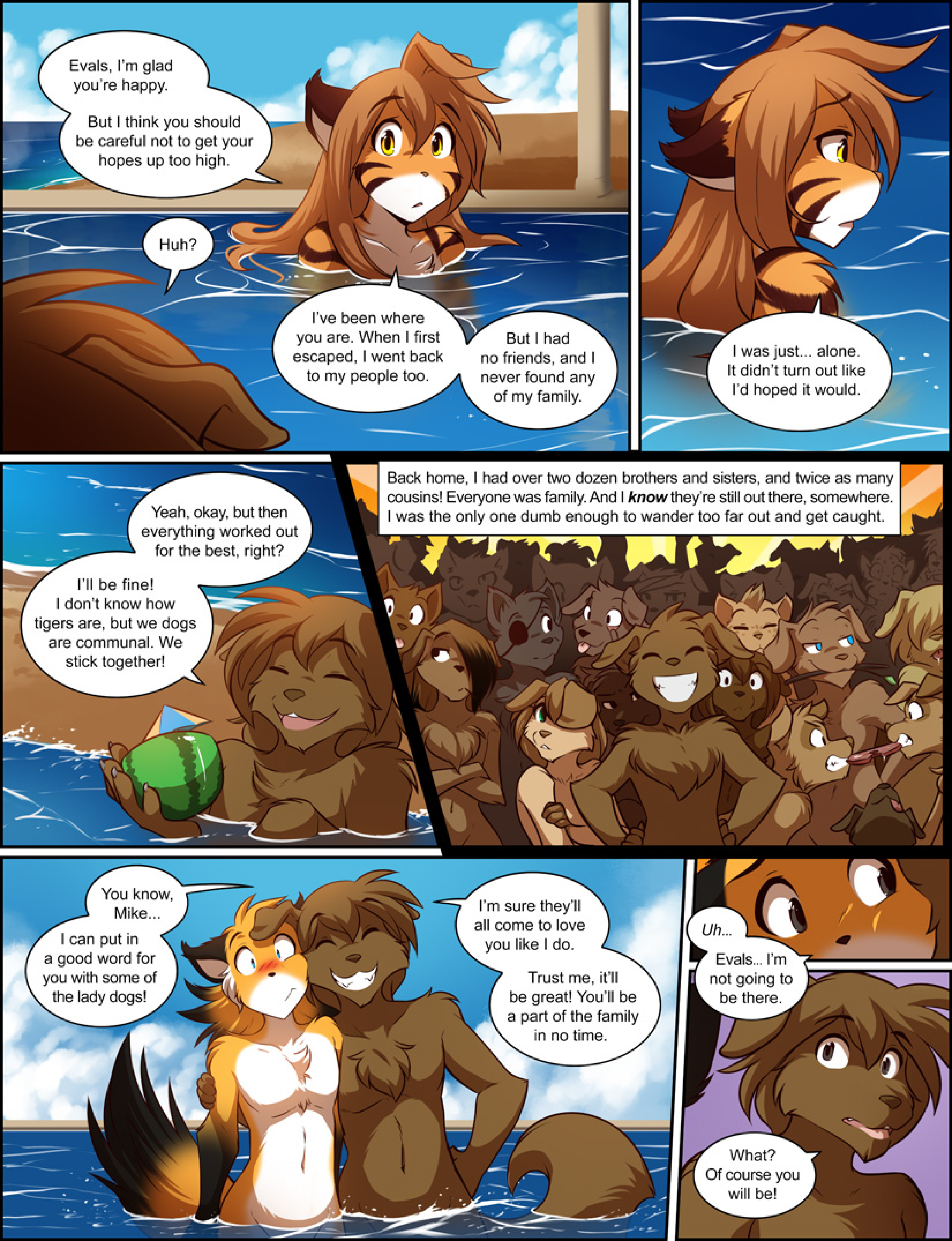

OASIS ROOM
Wow!
“Oasis” is right! What is this? Are we outside?
Can’t be. It was snowing, and the manor’s nowhere near a beach.
But I can smell the ocean... and it feels warm...
BUBBLE BUBBLE
Rawr I’m a tiger shark!!
Baaaugh!
Oh, it’s just you two. Sorry, I thought...
Have you seen Trace lately?
Can’t say I have. Thanks for soaking my new robes, by the way.

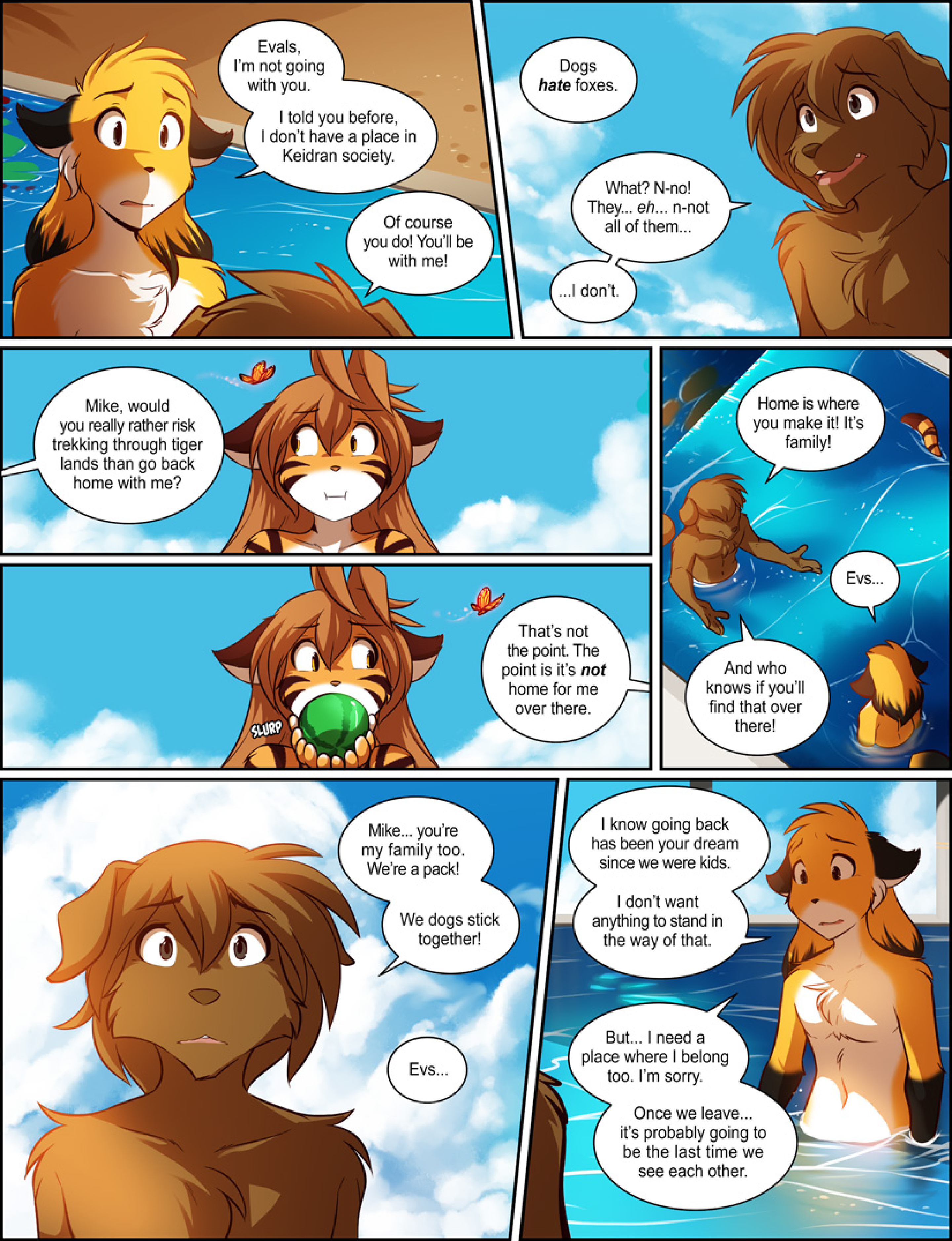

Ah... ♥
Man, now *this*... ***this*** is freedom.
I could stay here forever.
I'm still a little confused where *"here"* even is.
Did we actually leave the estate?
Nah...
I'm pretty sure it's just a really big room made to look like a real beach, using some kind of magic.
Don't try to run ***too*** far down the shore. You ***will*** hit a wall.
...Don't ask me how I know that...
Heh...
It feels real enough to me.
I don't see why Trace even bothered with all the tyrant stuff when he could have been kicking back in his own personal paradise at home!
Well...
He did end up losing the one person he'd hoped to enjoy it with.

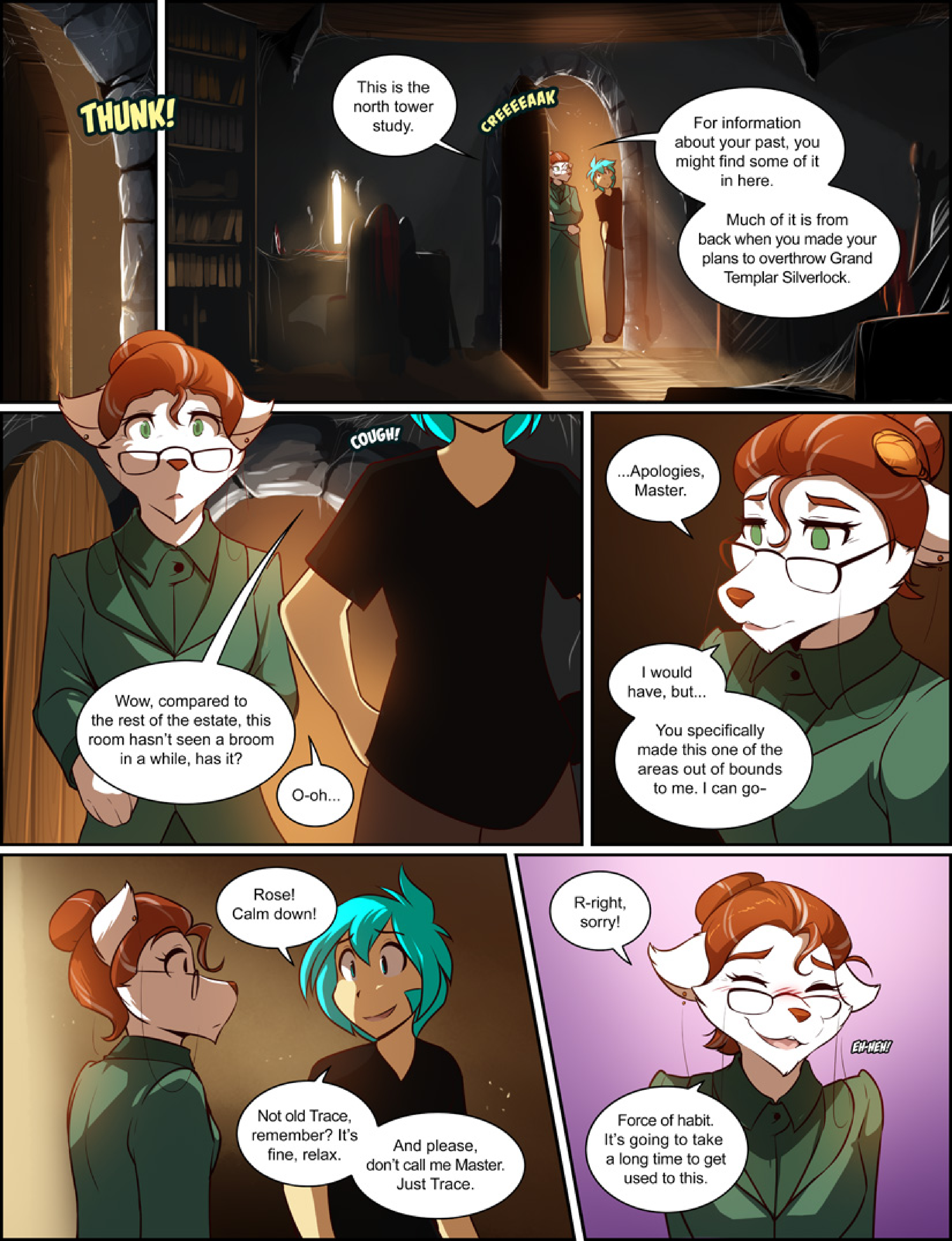
TwoKinds
15

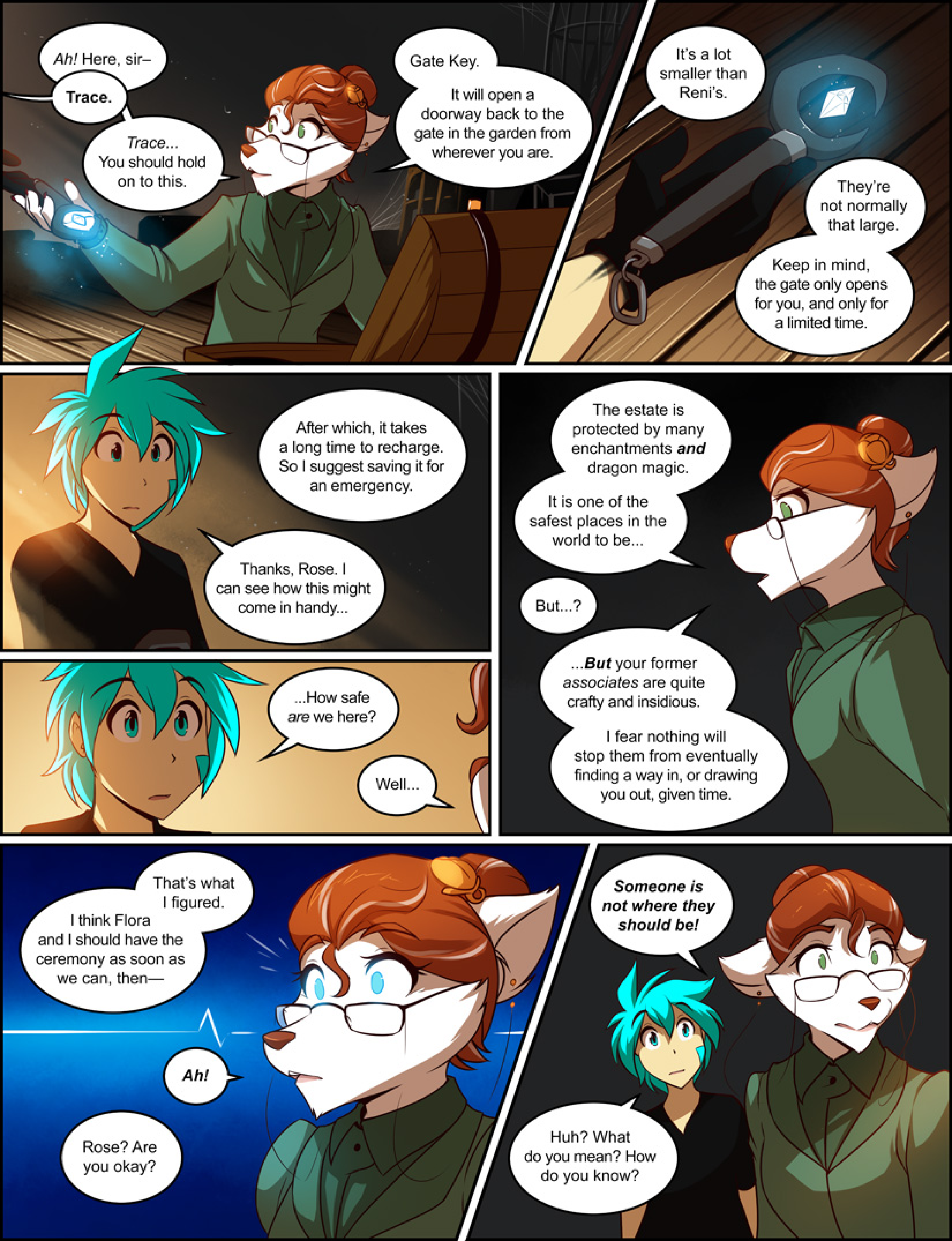
HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

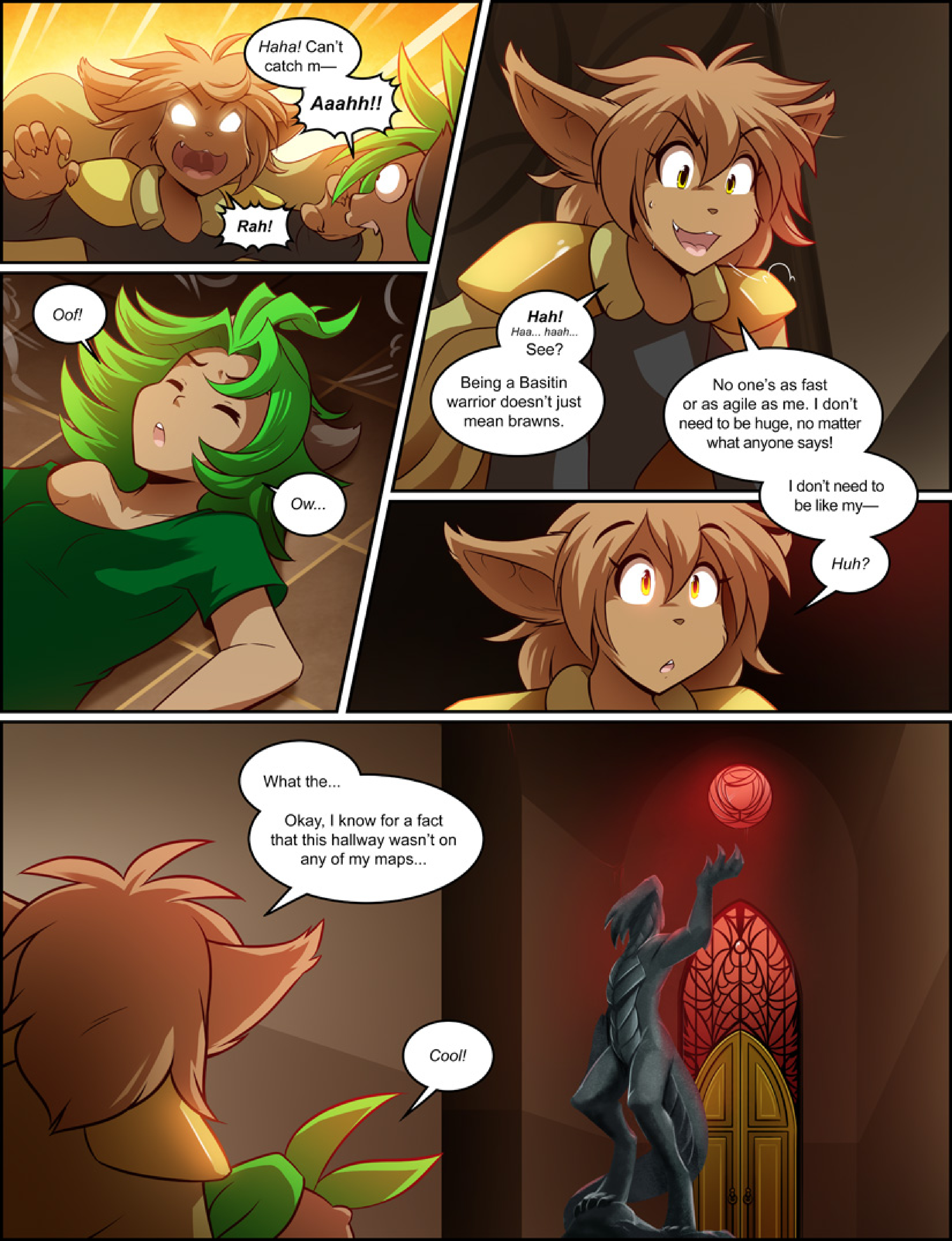

What's up, Mike?
You've been down practically since we got here.
I've just been thinking.
Mostly about where we're going from here.
This might be the last time we see...
...A lot of us.
Yeah, I guess, but why worry about it?
There's still plenty of time. It's not like we're in any rush.
I, for one, can't wait to head for home.
Wait... you're not planning to continue on with us?
Pff, no. I've heard your plans.
I don't intend to go traipsing through tiger territory chasing after some mythical village where everyone supposedly lives in harmony.
But dog territory is on the other side of the world. How are you going to get there?
By sea, of course.
Eric's got contacts. He told me he might be able to pull some strings once the port's fixed.
Eric?!
We just freed you from him, and you're going back to him for help?
I thought you didn't like Eric?
I ***don't*** like Eric. But as much as I hate to admit it, I trust him more than I would any other random captain out there.
Eric's a lot of things, but he's not a liar. When he says he knows a gal who can smuggle me home safe, I believe it.
Home... I'm as far as I've ever been, but I've never felt closer.

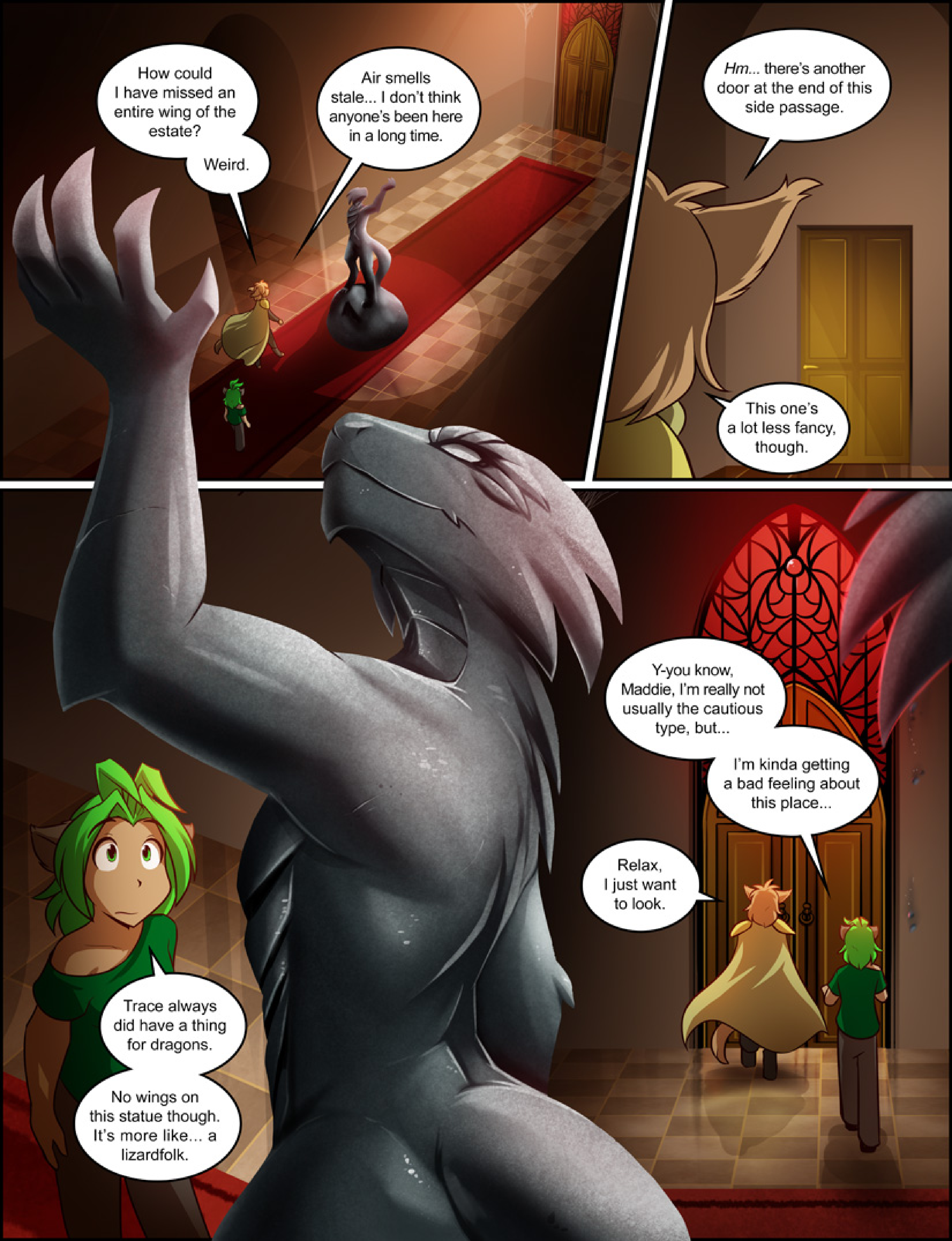

Evals, I'm glad you're happy.
But I think you should be careful not to get your hopes up too high.
Huh?
I've been where you are. When I first escaped, I went back to my people too.
But I had no friends, and I never found any of my family.
I was just... alone. It didn't turn out like I'd hoped it would.
Yeah, okay, but then everything worked out for the best, right?
I'll be fine! I don't know how tigers are, but we dogs are communal. We stick together!
Back home, I had over two dozen brothers and sisters, and twice as many cousins! Everyone was family. And I ***know*** they're still out there, somewhere. I was the only one dumb enough to wander too far out and get caught.
You know, Mike...
I can put in a good word for you with some of the lady dogs!
I'm sure they'll all come to love you like I do.
Trust me, it'll be great! You'll be a part of the family in no time.
Uh...
Evals... I'm not going to be there.
What? Of course you will be!

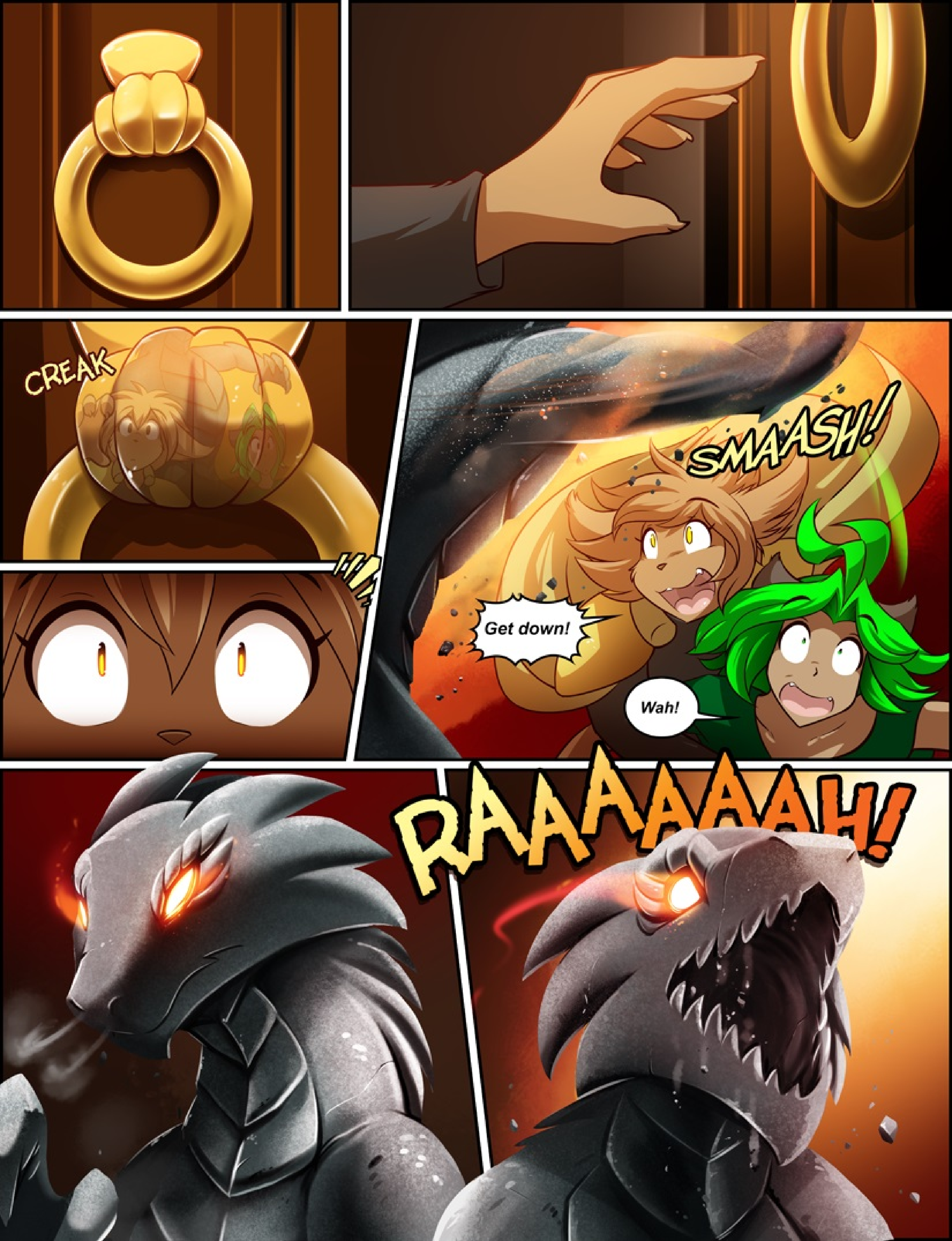

Evals, I'm not going with you.
I told you before, I don't have a place in Keidran society.
Of course you do! You'll be with me!
Dogs ***hate*** foxes.
What? N-no! They... *eh*... n-not all of them...
...I don't.
Mike, would you really rather risk trekking through tiger lands than go back home with me?
Home is where you make it! It's family!
SLURP
That's not the point. The point is it's ***not*** home for me over there.
Evs...
And who knows if you'll find that over there!
Mike... you're my family too. We're a pack!
We dogs stick together!
Evs...
I know going back has been your dream since we were kids.
I don't want anything to stand in the way of that.
But... I need a place where I belong too. I'm sorry.
Once we leave... it's probably going to be the last time we see each other.

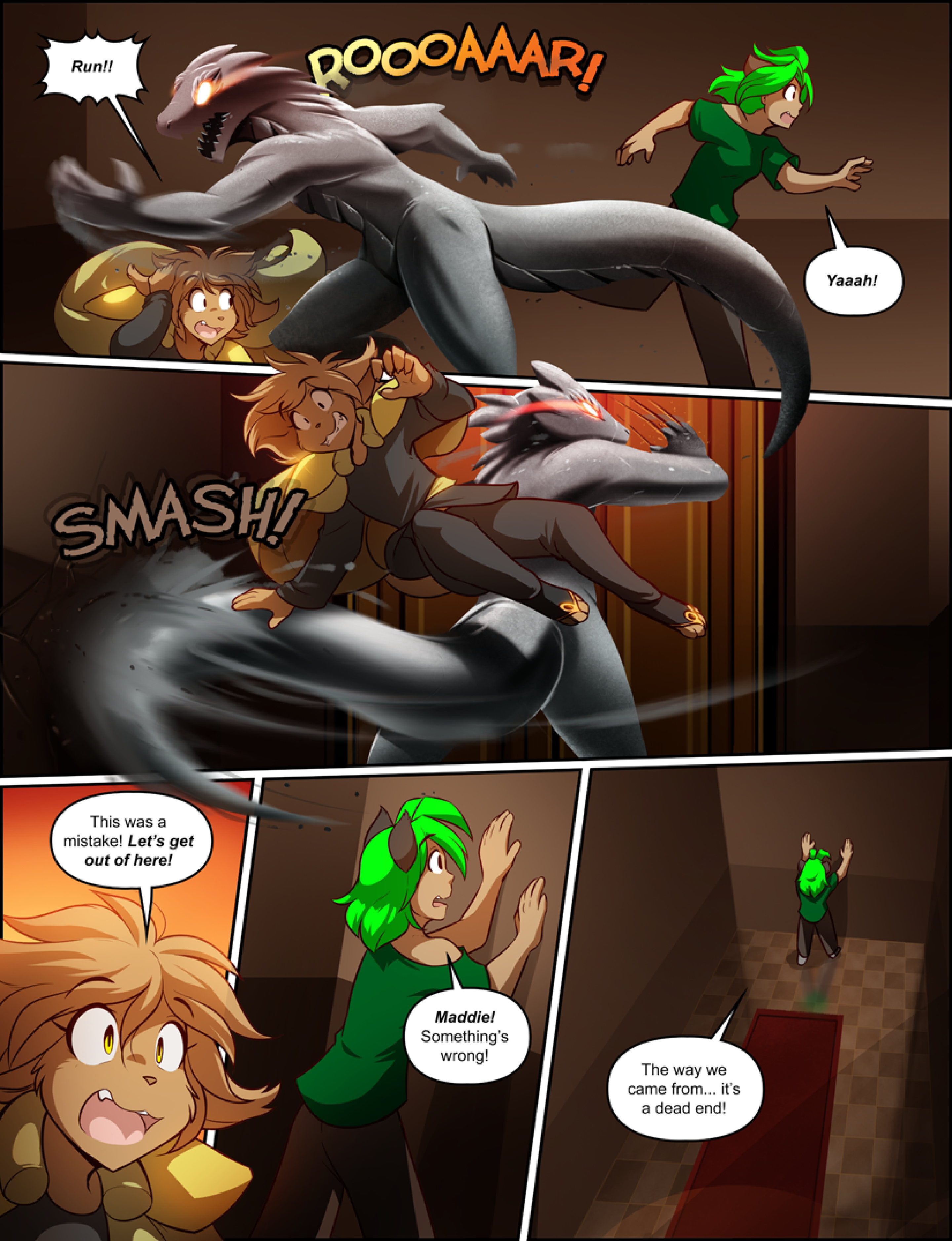

THUNK!
This is the north tower study.
CREEEEAAK
For information about your past, you might find some of it in here.
Much of it is from back when you made your plans to overthrow Grand Templar Silverlock.
COUGH!
Wow, compared to the rest of the estate, this room hasn't seen a broom in a while, has it?
O-oh...
...Apologies, Master.
I would have, but...
You specifically made this one of the areas out of bounds to me. I can go-
Rose! Calm down!
Not old Trace, remember? It's fine, relax.
And please, don't call me Master. Just Trace.
R-right, sorry!
EH-HEH!
Force of habit. It's going to take a long time to get used to this.

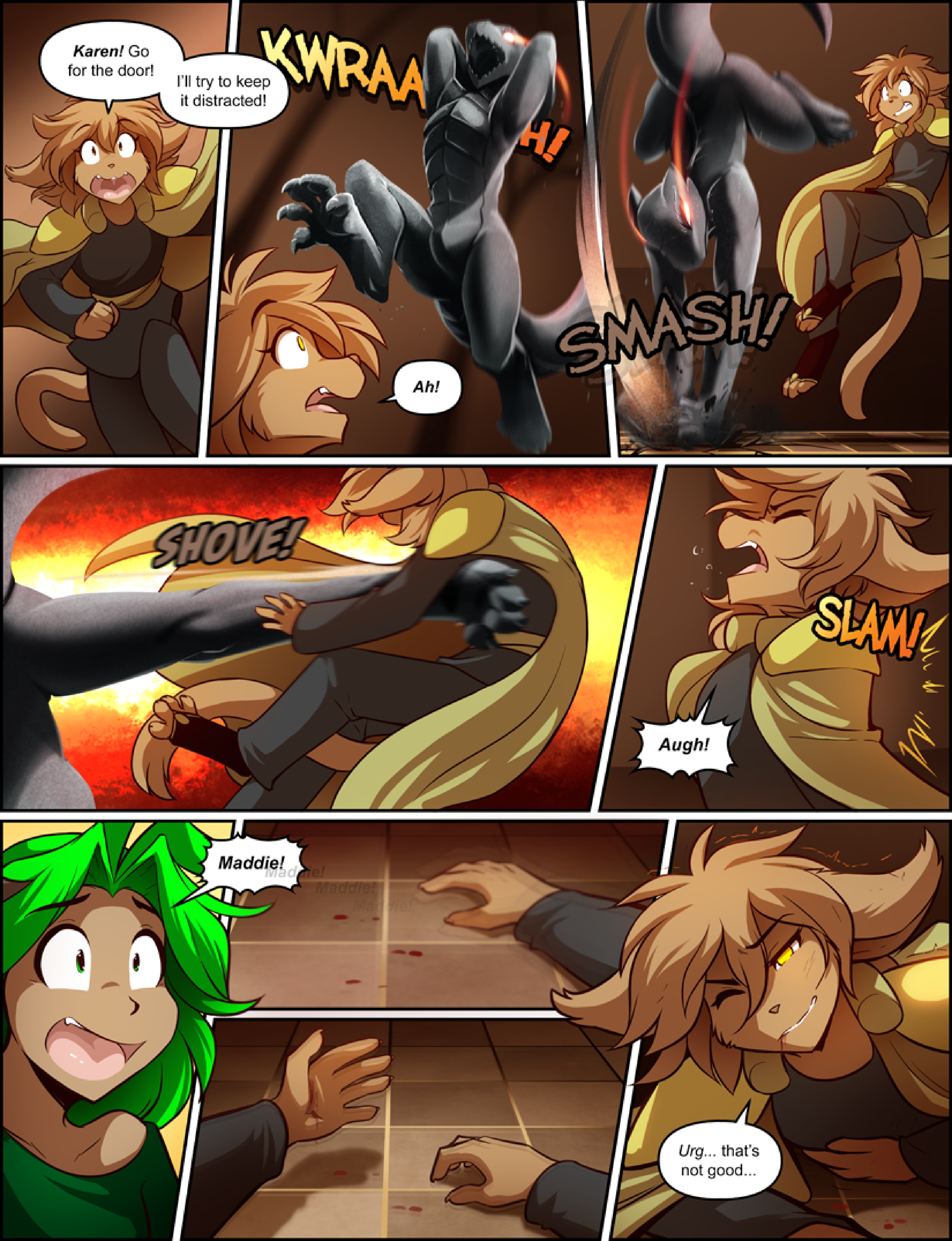

Ah! Here, sir–
Trace.
Trace... You should hold on to this.
Gate Key.
It will open a doorway back to the gate in the garden from wherever you are.
It's a lot smaller than Reni's.
They're not normally that large.
Keep in mind, the gate only opens for you, and only for a limited time.
After which, it takes a long time to recharge. So I suggest saving it for an emergency.
Thanks, Rose. I can see how this might come in handy...
...How safe *are* we here?
Well...
The estate is protected by many enchantments ***and*** dragon magic.
It is one of the safest places in the world to be...
But...?
...***But*** your former *associates* are quite crafty and insidious.
I fear nothing will stop them from eventually finding a way in, or drawing you out, given time.
That's what I figured.
I think Flora and I should have the ceremony as soon as we can, then—
Ah!
Rose? Are you okay?
Someone is not where they should be!
Huh? What do you mean? How do you know?

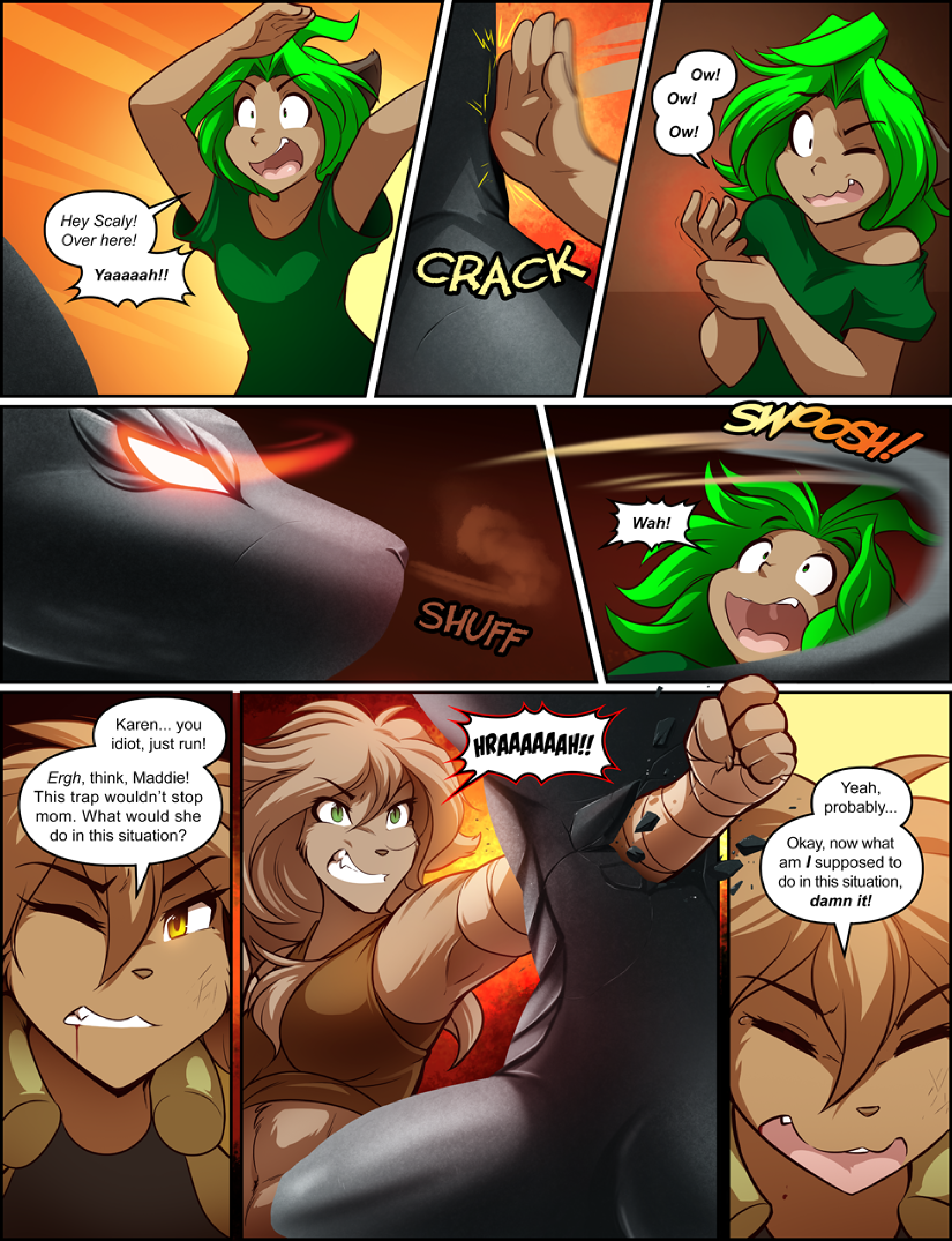

Haha! Can't catch m—
Aaahh!!
Rah!
Oof!
Ow...
Hah! *Haa... haah...* See?
Being a Basitin warrior doesn't just mean brawns.
No one's as fast or as agile as me. I don't need to be huge, no matter what anyone says!
I don't need to be like my—
Huh?
What the...
Okay, I know for a fact that this hallway wasn't on any of my maps...
Cool!

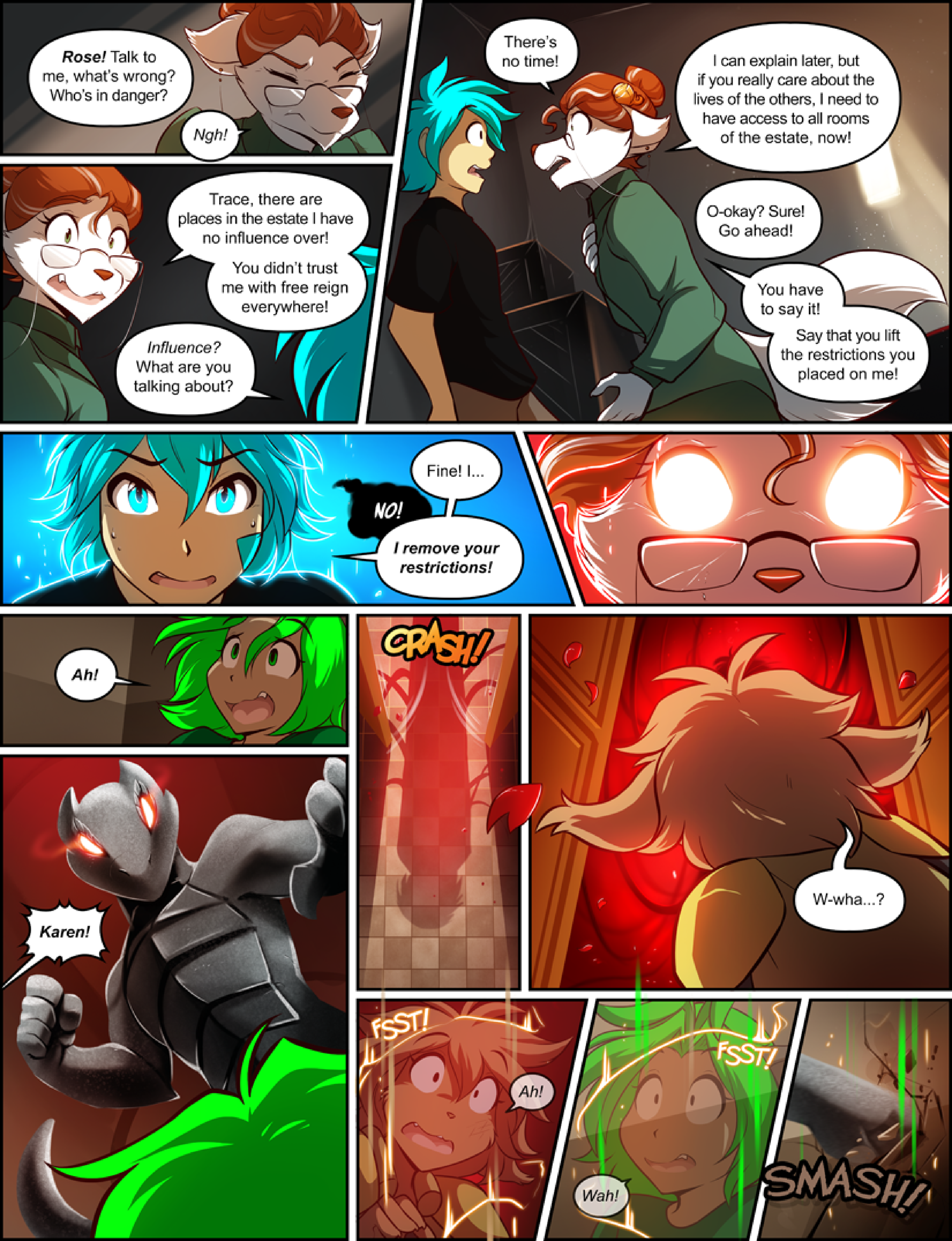

How could I have missed an entire wing of the estate?
Weird.
Air smells stale... I don't think anyone's been here in a long time.
Hm... there's another door at the end of this side passage.
This one's a lot less fancy, though.
Trace always did have a thing for dragons.
No wings on this statue though. It's more like... a lizardfolk.
Y-you know, Maddie, I'm really not usually the cautious type, but...
I'm kinda getting a bad feeling about this place...
Relax, I just want to look.

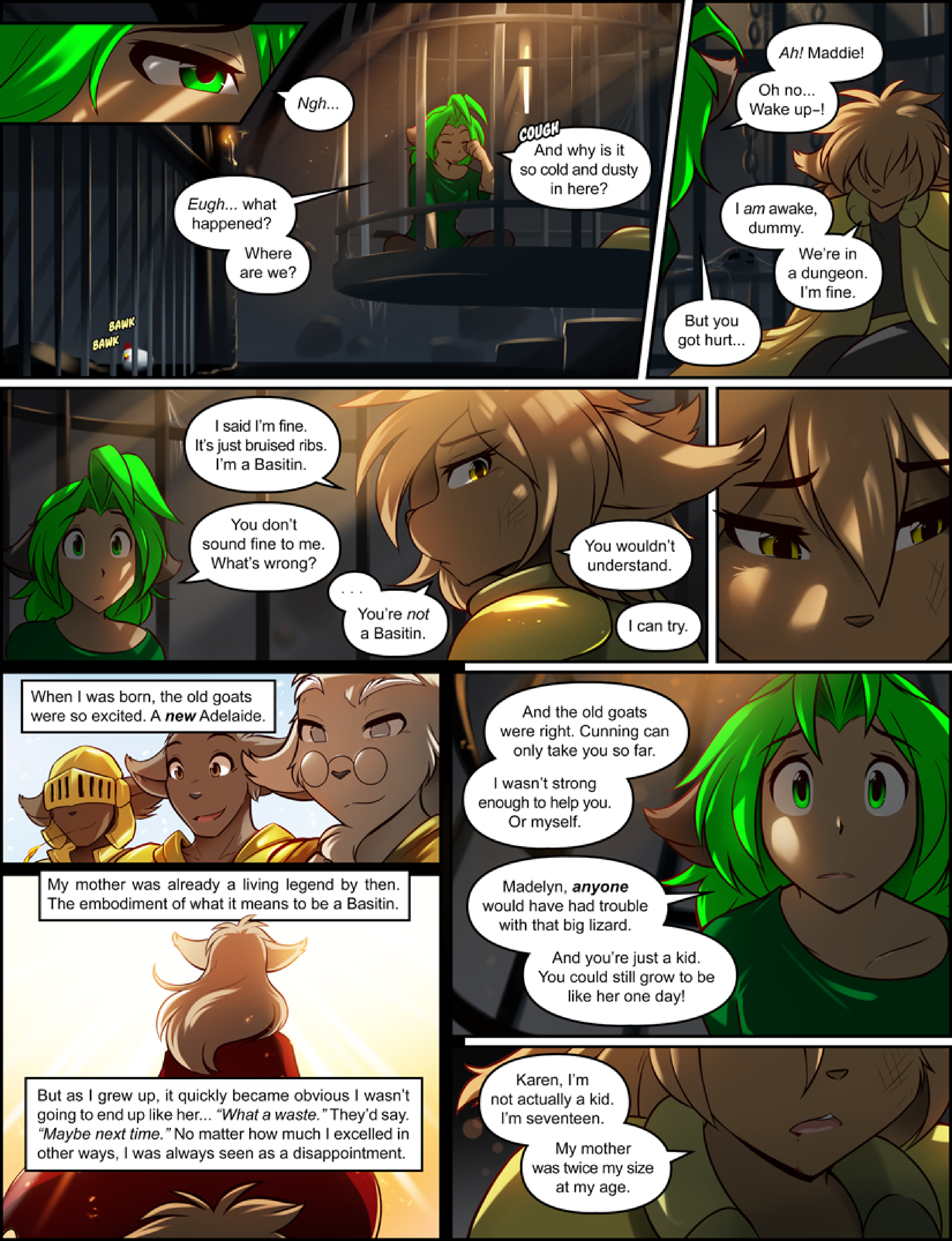

CREAK
SMAASH!
Get down!
Wah!
RAAAAAAH!

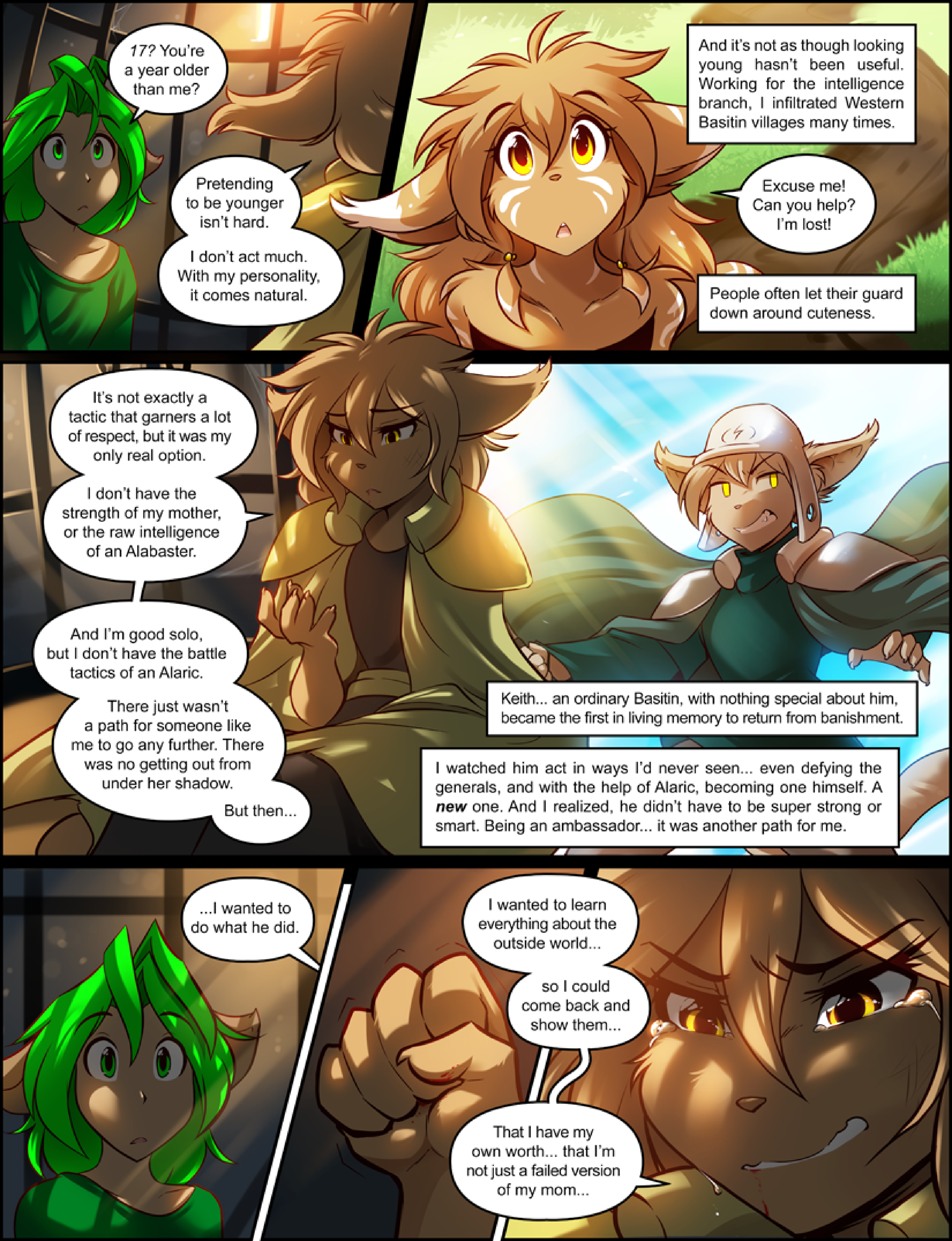

Run!!
ROOOAAAR!
Yaaah!
SMASH!
This was a mistake! Let's get out of here!
Maddie! Something's wrong!
The way we came from... it's a dead end!

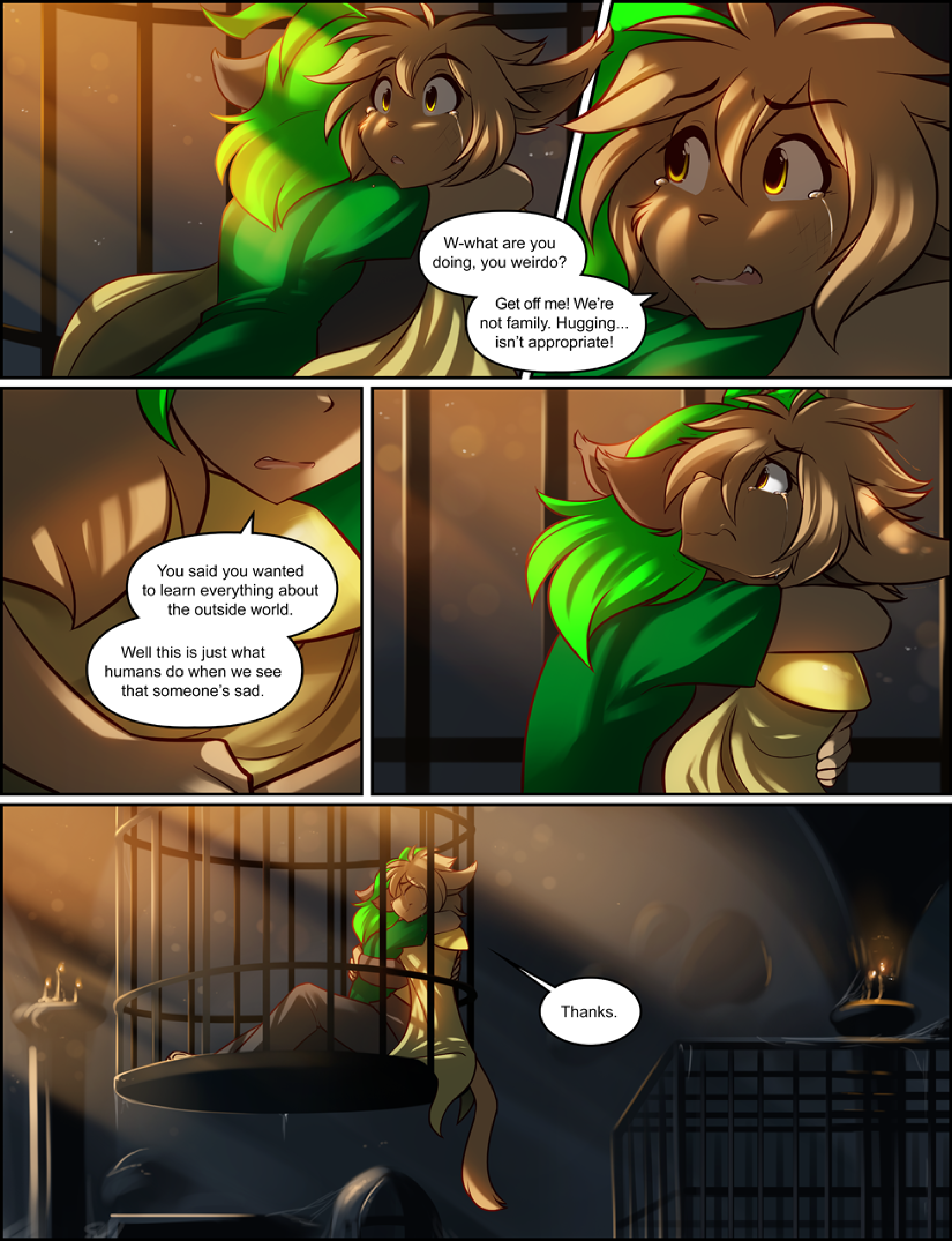

Karen! Go for the door!
I'll try to keep it distracted!
KWRAAAH!
Ah!
SMASH!
SHOVE!
SLAM!
Augh!
Maddie!
Maddie!
Maddie!
Maddie!
Urg... that's not good...


Hey Scaly! Over here!
Yaaaaah!!
CRACK
Ow! Ow! Ow!
SHUFF
SWOOSH!
Wah!
Karen... you idiot, just run!
Ergh, think, Maddie! This trap wouldn't stop mom. What would she do in this situation?
HRAAAAAAH!!
Yeah, probably...
Okay, now what am ***I*** supposed to do in this situation, ***damn it!***

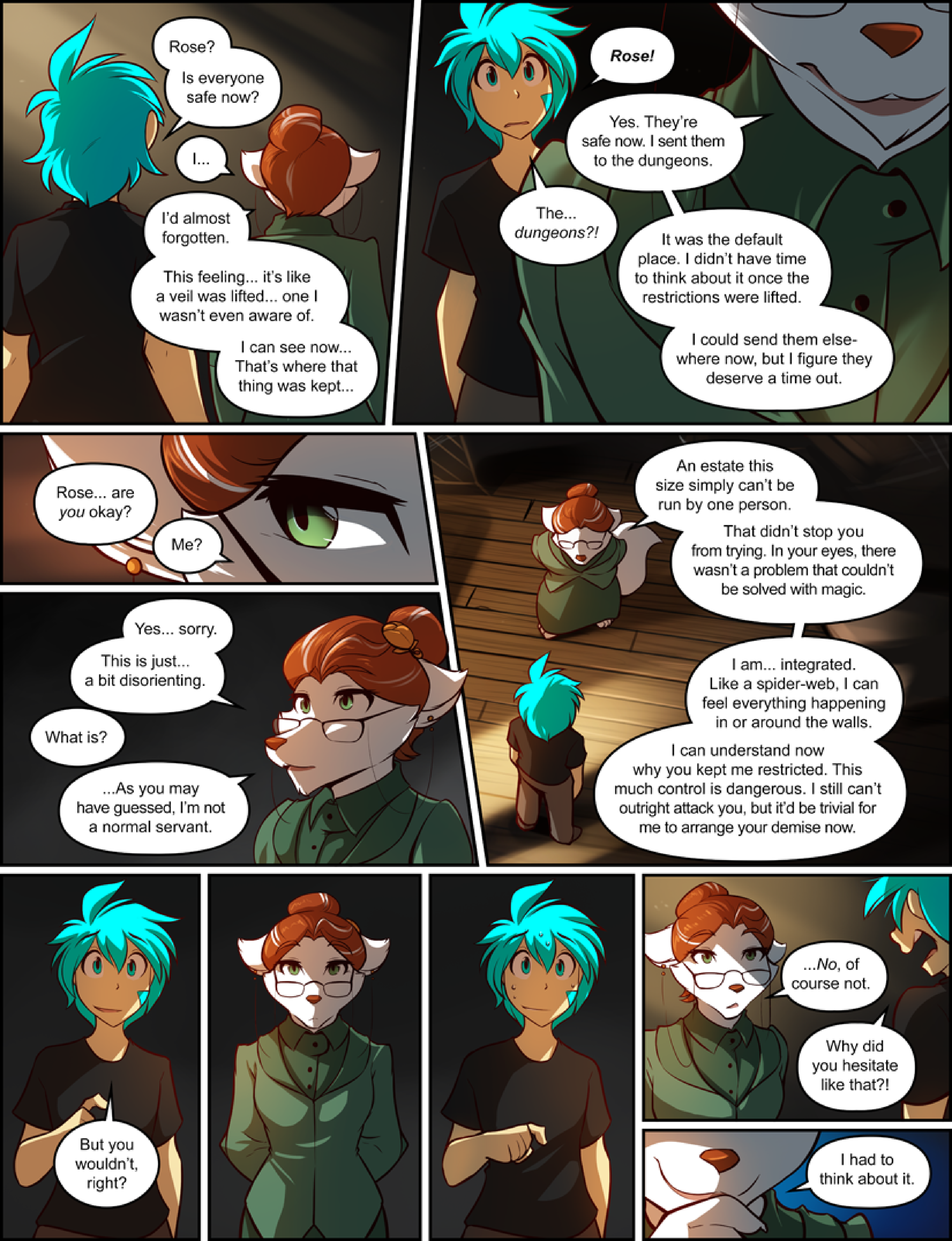

Rose! Talk to me, what's wrong? Who's in danger?
Ngh!
Trace, there are places in the estate I have no influence over!
You didn't trust me with free reign everywhere!
Influence? What are you talking about?
There's no time!
I can explain later, but if you really care about the lives of the others, I need to have access to all rooms of the estate, now!
O-okay? Sure! Go ahead!
You have to say it!
Say that you lift the restrictions you placed on me!
Fine! I...
NO!
I remove your restrictions!
Ah!
CRASH!
W-wha...?
Karen!
FSST!
Ah!
FSST!
Wah!
SMASH!

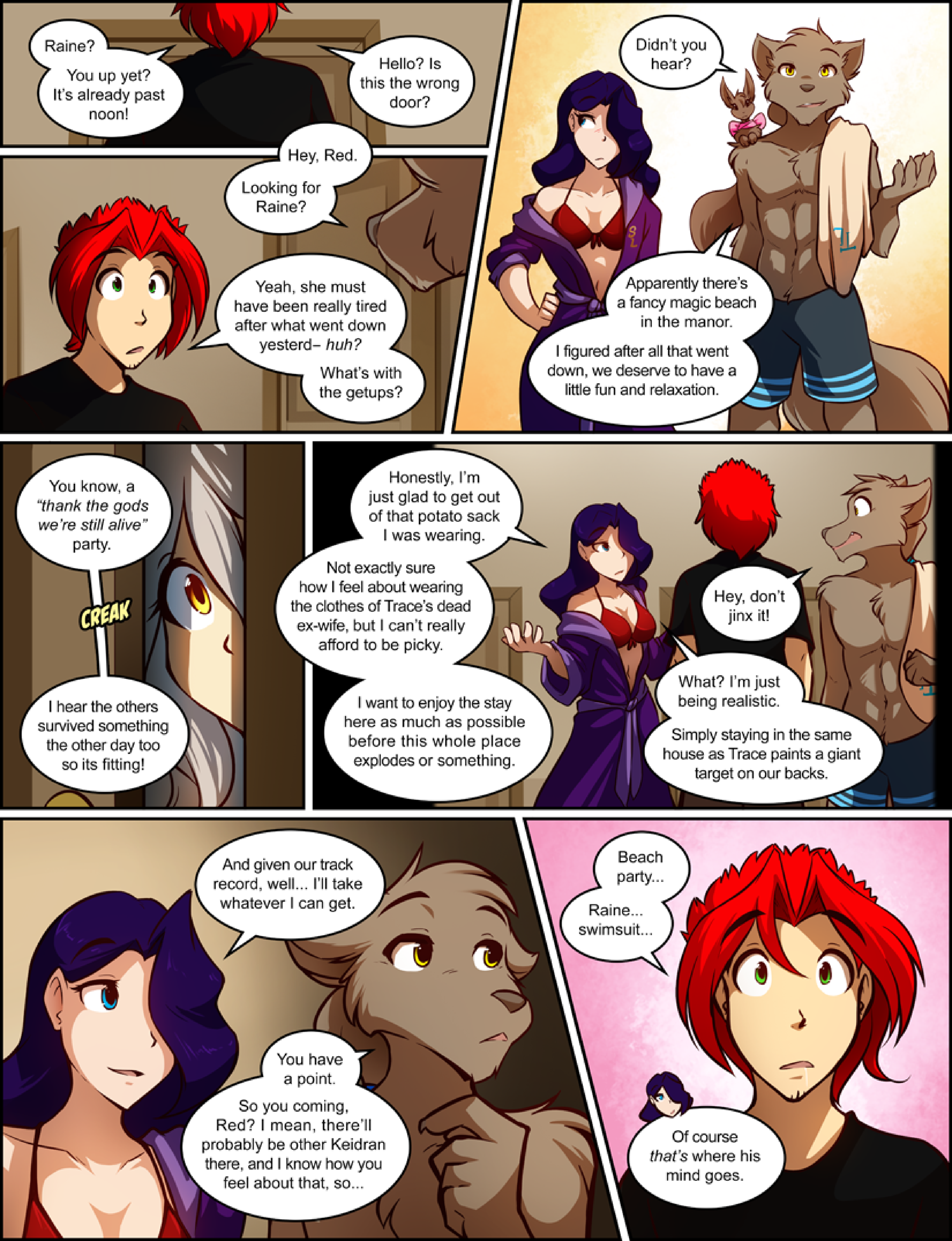

Ngh...
Eugh... what happened?
Where are we?
BAWK BAWK
COUGH
And why is it so cold and dusty in here?
Ah! Maddie!
Oh no... Wake up–!
I *am* awake, dummy.
We're in a dungeon. I'm fine.
But you got hurt...
I said I'm fine. It's just bruised ribs. I'm a Basitin.
You don't sound fine to me. What's wrong?
You wouldn't understand.
. . .
You're *not* a Basitin.
I can try.
When I was born, the old goats were so excited. A ***new*** Adelaide.
My mother was already a living legend by then. The embodiment of what it means to be a Basitin.
But as I grew up, it quickly became obvious I wasn't going to end up like her... *"What a waste."* They'd say. *"Maybe next time."* No matter how much I excelled in other ways, I was always seen as a disappointment.
And the old goats were right. Cunning can only take you so far.
I wasn't strong enough to help you. Or myself.
Madelyn, ***anyone*** would have had trouble with that big lizard.
And you're just a kid. You could still grow to be like her one day!
Karen, I'm not actually a kid. I'm seventeen.
My mother was twice my size at my age.

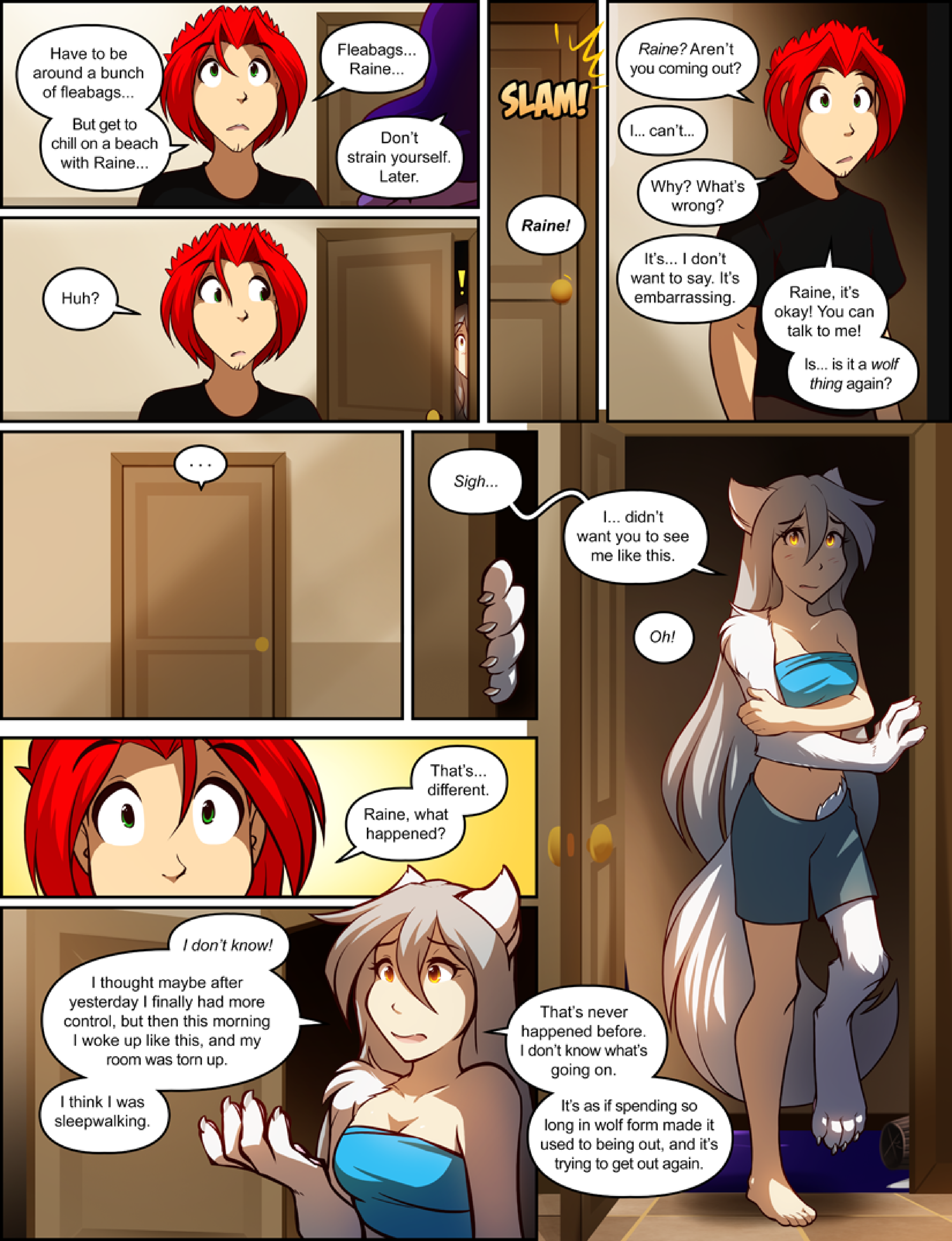

17? You're a year older than me?
Pretending to be younger isn't hard.
I don't act much. With my personality, it comes natural.
And it's not as though looking young hasn't been useful. Working for the intelligence branch, I infiltrated Western Basitin villages many times.
Excuse me! Can you help? I'm lost!
People often let their guard down around cuteness.
It's not exactly a tactic that garners a lot of respect, but it was my only real option.
I don't have the strength of my mother, or the raw intelligence of an Alabaster.
And I'm good solo, but I don't have the battle tactics of an Alaric.
There just wasn't a path for someone like me to go any further. There was no getting out from under her shadow.
But then...
Keith... an ordinary Basitin, with nothing special about him, became the first in living memory to return from banishment.
I watched him act in ways I'd never seen... even defying the generals, and with the help of Alaric, becoming one himself. A ***new*** one. And I realized, he didn't have to be super strong or smart. Being an ambassador... it was another path for me.
...I wanted to do what he did.
I wanted to learn everything about the outside world...
so I could come back and show them...
That I have my own worth... that I'm not just a failed version of my mom...

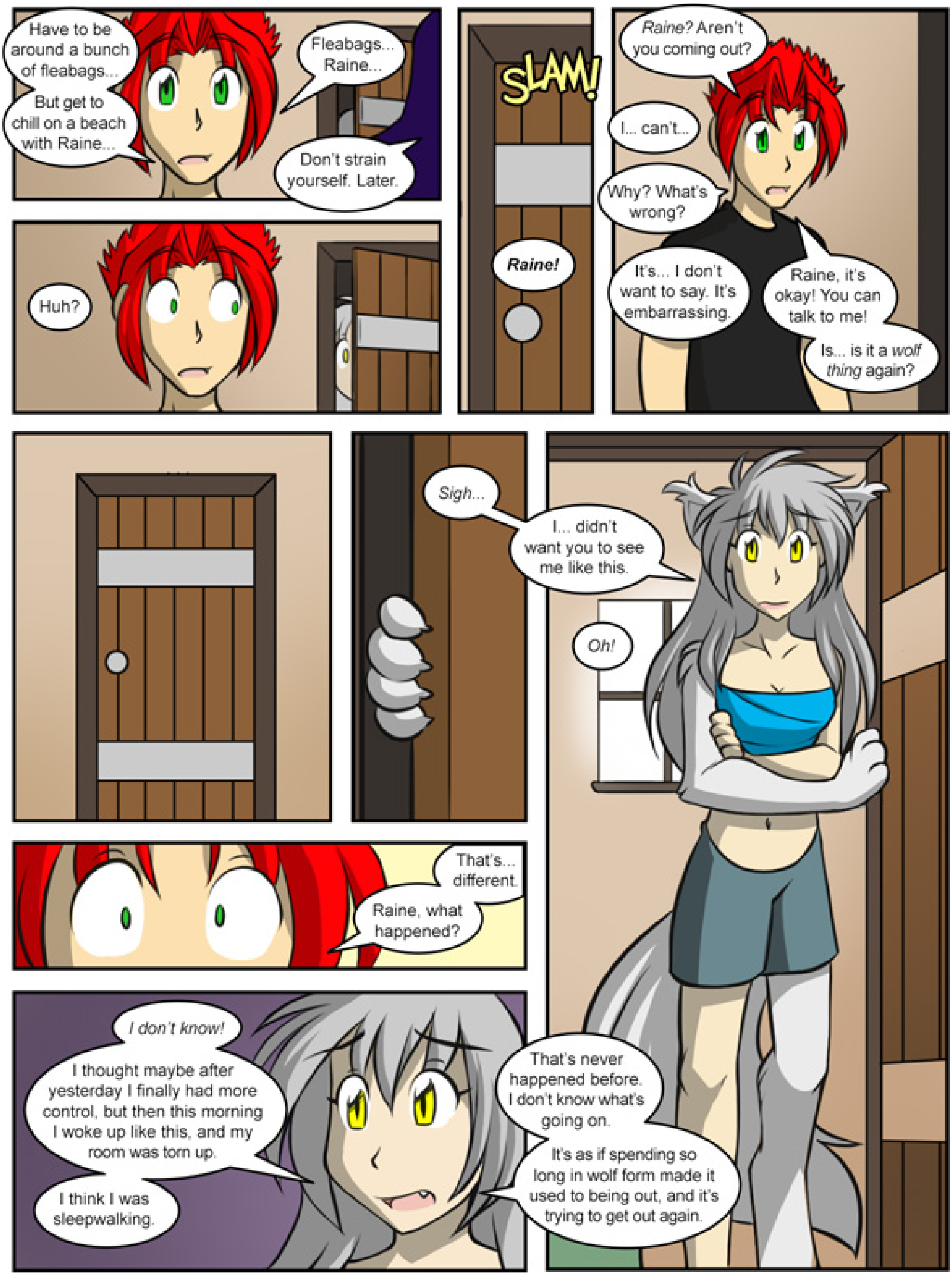

W-what are you doing, you weirdo?
Get off me! We're not family. Hugging... isn't appropriate!
You said you wanted to learn everything about the outside world.
Well this is just what humans do when we see that someone's sad.
Thanks.

NEXT PAGE WILL BE UP ON SATURDAY!
SORRY FOR THE WAIT!


Rose?
Is everyone safe now?
I...
I'd almost forgotten.
This feeling... it's like a veil was lifted... one I wasn't even aware of.
I can see now... That's where that thing was kept...
Rose!
Yes. They're safe now. I sent them to the dungeons.
The... *dungeons?!*
It was the default place. I didn't have time to think about it once the restrictions were lifted.
I could send them elsewhere now, but I figure they deserve a time out.
Rose... are *you* okay?
Me?
Yes... sorry.
This is just... a bit disorienting.
What is?
...As you may have guessed, I'm not a normal servant.
An estate this size simply can't be run by one person.
That didn't stop you from trying. In your eyes, there wasn't a problem that couldn't be solved with magic.
I am... integrated. Like a spider-web, I can feel everything happening in or around the walls.
I can understand now why you kept me restricted. This much control is dangerous. I still can't outright attack you, but it'd be trivial for me to arrange your demise now.
But you wouldn't, right?
...*No*, of course not.
Why did you hesitate like that?!
I had to think about it.


Raine?
You up yet? It's already past noon!
Hello? Is this the wrong door?
Hey, Red.
Looking for Raine?
Yeah, she must have been really tired after what went down yesterd– *huh?*
What's with the getups?
Didn't you hear?
Apparently there's a fancy magic beach in the manor.
I figured after all that went down, we deserve to have a little fun and relaxation.
You know, a *"thank the gods we're still alive"* party.
CREAK
I hear the others survived something the other day too so its fitting!
Honestly, I'm just glad to get out of that potato sack I was wearing.
Not exactly sure how I feel about wearing the clothes of Trace's dead ex-wife, but I can't really afford to be picky.
I want to enjoy the stay here as much as possible before this whole place explodes or something.
Hey, don't jinx it!
What? I'm just being realistic.
Simply staying in the same house as Trace paints a giant target on our backs.
And given our track record, well... I'll take whatever I can get.
You have a point.
So you coming, Red? I mean, there'll probably be other Keidran there, and I know how you feel about that, so...
Beach party...
Raine... swimsuit...
Of course *that's* where his mind goes.


Have to be around a bunch of fleabags...
But get to chill on a beach with Raine...
Fleabags... Raine...
Don't strain yourself. Later.
Huh?
!
SLAM!
Raine!
Raine? Aren't you coming out?
I... can't...
Why? What's wrong?
It's... I don't want to say. It's embarrassing.
Raine, it's okay! You can talk to me!
Is... is it a wolf thing again?
...
Sigh...
I... didn't want you to see me like this.
Oh!
That's... different.
Raine, what happened?
I don't know!
I thought maybe after yesterday I finally had more control, but then this morning I woke up like this, and my room was torn up.
I think I was sleepwalking.
That's never happened before. I don't know what's going on.
It's as if spending so long in wolf form made it used to being out, and it's trying to get out again.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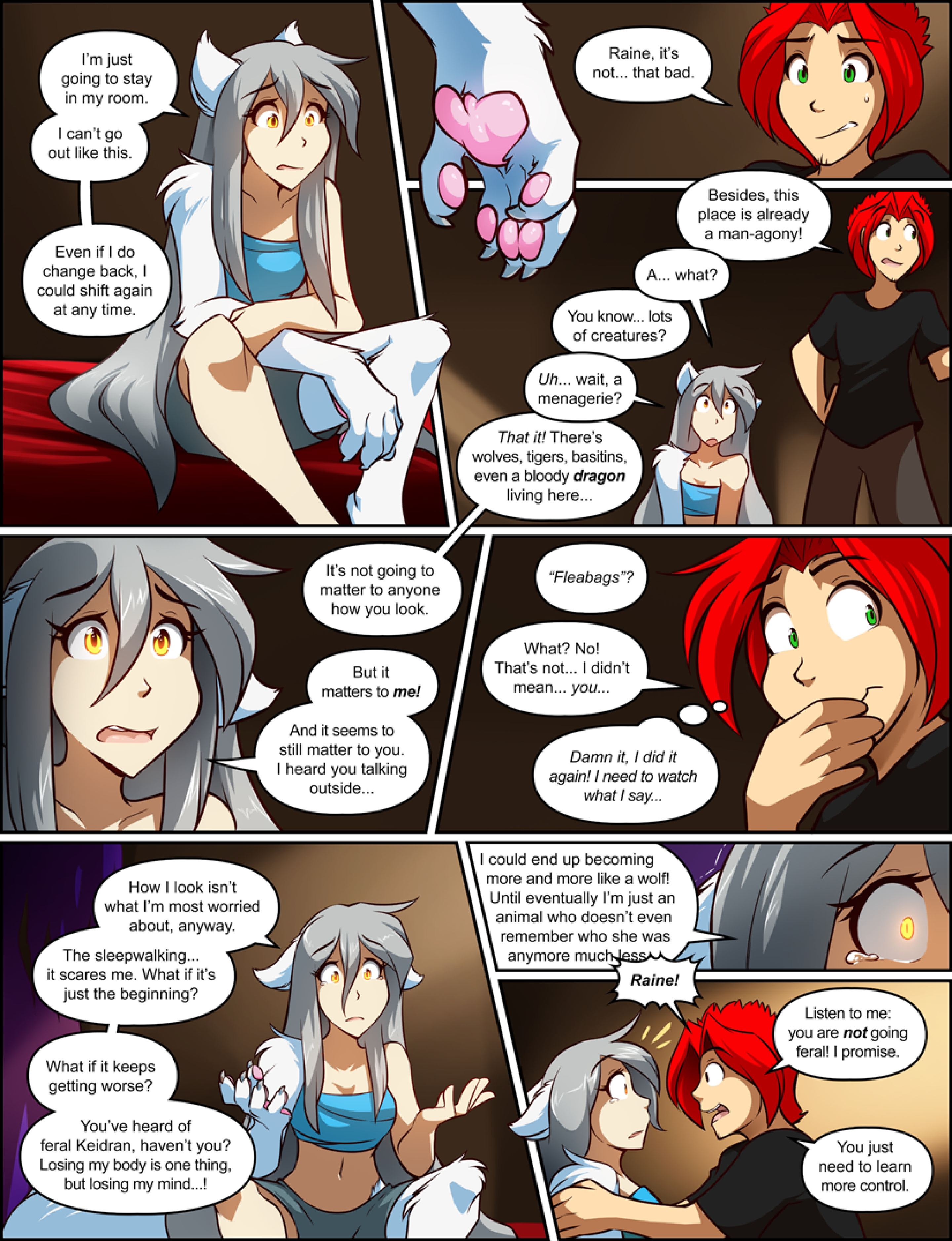
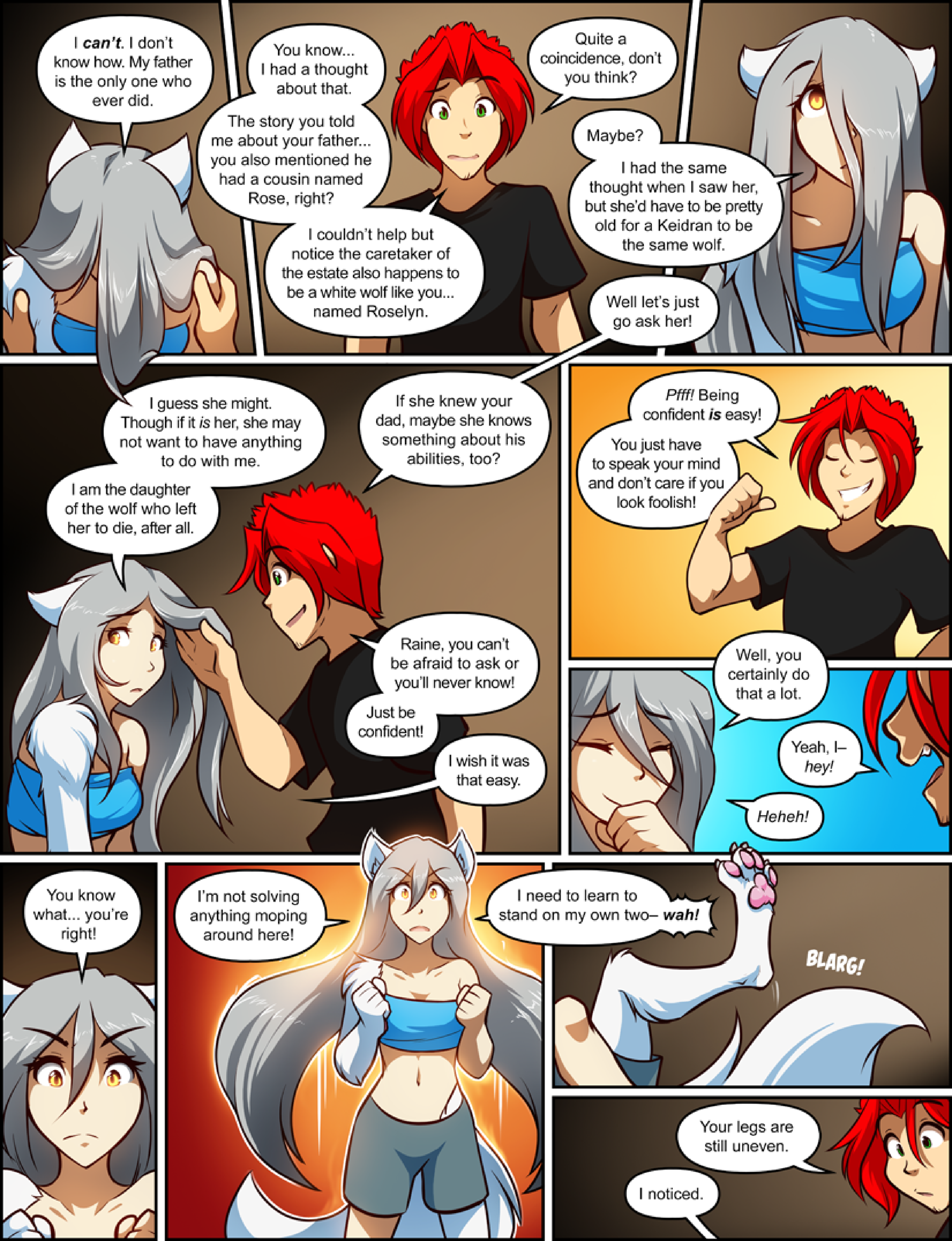
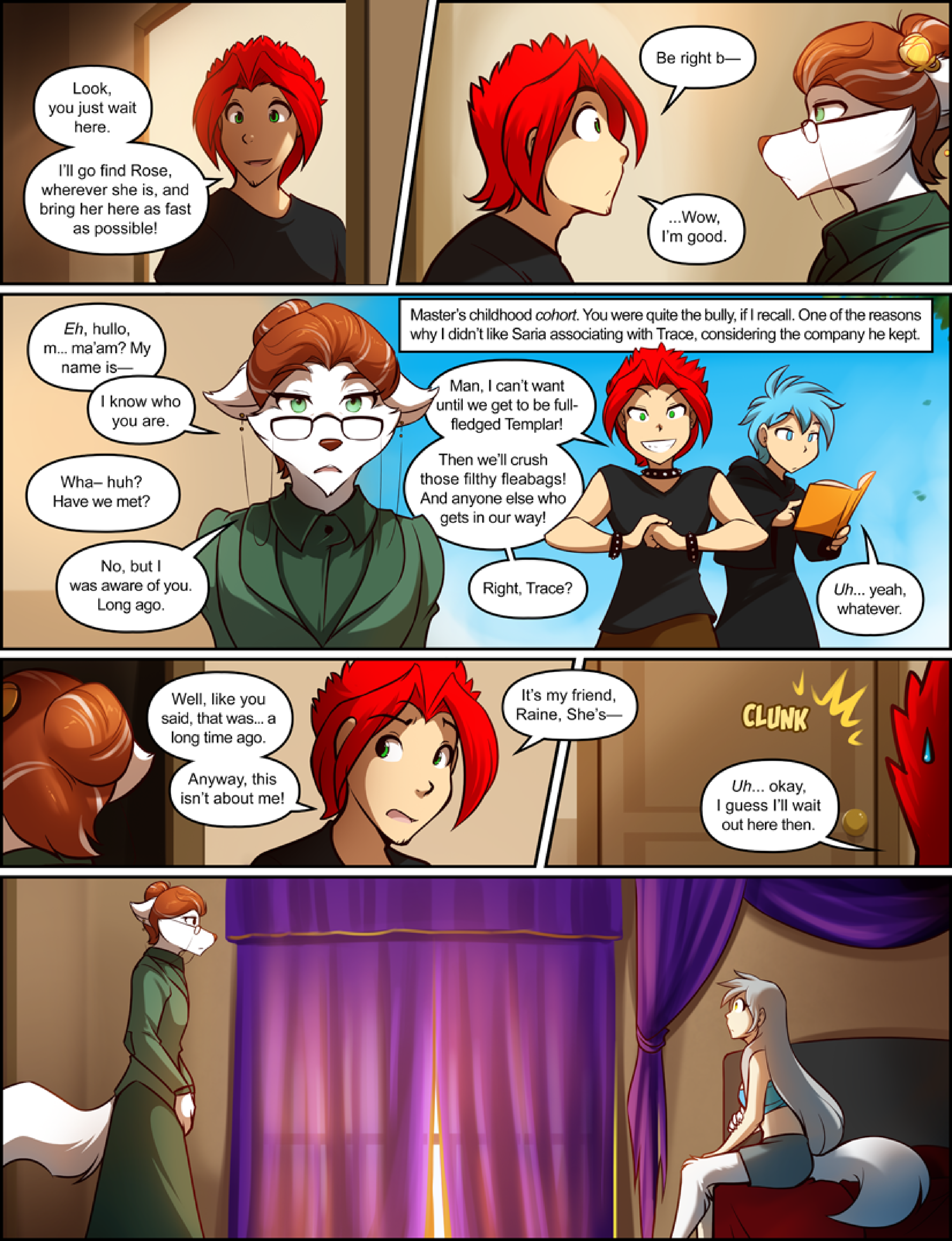
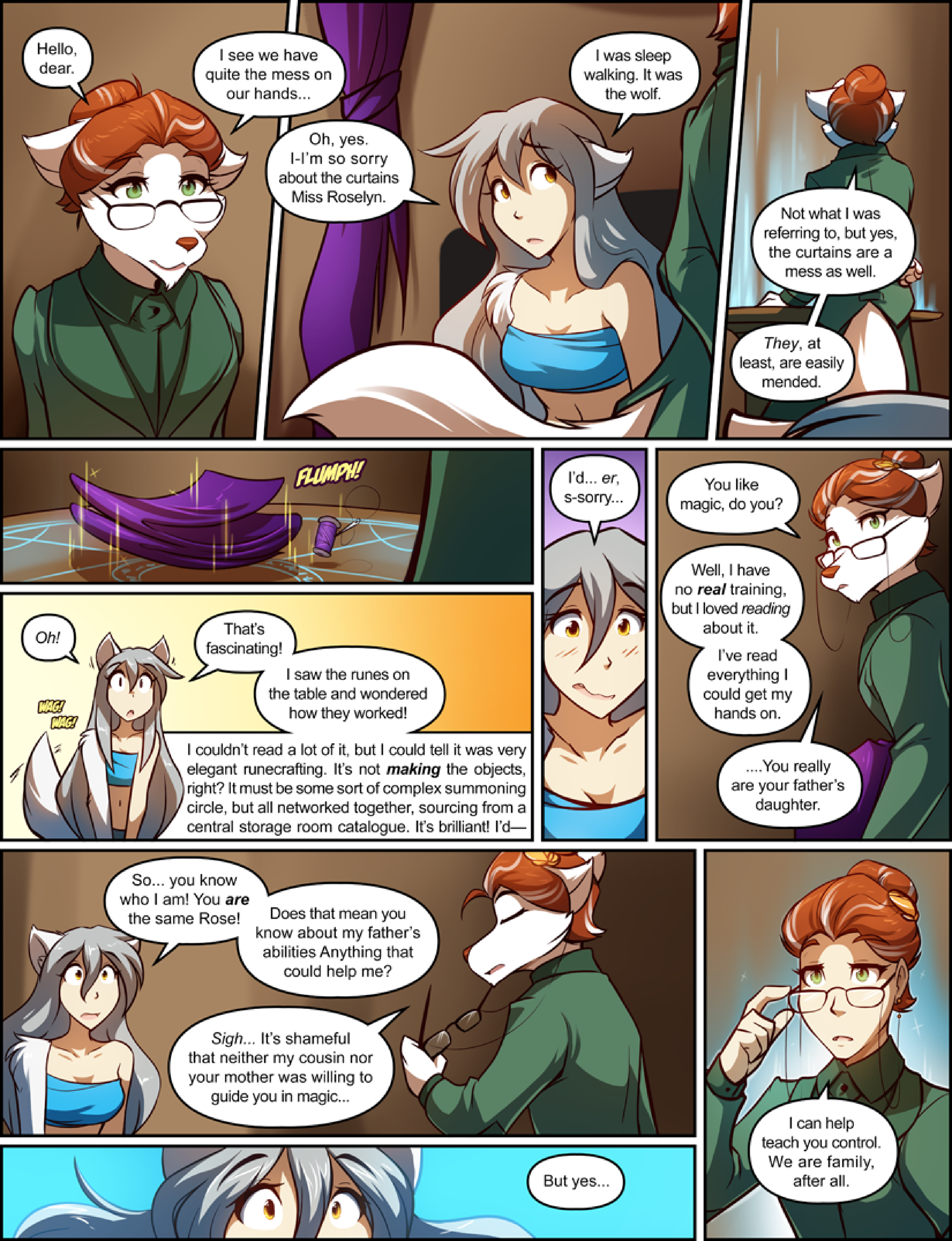
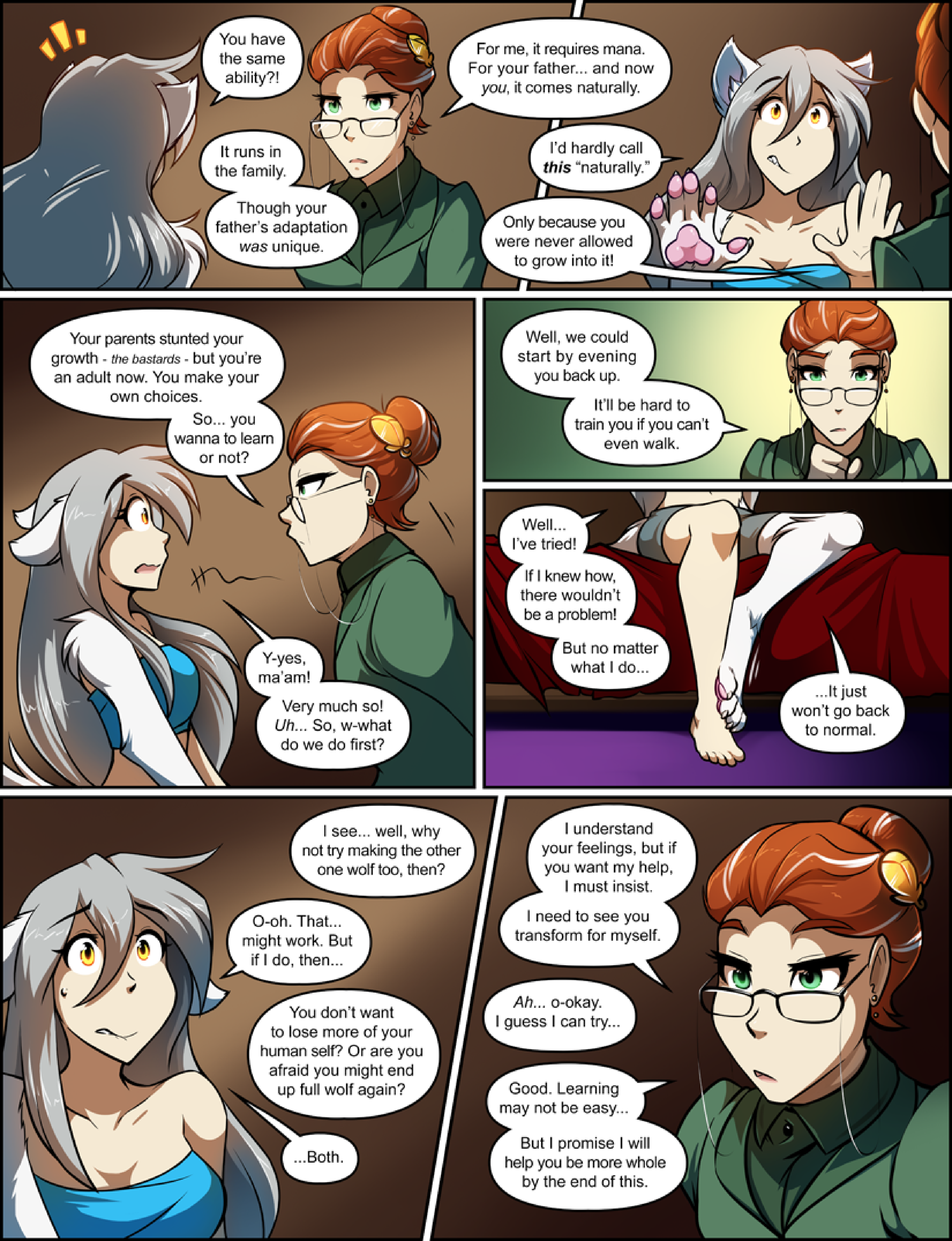
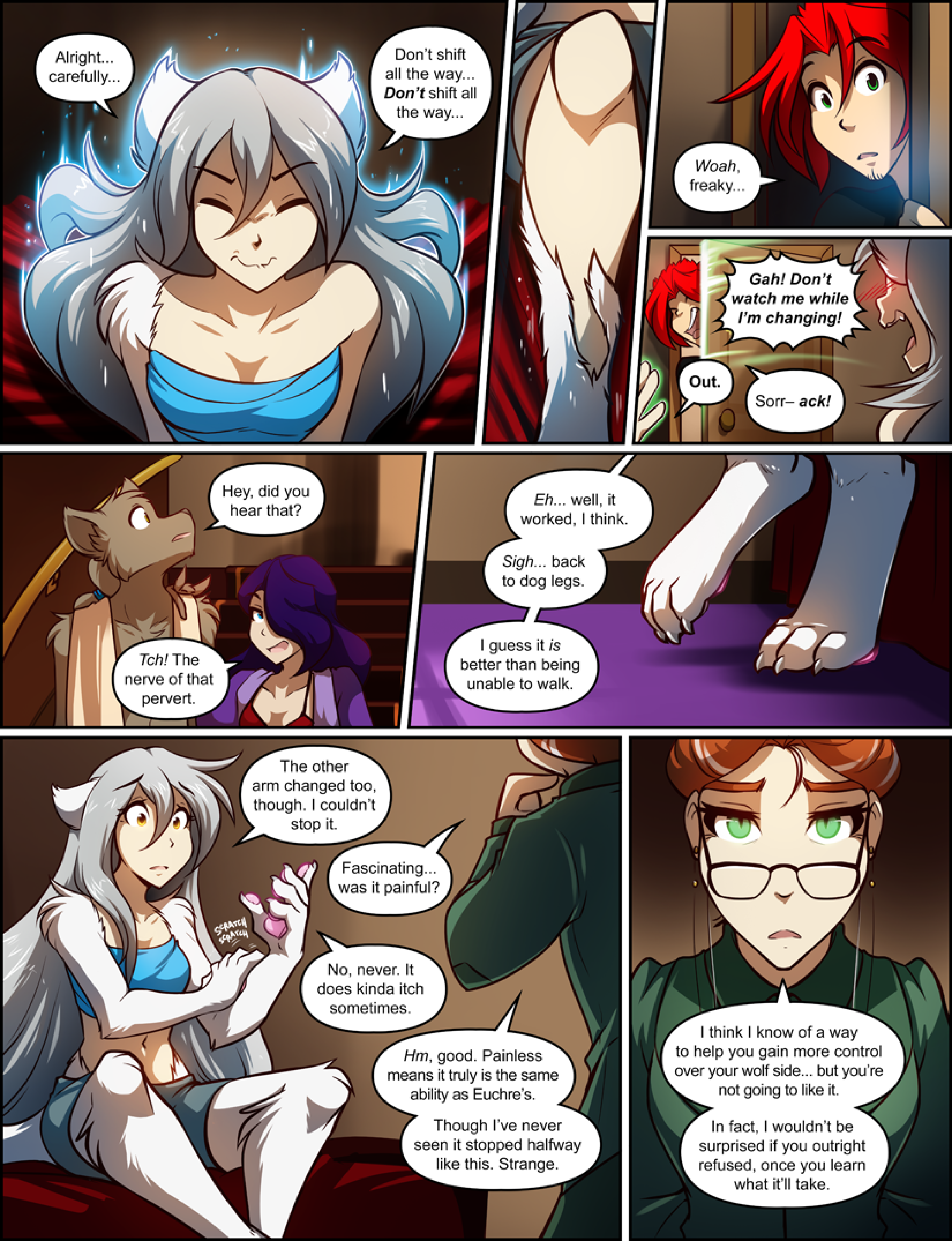

I'm just going to stay in my room.
I can't go out like this.
Even if I do change back, I could shift again at any time.
Raine, it's not... that bad.
Besides, this place is already a man-agony!
A... what?
You know... lots of creatures?
Uh... wait, a menagerie?
That it! There's wolves, tigers, basitins, even a bloody ***dragon*** living here...
It's not going to matter to anyone how you look.
But it matters to ***me!***
And it seems to still matter to you. I heard you talking outside...
"Fleabags"?
What? No! That's not... I didn't mean... *you*...
Damn it, I did it again! I need to watch what I say...
How I look isn't what I'm most worried about, anyway.
The sleepwalking... it scares me. What if it's just the beginning?
What if it keeps getting worse?
You've heard of feral Keidran, haven't you? Losing my body is one thing, but losing my mind...!
I could end up becoming more and more like a wolf! Until eventually I'm just an animal who doesn't even remember who she was anymore much less
Raine!
Listen to me: you are ***not*** going feral! I promise.
You just need to learn more control.

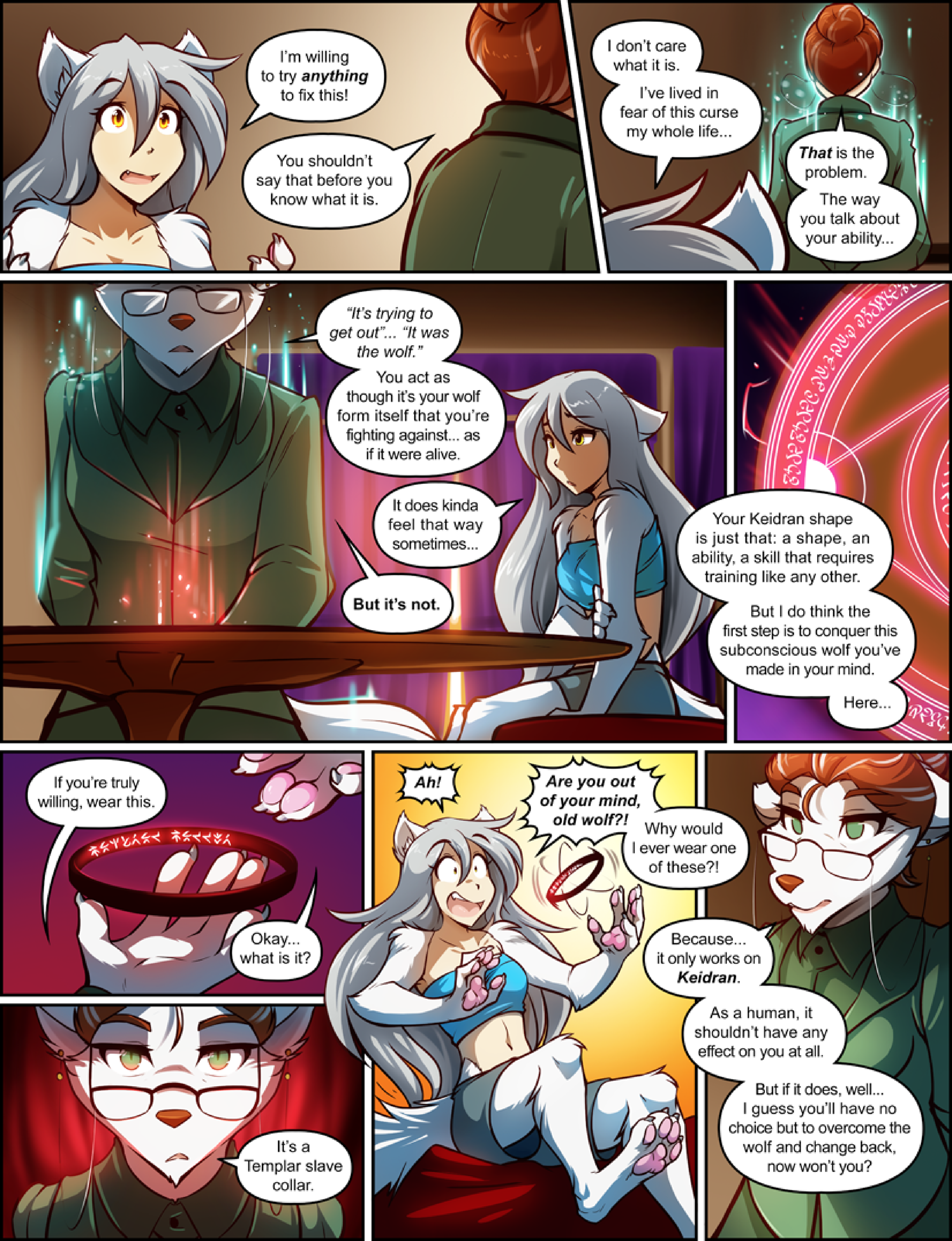

I can't. I don't know how. My father is the only one who ever did.
You know... I had a thought about that.
The story you told me about your father... you also mentioned he had a cousin named Rose, right?
I couldn't help but notice the caretaker of the estate also happens to be a white wolf like you... named Roselyn.
Quite a coincidence, don't you think?
Maybe?
I had the same thought when I saw her, but she'd have to be pretty old for a Keidran to be the same wolf.
Well let's just go ask her!
I guess she might. Though if it is her, she may not want to have anything to do with me.
I am the daughter of the wolf who left her to die, after all.
If she knew your dad, maybe she knows something about his abilities, too?
Raine, you can't be afraid to ask or you'll never know!
Just be confident!
I wish it was that easy.
Pfff! Being confident is easy!
You just have to speak your mind and don't care if you look foolish!
Well, you certainly do that a lot.
Yeah, I– hey!
Heheh!
You know what... you're right!
I'm not solving anything moping around here!
I need to learn to stand on my own two– wah!
BLARG!
Your legs are still uneven.
I noticed.

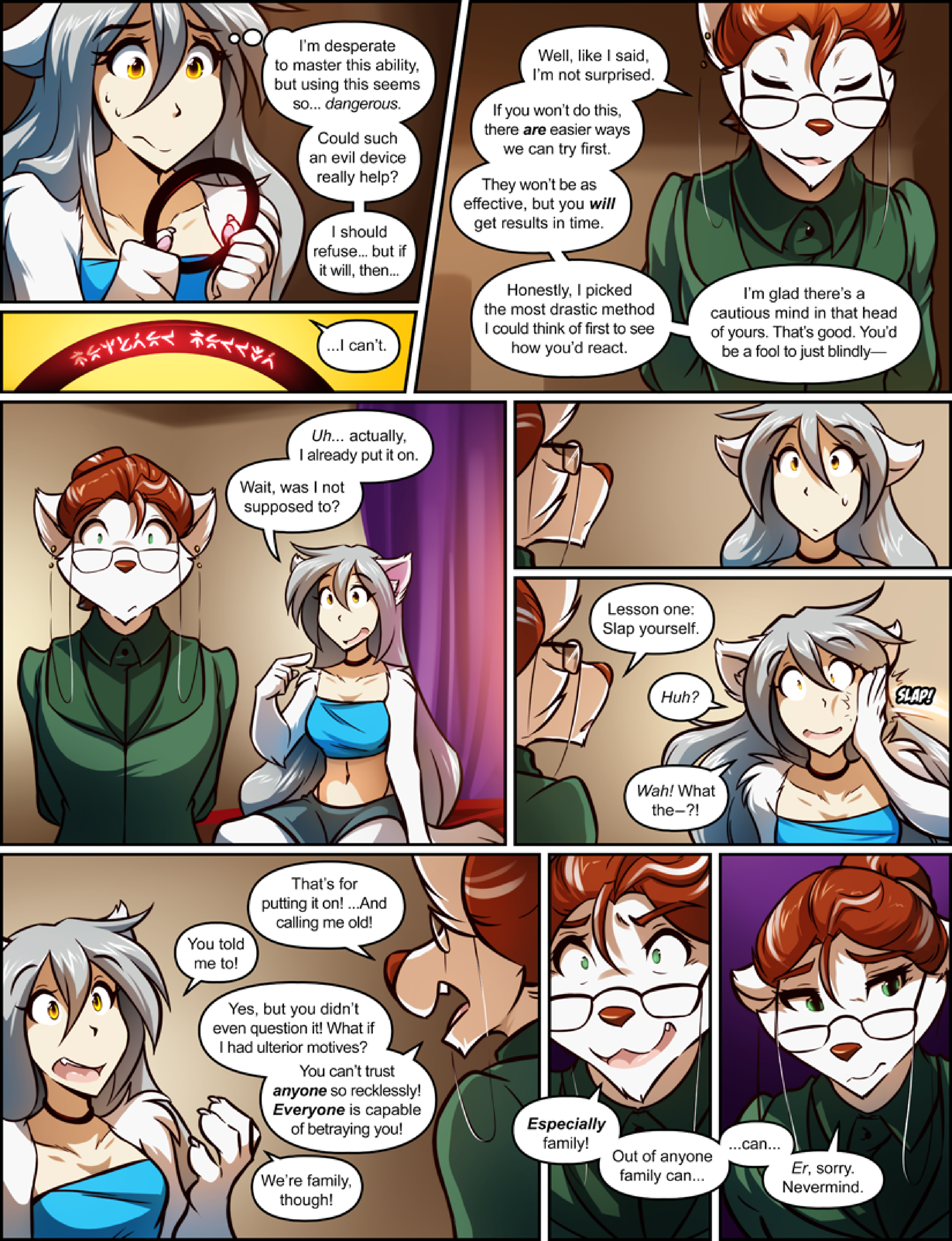

Look, you just wait here.
I'll go find Rose, wherever she is, and bring her here as fast as possible!
Be right b—
...Wow, I'm good.
Eh, hullo, m... ma'am? My name is—
I know who you are.
Wha– huh? Have we met?
No, but I was aware of you. Long ago.
Master's childhood cohort. You were quite the bully, if I recall. One of the reasons why I didn't like Saria associating with Trace, considering the company he kept.
Man, I can't want until we get to be full-fledged Templar!
Then we'll crush those filthy fleabags! And anyone else who gets in our way!
Right, Trace?
Uh... yeah, whatever.
Well, like you said, that was... a long time ago.
Anyway, this isn't about me!
It's my friend, Raine, She's—
CLUNK
Uh... okay, I guess I'll wait out here then.

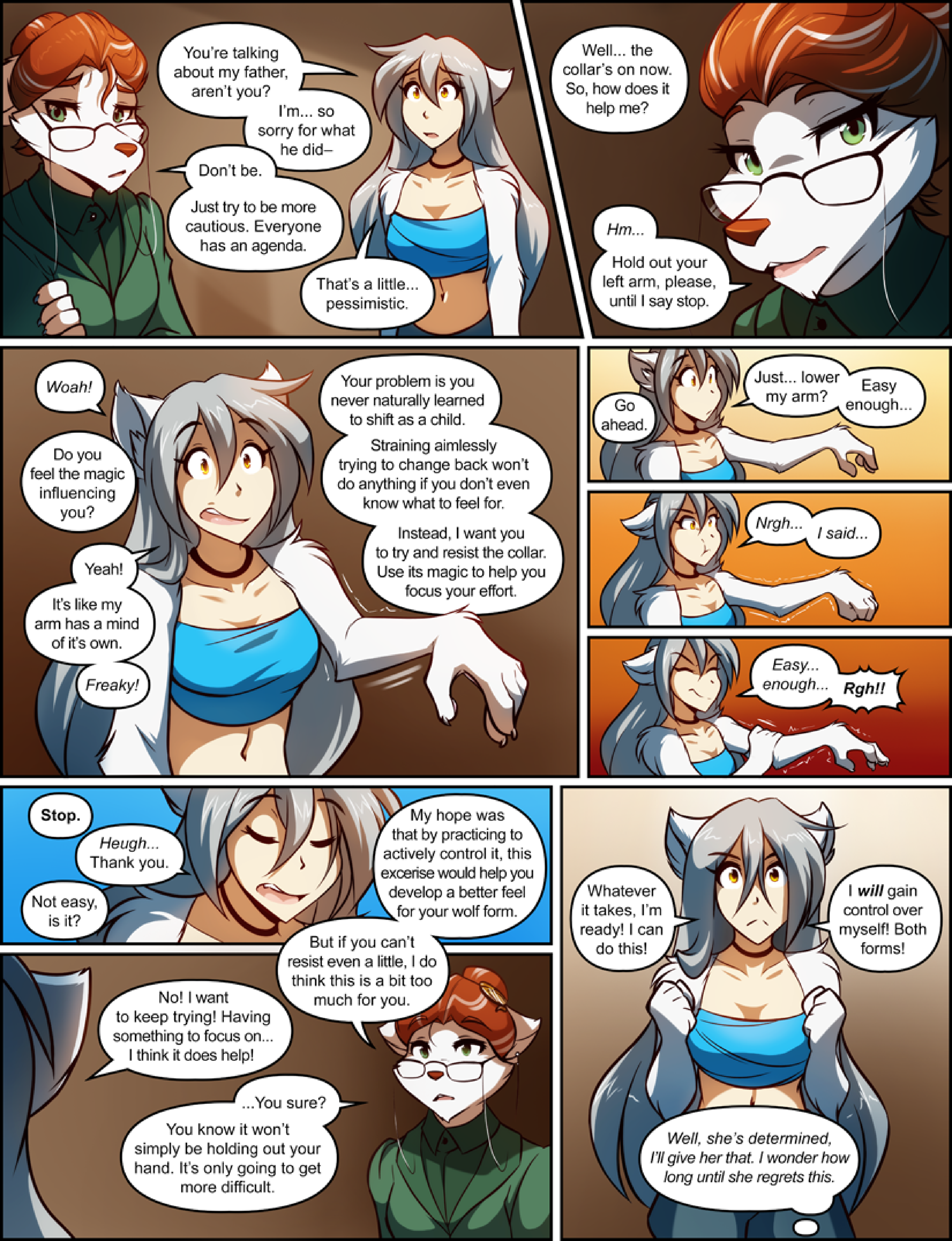

Hello, dear.
I see we have quite the mess on our hands...
Oh, yes. I-I'm so sorry about the curtains Miss Roselyn.
I was sleep walking. It was the wolf.
Not what I was referring to, but yes, the curtains are a mess as well.
They, at least, are easily mended.
FLUMPH!
Oh!
WAG! WAG!
That's fascinating!
I saw the runes on the table and wondered how they worked!
I couldn't read a lot of it, but I could tell it was very elegant runecrafting. It's not ***making*** the objects, right? It must be some sort of complex summoning circle, but all networked together, sourcing from a central storage room catalogue. It's brilliant! I'd—
I'd... *er*, s-sorry...
You like magic, do you?
Well, I have no ***real*** training, but I loved *reading* about it.
I've read everything I could get my hands on.
....You really are your father's daughter.
So... you know who I am! You ***are*** the same Rose!
Does that mean you know about my father's abilities Anything that could help me?
Sigh... It's shameful that neither my cousin nor your mother was willing to guide you in magic...
But yes...
I can help teach you control. We are family, after all.

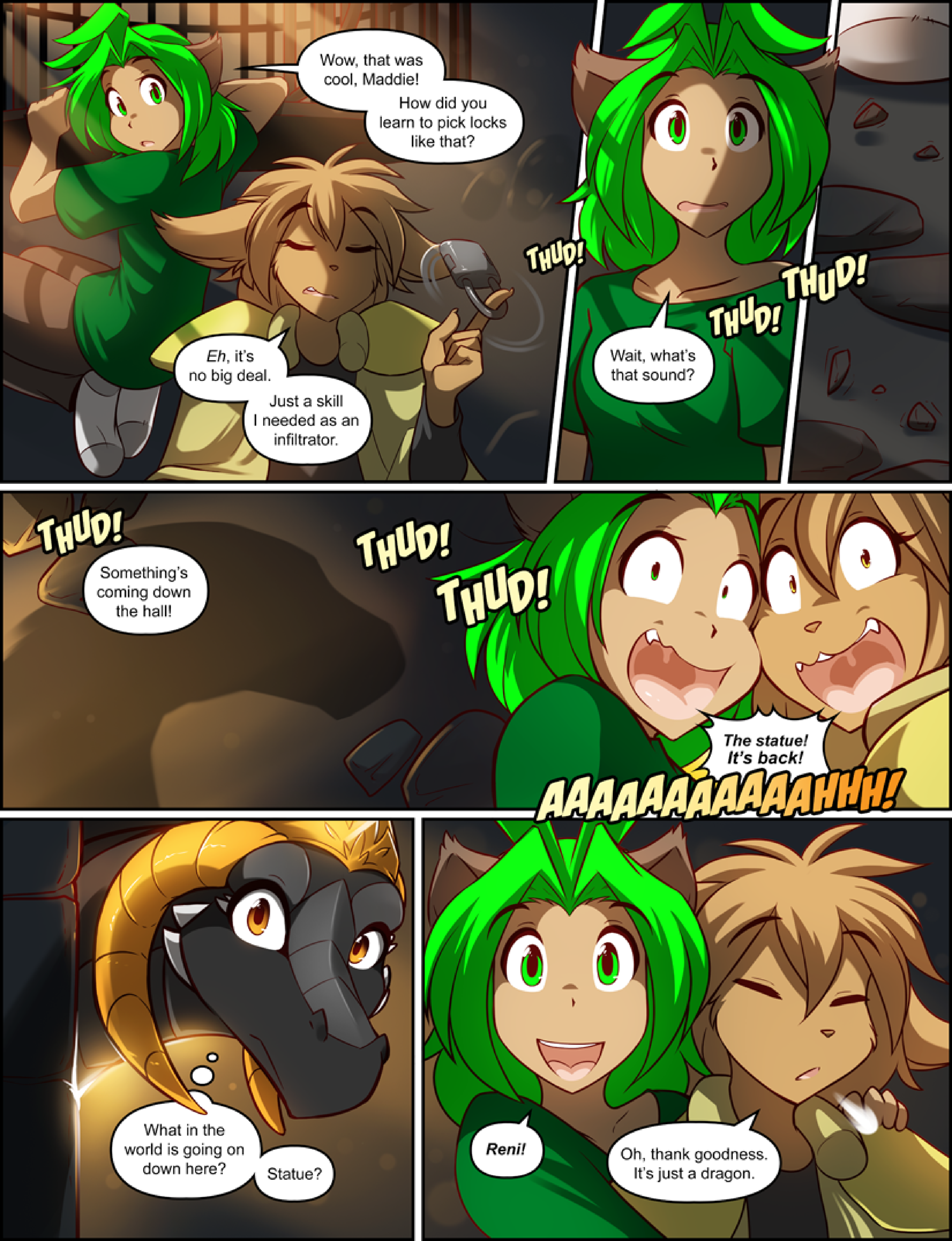

You have the same ability?!
It runs in the family.
Though your father's adaptation *was* unique.
For me, it requires mana. For your father... and now *you*, it comes naturally.
I'd hardly call ***this*** "naturally."
Only because you were never allowed to grow into it!
Your parents stunted your growth - *the bastards* - but you're an adult now. You make your own choices.
So... you wanna to learn or not?
Y-yes, ma'am!
Very much so! *Uh*... So, w-what do we do first?
Well, we could start by evening you back up.
It'll be hard to train you if you can't even walk.
Well... I've tried!
If I knew how, there wouldn't be a problem!
But no matter what I do...
...It just won't go back to normal.
I see... well, why not try making the other one wolf too, then?
O-oh. That... might work. But if I do, then...
You don't want to lose more of your human self? Or are you afraid you might end up full wolf again?
...Both.
I understand your feelings, but if you want my help, I must insist.
I need to see you transform for myself.
Ah... o-okay. I guess I can try...
Good. Learning may not be easy...
But I promise I will help you be more whole by the end of this.

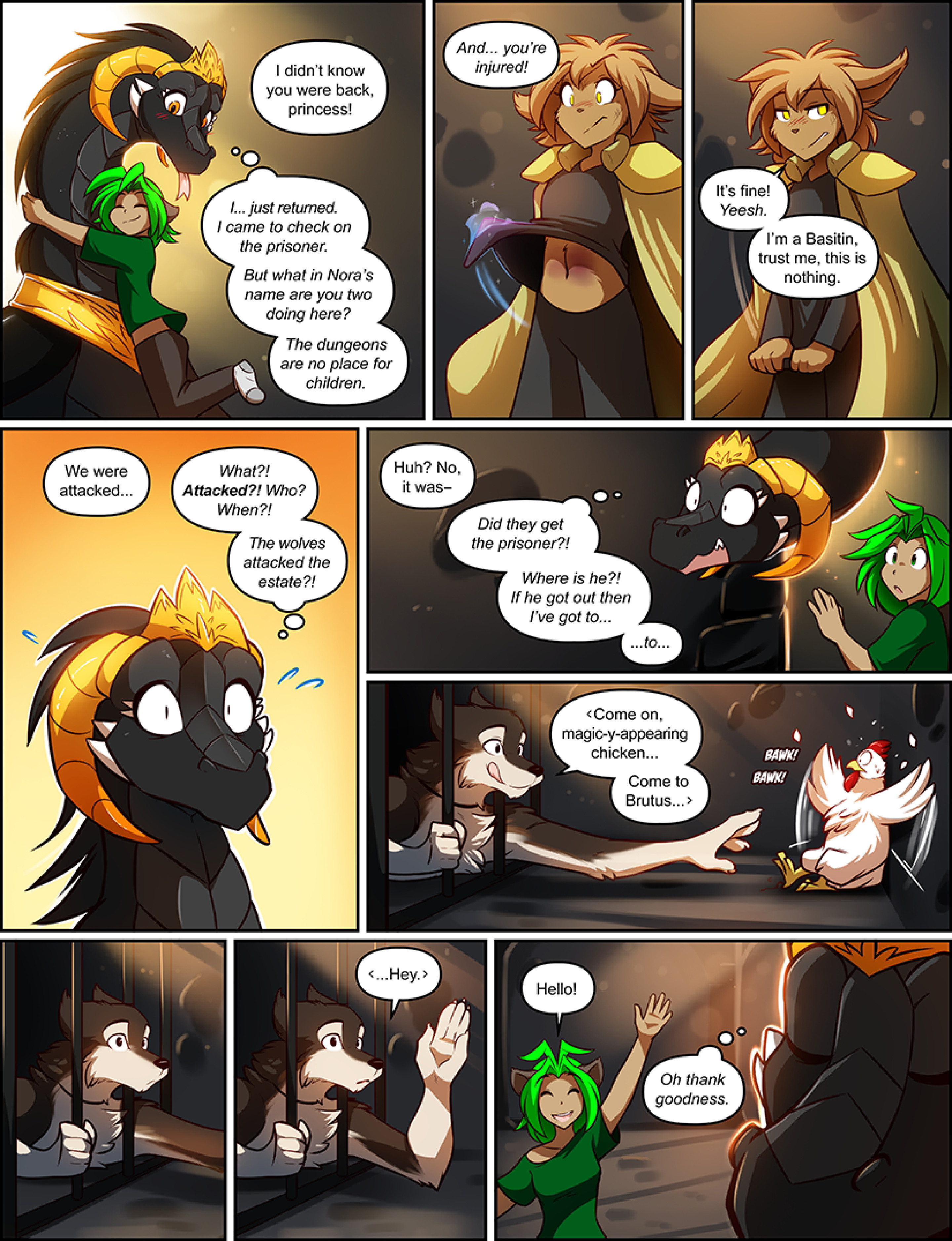

Alright... carefully...
Don't shift all the way... *Don't* shift all the way...
Woah, freaky...
Gah! Don't watch me while I'm changing!
Out.
Sorr– *ack!*
Hey, did you hear that?
Tch! The nerve of that pervert.
Eh... well, it worked, I think.
Sigh... back to dog legs.
I guess it *is* better than being unable to walk.
The other arm changed too, though. I couldn't stop it.
Fascinating... was it painful?
SCRATCH SCRATCH
No, never. It does kinda itch sometimes.
Hm, good. Painless means it truly is the same ability as Euchre's.
Though I've never seen it stopped halfway like this. Strange.
I think I know of a way to help you gain more control over your wolf side... but you're not going to like it.
In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if you outright refused, once you learn what it'll take.

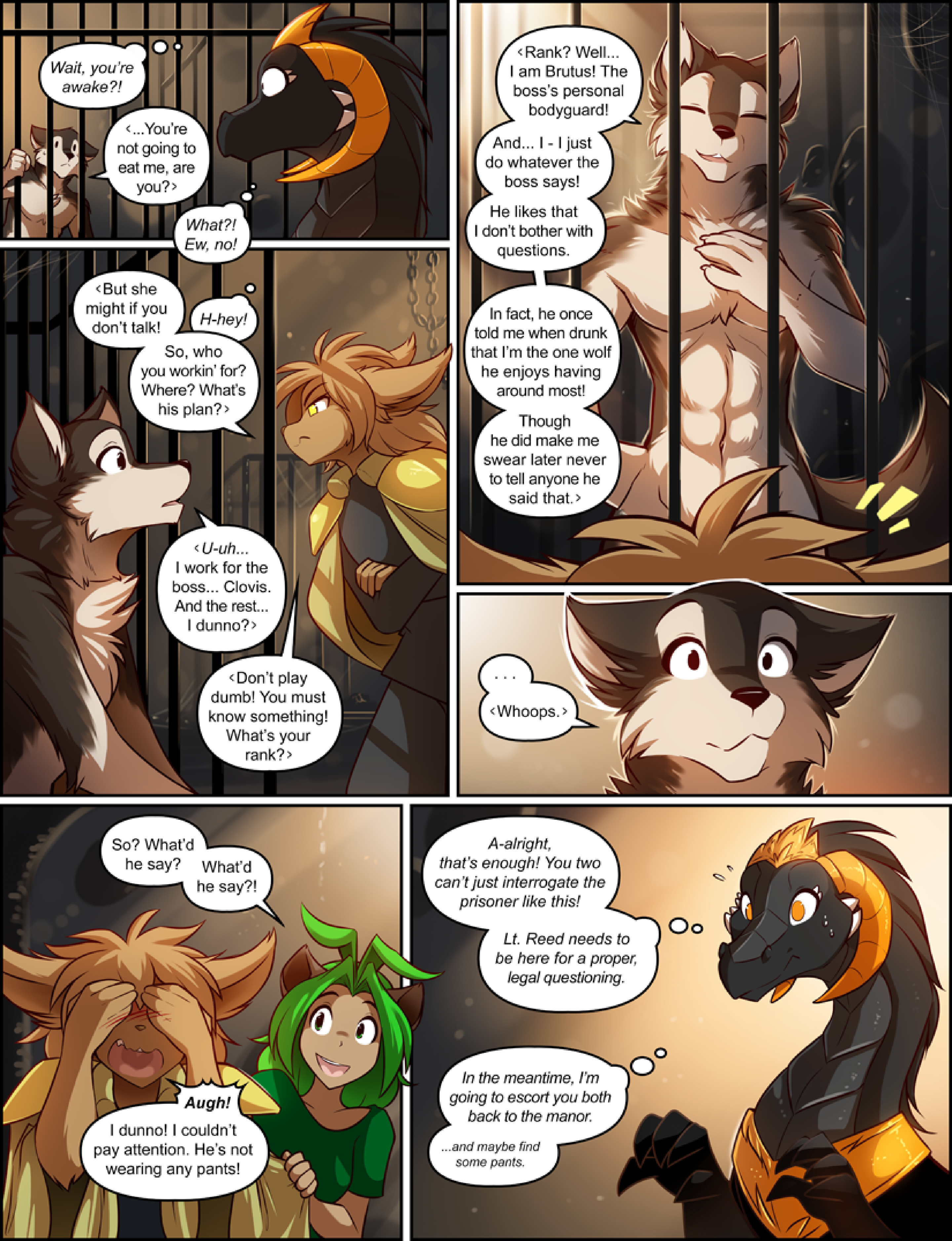

I'm willing to try *anything* to fix this!
You shouldn't say that before you know what it is.
I don't care what it is.
I've lived in fear of this curse my whole life...
That is the problem.
The way you talk about your ability...
"It's trying to get out"... "It was the wolf."
You act as though it's your wolf form itself that you're fighting against... as if it were alive.
It does kinda feel that way sometimes...
But it's not.
Your Keidran shape is just that: a shape, an ability, a skill that requires training like any other.
But I do think the first step is to conquer this subconscious wolf you've made in your mind.
Here...
If you're truly willing, wear this.
Okay... what is it?
It's a Templar slave collar.
Ah!
Are you out of your mind, old wolf?!
Why would I ever wear one of these?!
Because... it only works on ***Keidran***.
As a human, it shouldn't have any effect on you at all.
But if it does, well... I guess you'll have no choice but to overcome the wolf and change back, now won't you?

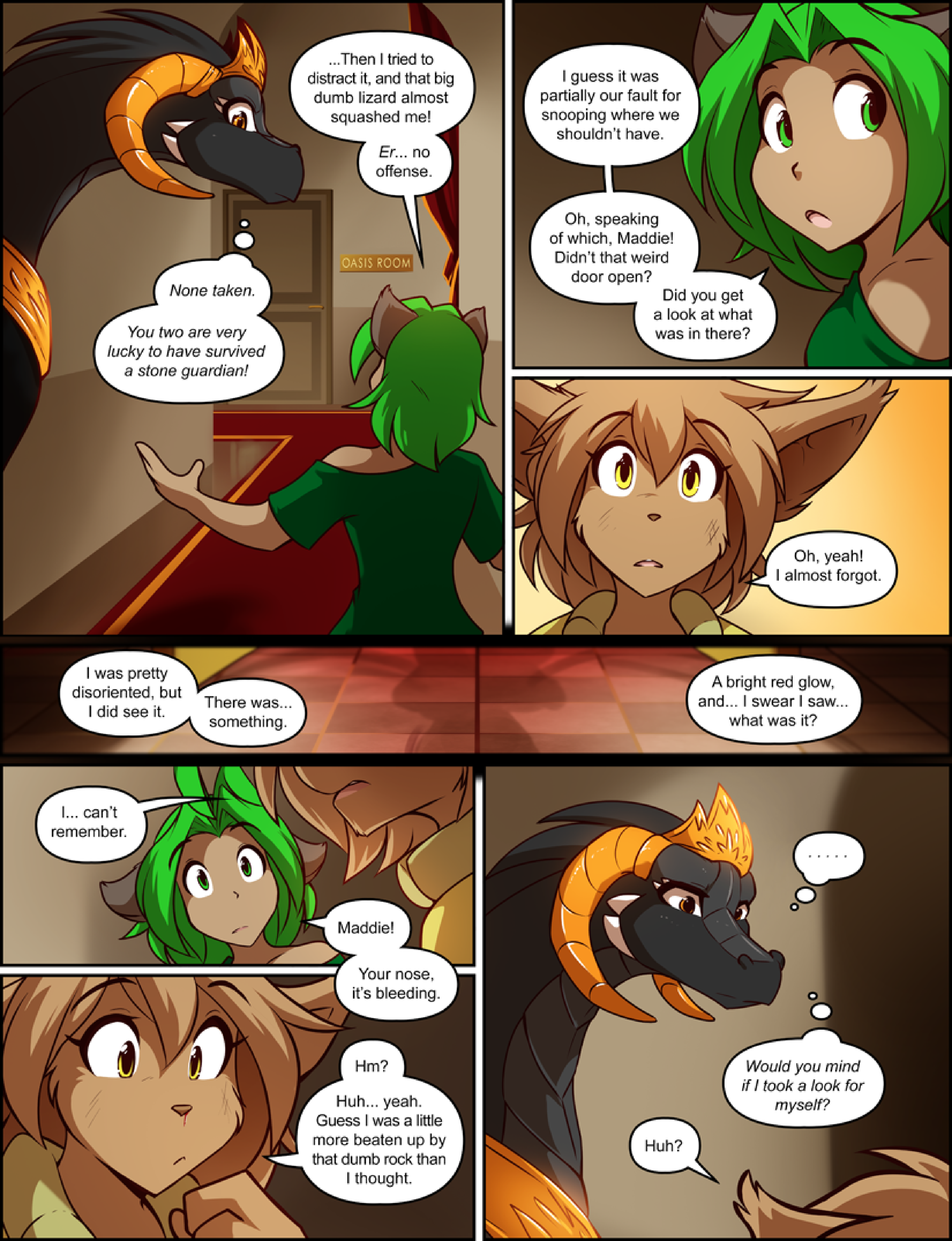

I'm desperate to master this ability, but using this seems so... *dangerous.*
Could such an evil device really help?
I should refuse... but if it will, then...
...I can't.
Well, like I said, I'm not surprised.
If you won't do this, there ***are*** easier ways we can try first.
They won't be as effective, but you ***will*** get results in time.
Honestly, I picked the most drastic method I could think of first to see how you'd react.
I'm glad there's a cautious mind in that head of yours. That's good. You'd be a fool to just blindly—
Uh... actually, I already put it on.
Wait, was I not supposed to?
Lesson one: Slap yourself.
Huh?
SLAP!
Wah! What the–?!
That's for putting it on! ...And calling me old!
You told me to!
Yes, but you didn't even question it! What if I had ulterior motives?
You can't trust ***anyone*** so recklessly! ***Everyone*** is capable of betraying you!
We're family, though!
Especially family!
Out of anyone family can...
...can...
Er, sorry. Nevermind.

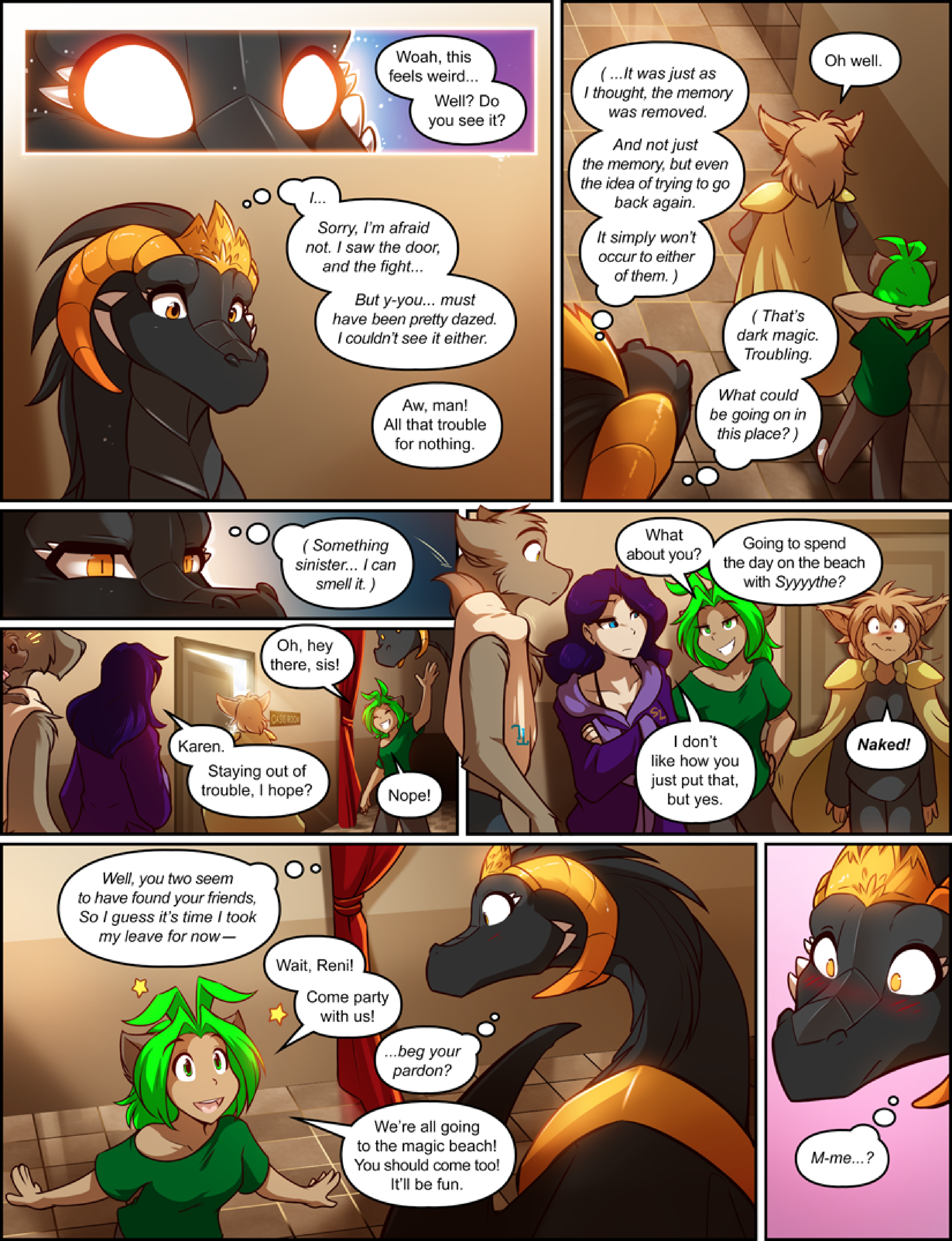

You're talking about my father, aren't you?
I'm... so sorry for what he did–
Don't be.
Just try to be more cautious. Everyone has an agenda.
That's a little... pessimistic.
Well... the collar's on now. So, how does it help me?
Hm...
Hold out your left arm, please, until I say stop.
Woah!
Do you feel the magic influencing you?
Yeah!
It's like my arm has a mind of it's own.
Freaky!
Your problem is you never naturally learned to shift as a child.
Straining aimlessly trying to change back won't do anything if you don't even know what to feel for.
Instead, I want you to try and resist the collar. Use its magic to help you focus your effort.
Go ahead.
Just... lower my arm?
Easy enough...
Nrgh...
I said...
Easy... enough...
Rgh!!
Stop.
Heugh... Thank you.
Not easy, is it?
My hope was that by practicing to actively control it, this excerise would help you develop a better feel for your wolf form.
But if you can't resist even a little, I do think this is a bit too much for you.
No! I want to keep trying! Having something to focus on... I think it does help!
...You sure?
You know it won't simply be holding out your hand. It's only going to get more difficult.
Whatever it takes, I'm ready! I can do this!
I ***will*** gain control over myself! Both forms!
Well, she's determined, I'll give her that. I wonder how long until she regrets this.

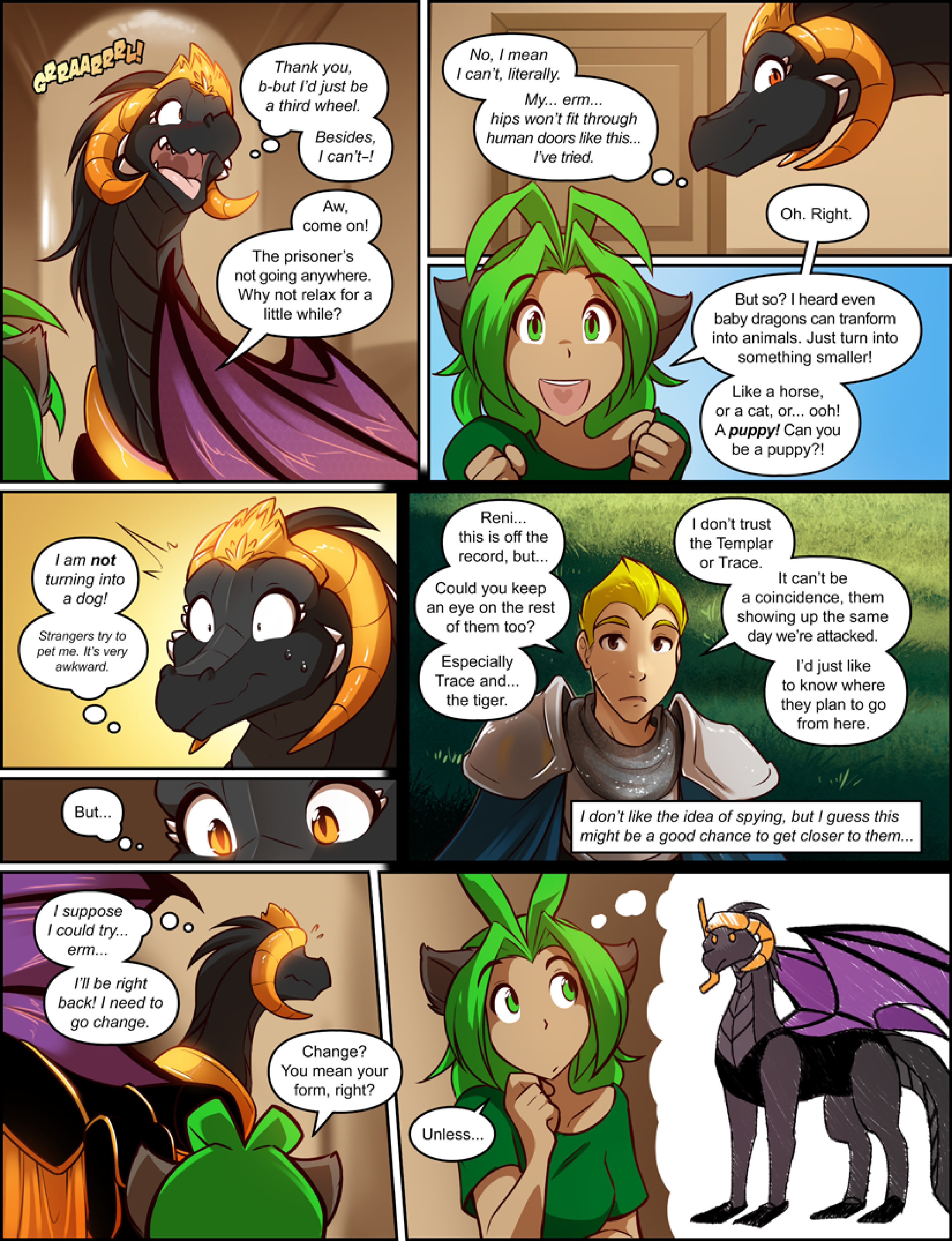

Wow, that was cool, Maddie!
How did you learn to pick locks like that?
Eh, it's no big deal.
Just a skill I needed as an infiltrator.
THUD!
THUD!
THUD!
Wait, what's that sound?
THUD!
Something's coming down the hall!
THUD!
THUD!
The statue! It's back!
AAAAAAAAAAAHHH!
What in the world is going on down here?
Statue?
Reni!
Oh, thank goodness. It's just a dragon.

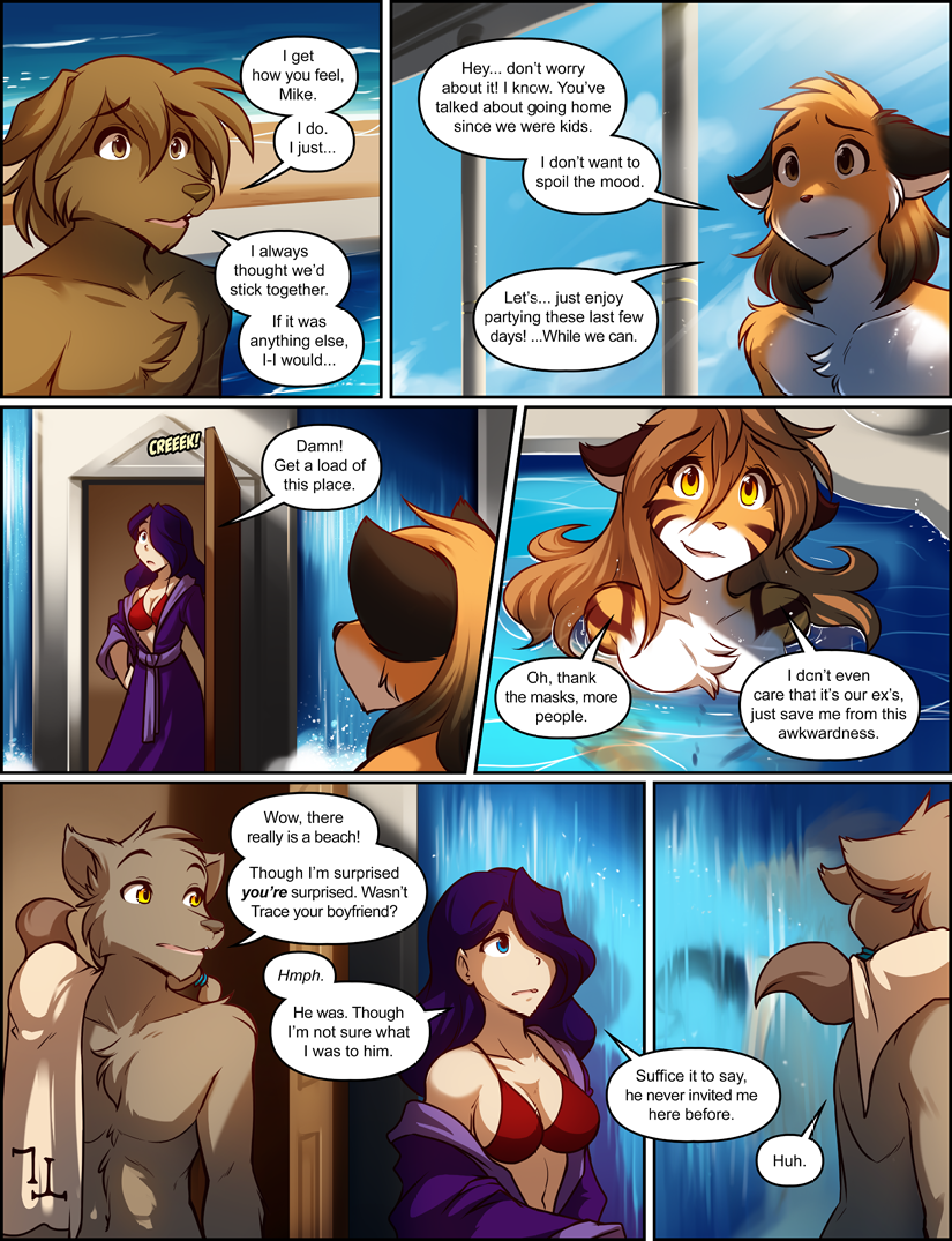

I didn't know you were back, princess!
I... just returned. I came to check on the prisoner.
But what in Nora's name are you two doing here?
The dungeons are no place for children.
And... you're injured!
It's fine! Yeesh.
I'm a Basitin, trust me, this is nothing.
We were attacked...
What?! **Attacked?!** Who? When?!
The wolves attacked the estate?!
Huh? No, it was–
Did they get the prisoner?!
Where is he?! If he got out then I've got to...
...to...
<Come on, magic-y-appearing chicken...
Come to Brutus...>
BAWK!
BAWK!
<...Hey.>
Hello!
Oh thank goodness.

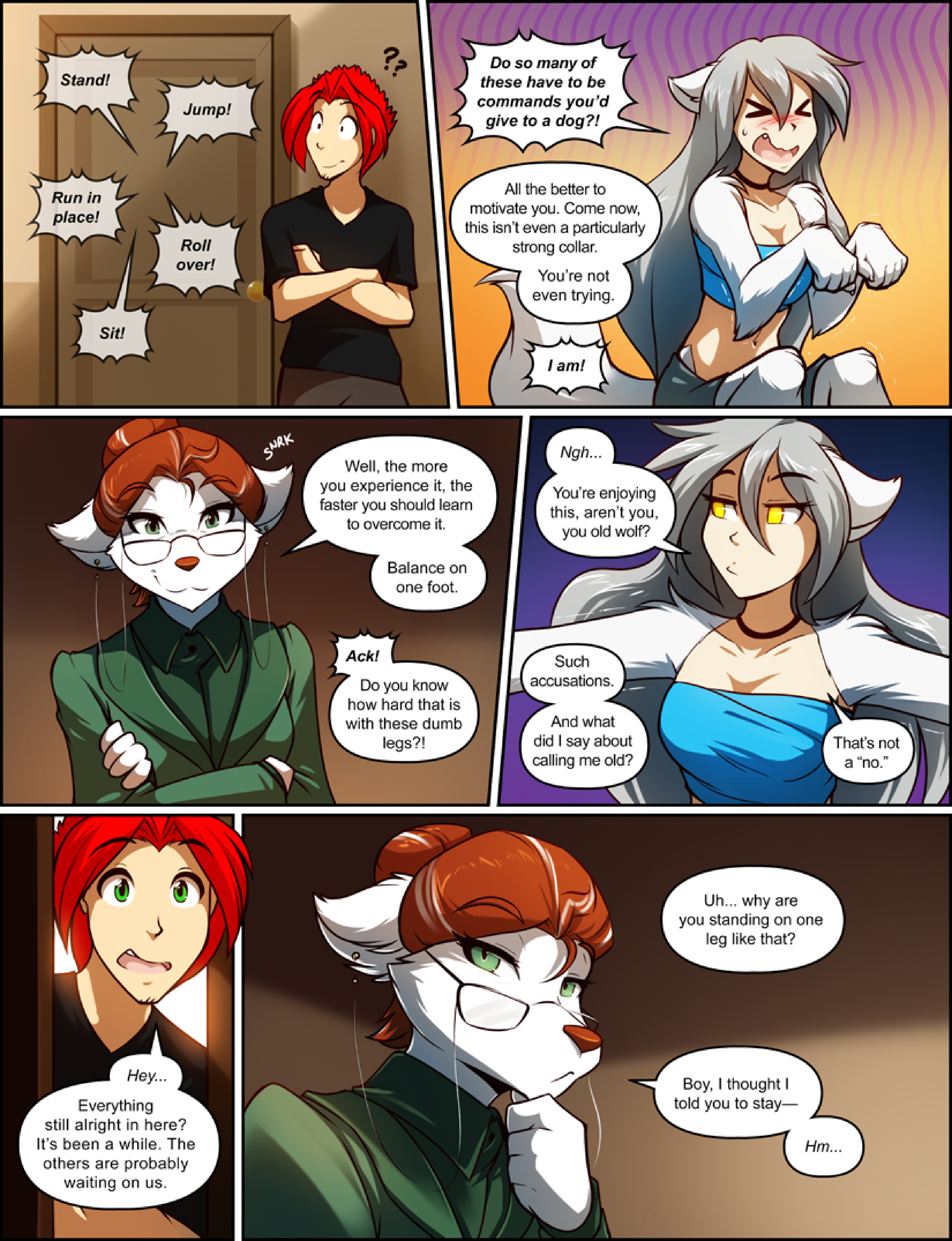

Wait, you're awake?!
<...You're not going to eat me, are you?>
What?! Ew, no!
<Rank? Well... I am Brutus! The boss's personal bodyguard!
And... I - I just do whatever the boss says!
He likes that I don't bother with questions.
In fact, he once told me when drunk that I'm the one wolf he enjoys having around most!
Though he did make me swear later never to tell anyone he said that.>
<But she might if you don't talk!
H-hey!
So, who you workin' for? Where? What's his plan?>
<U-uh... I work for the boss... Clovis. And the rest... I dunno?>
<Don't play dumb! You must know something! What's your rank?>
. . .
<Whoops.>
So? What'd he say?
What'd he say?!
Augh!
I dunno! I couldn't pay attention. He's not wearing any pants!
A-alright, that's enough! You two can't just interrogate the prisoner like this!
Lt. Reed needs to be here for a proper, legal questioning.
In the meantime, I'm going to escort you both back to the manor.
...and maybe find some pants.

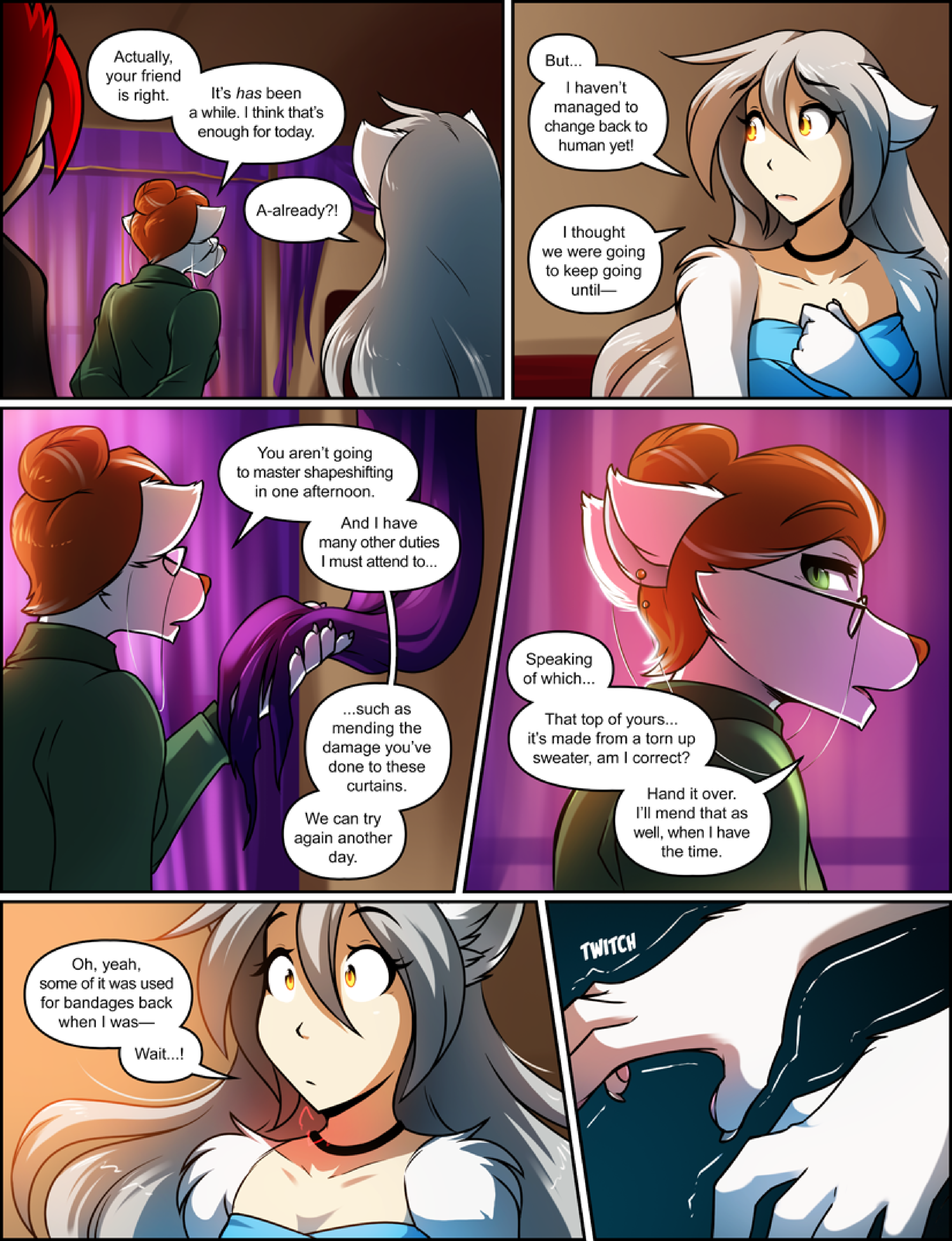

...Then I tried to distract it, and that big dumb lizard almost squashed me!
Er... no offense.
None taken.
You two are very lucky to have survived a stone guardian!
OASIS ROOM
I guess it was partially our fault for snooping where we shouldn't have.
Oh, speaking of which, Maddie! Didn't that weird door open?
Did you get a look at what was in there?
Oh, yeah! I almost forgot.
I was pretty disoriented, but I did see it.
There was... something.
A bright red glow, and... I swear I saw... what was it?
I... can't remember.
Maddie!
Your nose, it's bleeding.
Hm?
Huh... yeah. Guess I was a little more beaten up by that dumb rock than I thought.
. . . . .
Would you mind if I took a look for myself?
Huh?

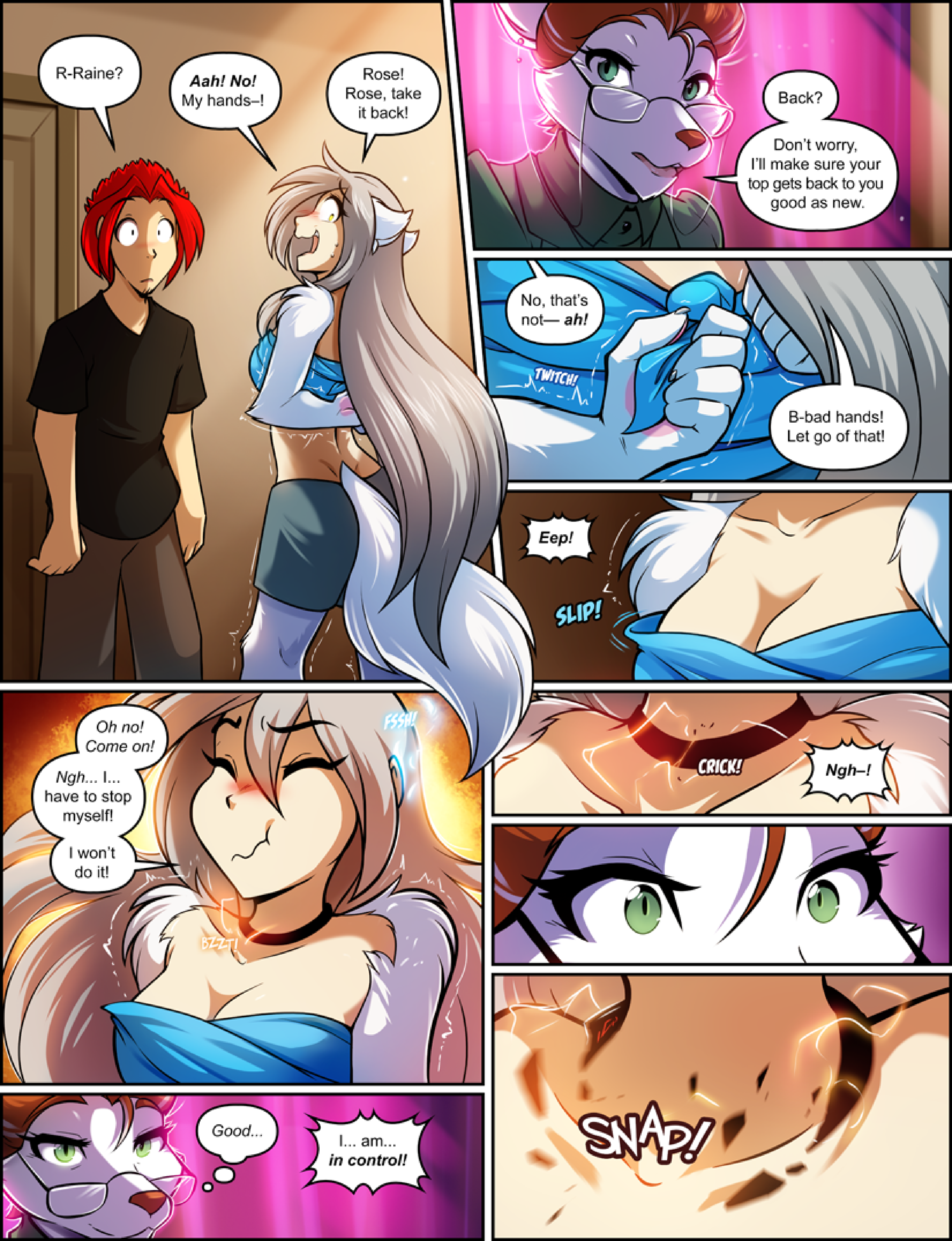

Woah, this feels weird...
Well? Do you see it?
I...
Sorry, I'm afraid not. I saw the door, and the fight...
But y-you... must have been pretty dazed. I couldn't see it either.
Aw, man! All that trouble for nothing.
(...It was just as I thought, the memory was removed.
And not just the memory, but even the idea of trying to go back again.
It simply won't occur to either of them.)
Oh well.
(That's dark magic. Troubling.
What could be going on in this place?)
(Something sinister... I can smell it.)
Oh, hey there, sis!
Karen.
Staying out of trouble, I hope?
Nope!
What about you?
Going to spend the day on the beach with *Syyyythe*?
I don't like how you just put that, but yes.
Naked!
Well, you two seem to have found your friends, So I guess it's time I took my leave for now—
Wait, Reni!
Come party with us!
...beg your pardon?
We're all going to the magic beach! You should come too! It'll be fun.
M-me...?

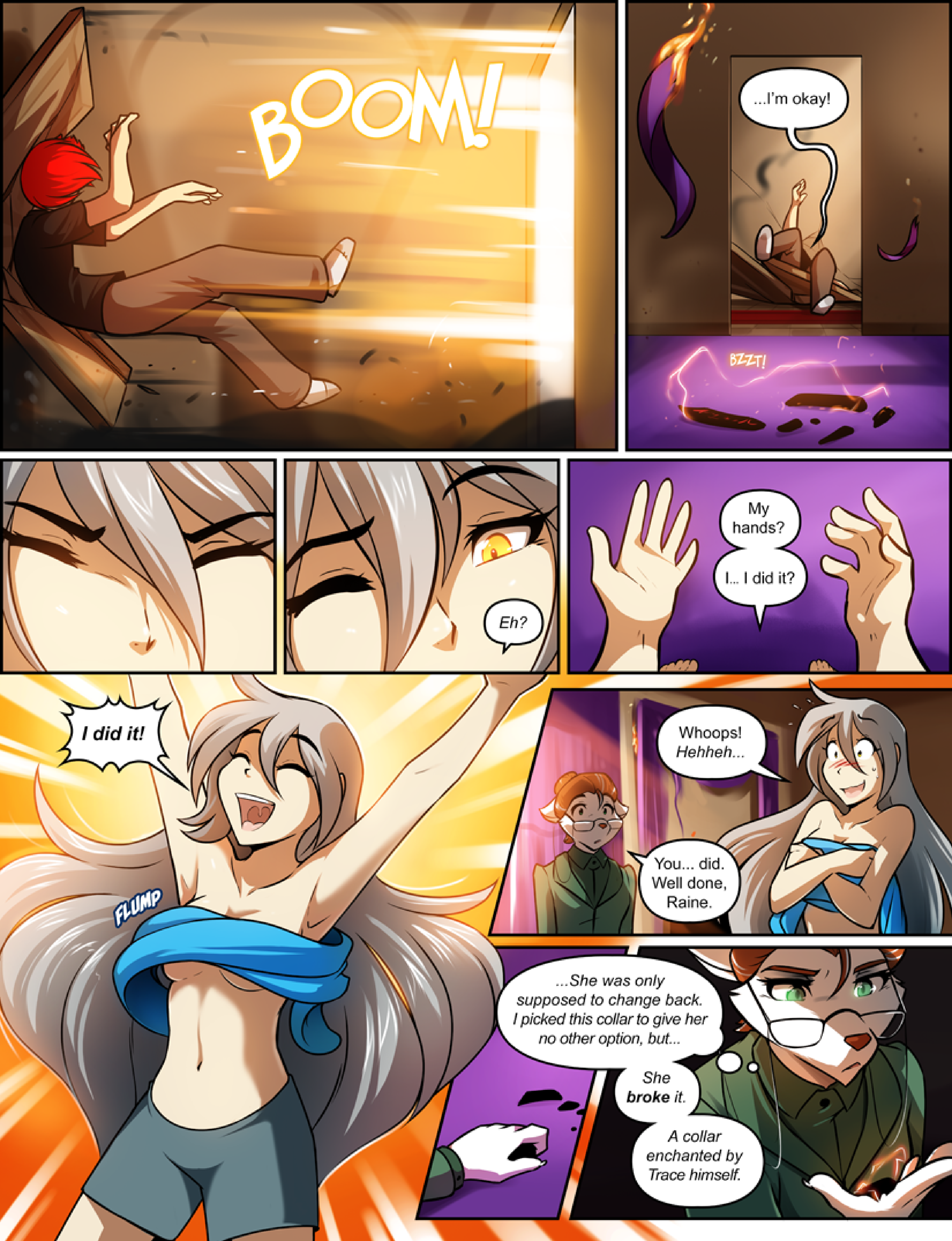

GRRAARRRL!
Thank you, b-but I'd just be a third wheel.
Besides, I can't-!
Aw, come on!
The prisoner's not going anywhere. Why not relax for a little while?
No, I mean I can't, literally.
My... erm... hips won't fit through human doors like this... I've tried.
Oh. Right.
But so? I heard even baby dragons can tranform into animals. Just turn into something smaller!
Like a horse, or a cat, or... ooh! A ***puppy!*** Can you be a puppy?!
*I am **not** turning into a dog!*
Strangers try to pet me. It's very awkward.
But...
Reni... this is off the record, but...
Could you keep an eye on the rest of them too?
Especially Trace and... the tiger.
I don't trust the Templar or Trace.
It can't be a coincidence, them showing up the same day we're attacked.
I'd just like to know where they plan to go from here.
I don't like the idea of spying, but I guess this might be a good chance to get closer to them...
I suppose I could try... erm...
I'll be right back! I need to go change.
Change? You mean your form, right?
Unless...

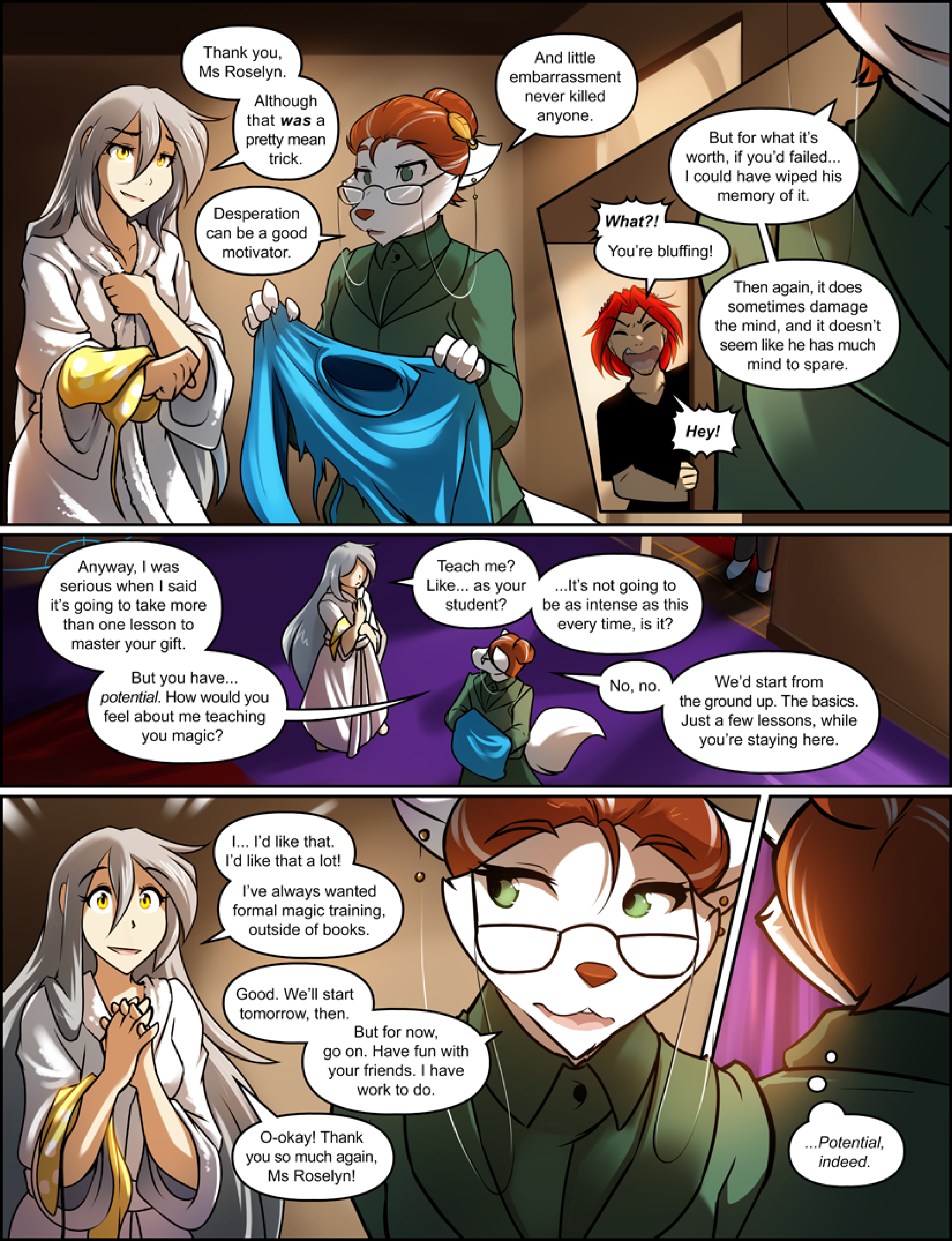

I get how you feel, Mike.
I do. I just...
I always thought we'd stick together.
If it was anything else, I-I would...
Hey... don't worry about it! I know. You've talked about going home since we were kids.
I don't want to spoil the mood.
Let's... just enjoy partying these last few days! ...While we can.
CREEEK!
Damn! Get a load of this place.
Oh, thank the masks, more people.
I don't even care that it's our ex's, just save me from this awkwardness.
Wow, there really is a beach!
Though I'm surprised *you're* surprised. Wasn't Trace your boyfriend?
Hmph.
He was. Though I'm not sure what I was to him.
Suffice it to say, he never invited me here before.
Huh.

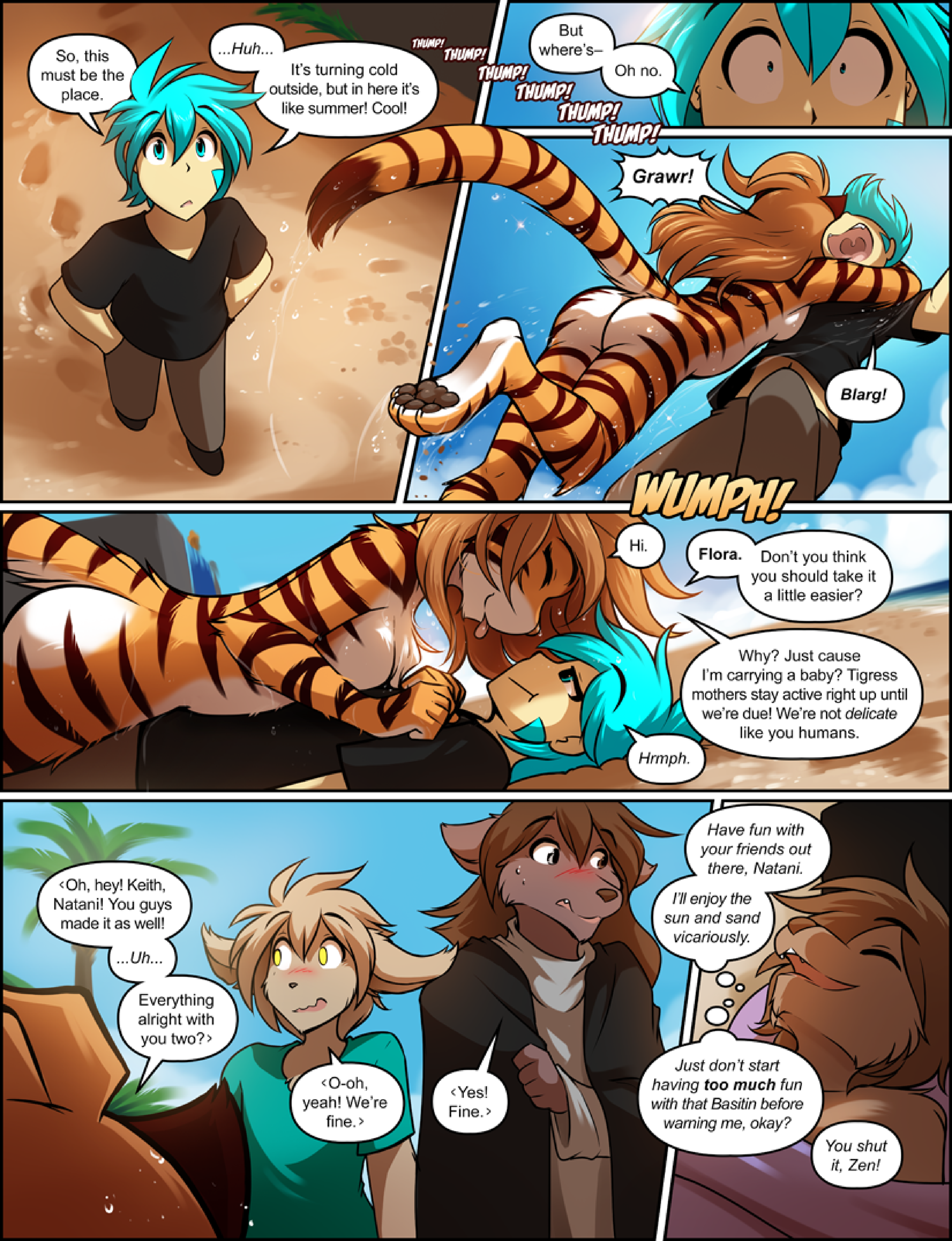

Stand!
Jump!
Run in place!
Roll over!
Sit!
??
Do so many of these have to be commands you'd give to a dog?!
All the better to motivate you. Come now, this isn't even a particularly strong collar.
You're not even trying.
I am!
SNRK
Well, the more you experience it, the faster you should learn to overcome it.
Balance on one foot.
Ack!
Do you know how hard that is with these dumb legs?!
Ngh...
You're enjoying this, aren't you, you old wolf?
Such accusations.
And what did I say about calling me old?
That's not a "no."
Hey...
Everything still alright in here? It's been a while. The others are probably waiting on us.
Uh... why are you standing on one leg like that?
Boy, I thought I told you to stay—
Hm...


Actually, your friend is right.
It's *has* been a while. I think that's enough for today.
A-already?!
But...
I haven't managed to change back to human yet!
I thought we were going to keep going until—
You aren't going to master shapeshifting in one afternoon.
And I have many other duties I must attend to...
...such as mending the damage you've done to these curtains.
We can try again another day.
Speaking of which...
That top of yours... it's made from a torn up sweater, am I correct?
Hand it over. I'll mend that as well, when I have the time.
Oh, yeah, some of it was used for bandages back when I was—
Wait...!
TWITCH


R-Raine?
Aah! No! My hands–!
Rose! Rose, take it back!
Back?
Don't worry, I'll make sure your top gets back to you good as new.
No, that's not— *ah!*
TWITCH!
B-bad hands! Let go of that!
Eep!
SLIP!
Oh no! Come on!
Ngh... I... have to stop myself!
I won't do it!
FSSH!
BZZT!
Good...
I... am... *in control!*
CRICK!
Ngh–!
SNAP!


BOOM!
...I'm okay!
BZZT!
Eh?
My hands?
I... I did it?
I did it!
FLUMP
Whoops! Hehheh...
You... did. Well done, Raine.
...She was only supposed to change back. I picked this collar to give her no other option, but...
She broke it.
A collar enchanted by Trace himself.


Thank you, Ms Roselyn.
Although that ***was*** a pretty mean trick.
Desperation can be a good motivator.
And little embarrassment never killed anyone.
But for what it's worth, if you'd failed... I could have wiped his memory of it.
What?!
You're bluffing!
Then again, it does sometimes damage the mind, and it doesn't seem like he has much mind to spare.
Hey!
Anyway, I was serious when I said it's going to take more than one lesson to master your gift.
But you have... *potential*. How would you feel about me teaching you magic?
Teach me? Like... as your student?
...It's not going to be as intense as this every time, is it?
No, no.
We'd start from the ground up. The basics. Just a few lessons, while you're staying here.
I... I'd like that. I'd like that a lot!
I've always wanted formal magic training, outside of books.
Good. We'll start tomorrow, then.
But for now, go on. Have fun with your friends. I have work to do.
O-okay! Thank you so much again, Ms Roselyn!
...Potential, indeed.


So, this must be the place.
...Huh...
It's turning cold outside, but in here it's like summer! Cool!
THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!
But where's–
Oh no.
Grawr!
Blarg!
WUMPH!
Hi.
Flora. Don't you think you should take it a little easier?
Why? Just cause I'm carrying a baby? Tigress mothers stay active right up until we're due! We're not *delicate* like you humans.
Hrmph.
‹Oh, hey! Keith, Natani! You guys made it as well!
...Uh...
Everything alright with you two?›
‹O-oh, yeah! We're fine.›
‹Yes! Fine.›
Have fun with your friends out there, Natani.
I'll enjoy the sun and sand vicariously.
Just don't start having ***too much*** *fun with that Basitin before warning me, okay?*
You shut it, Zen!

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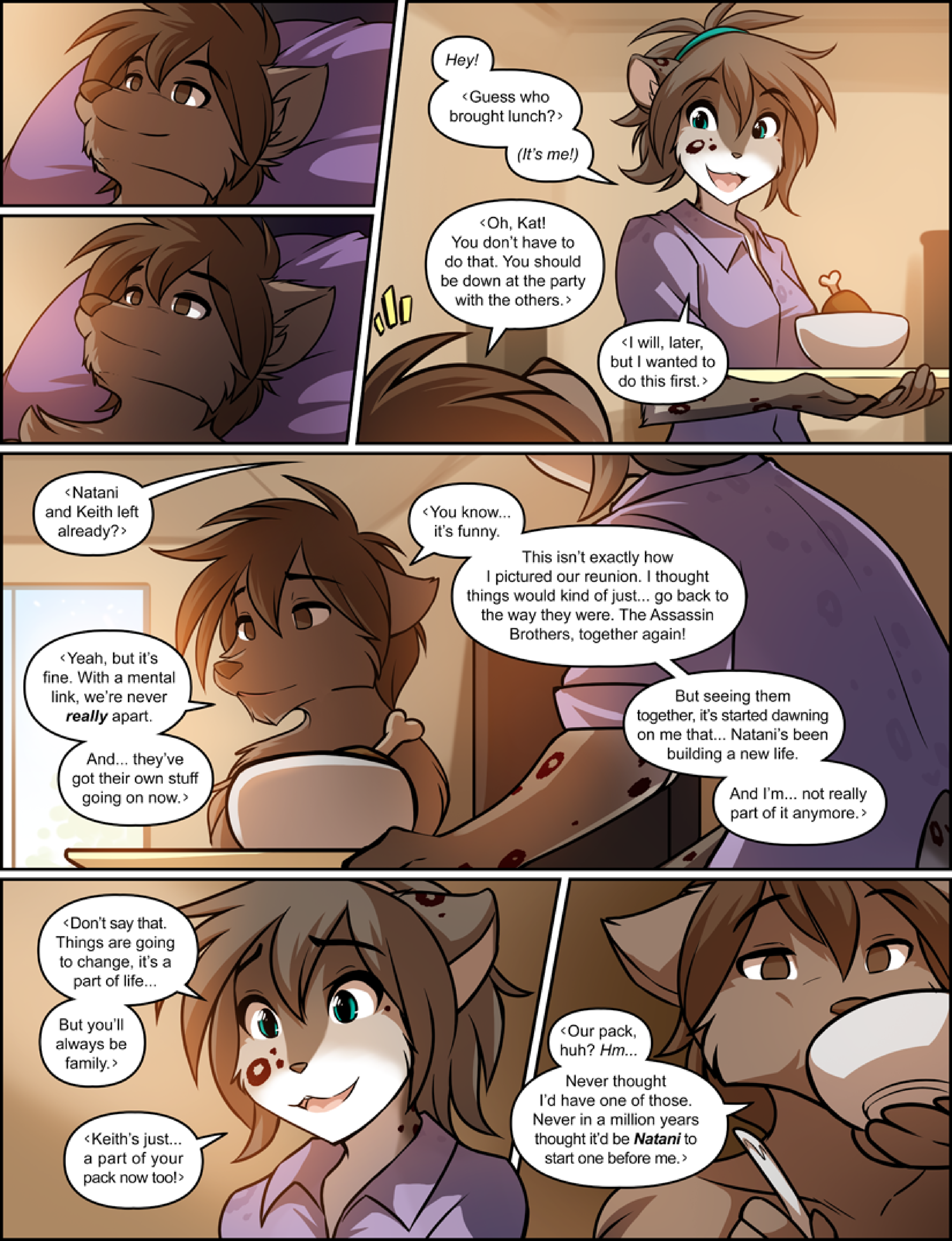
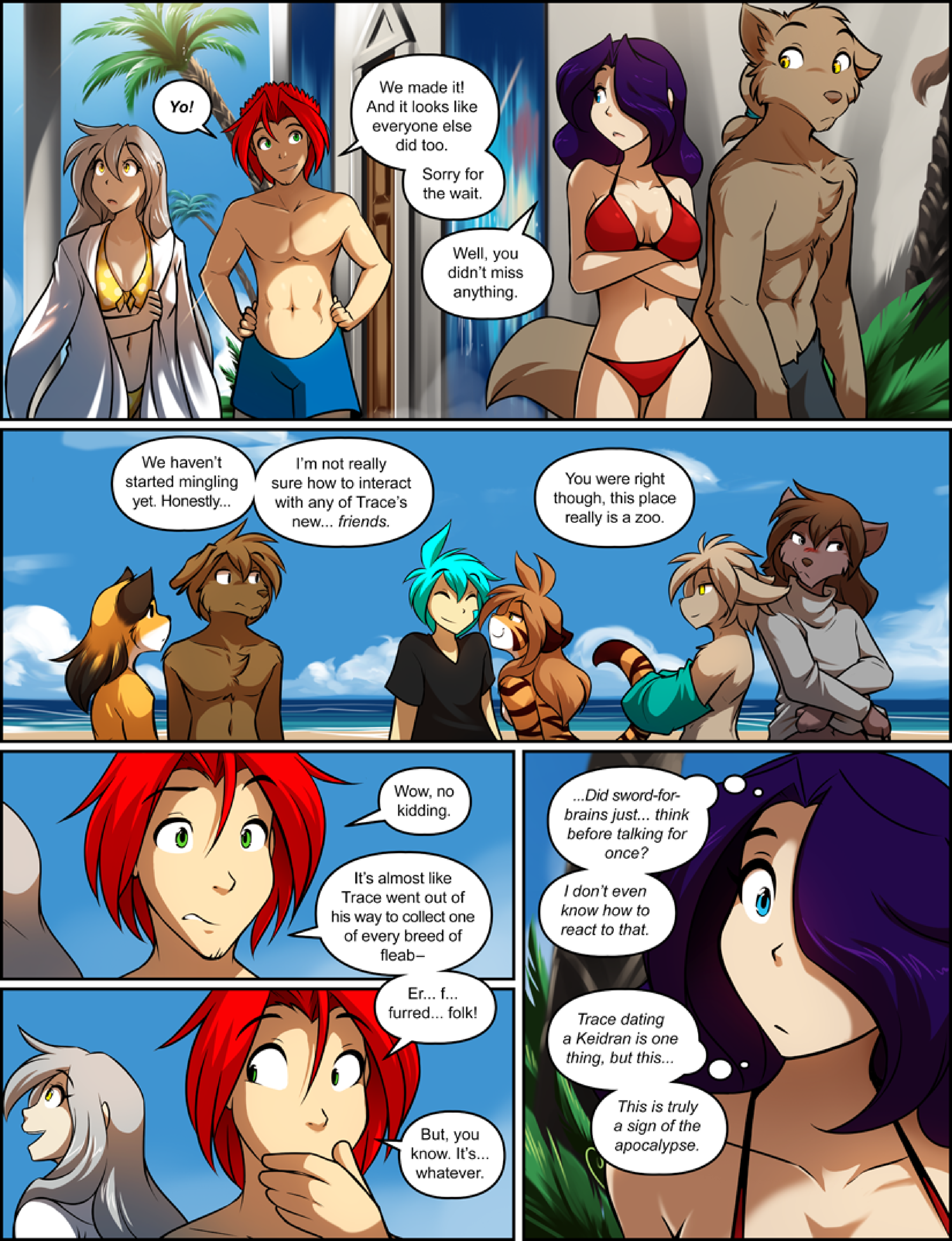
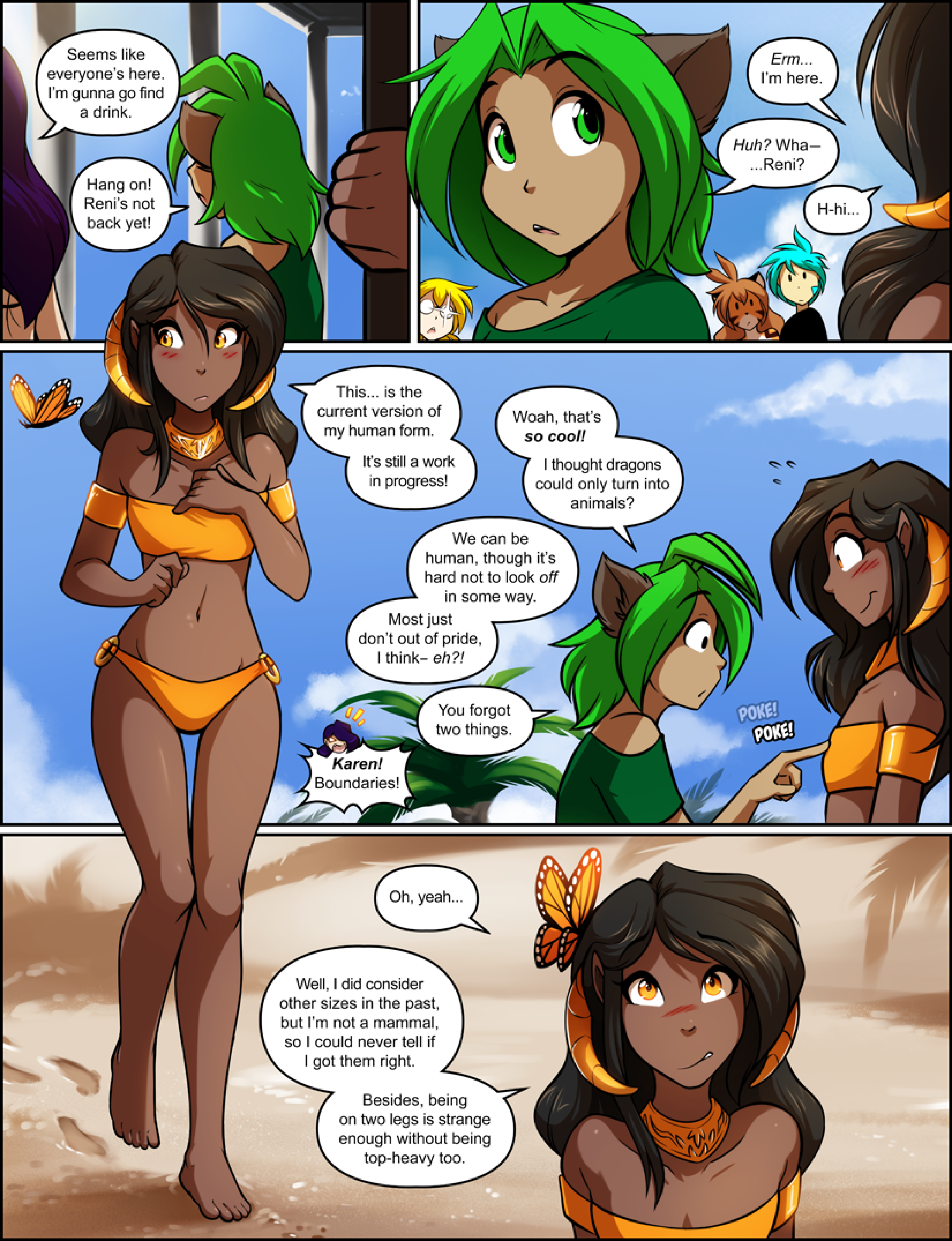
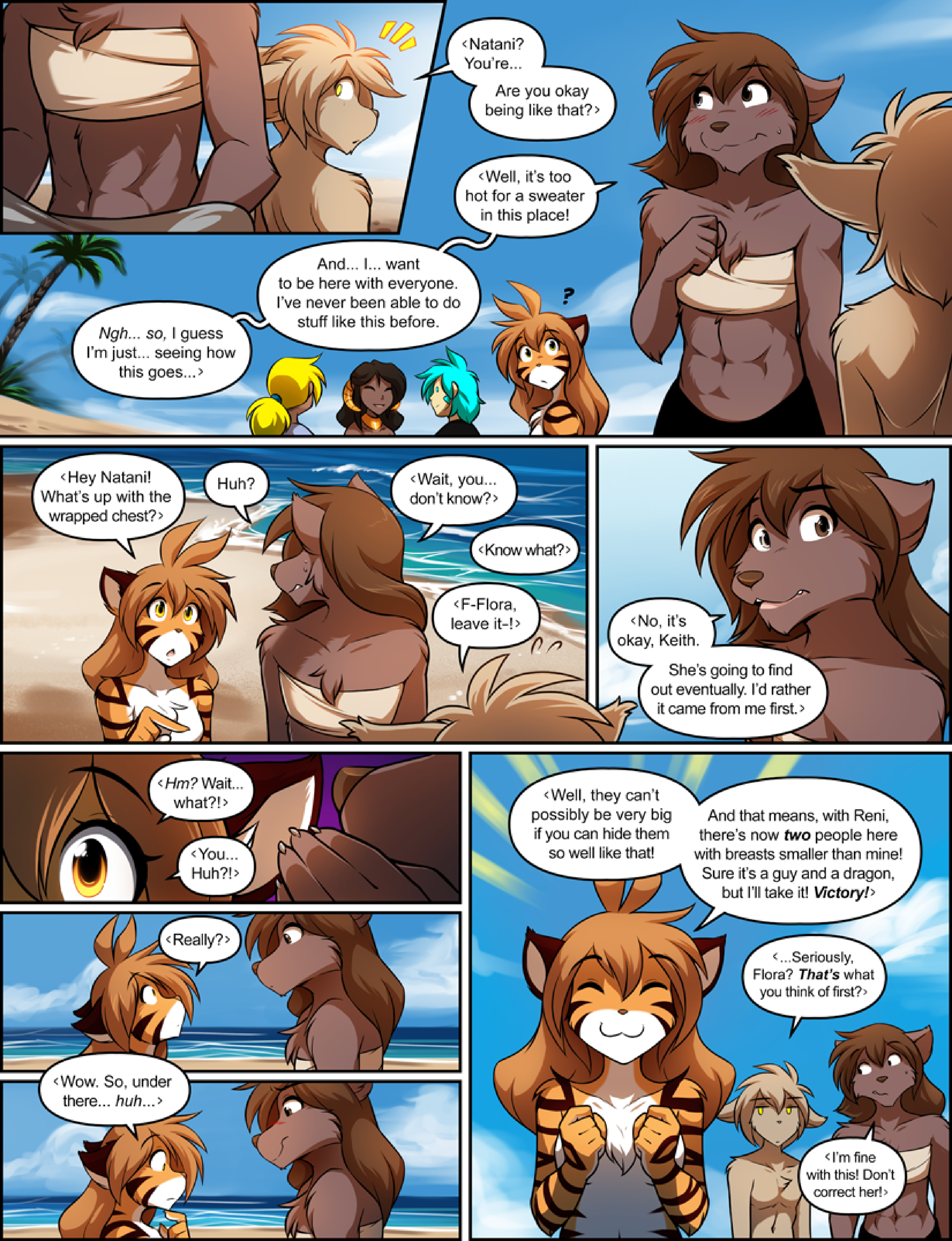
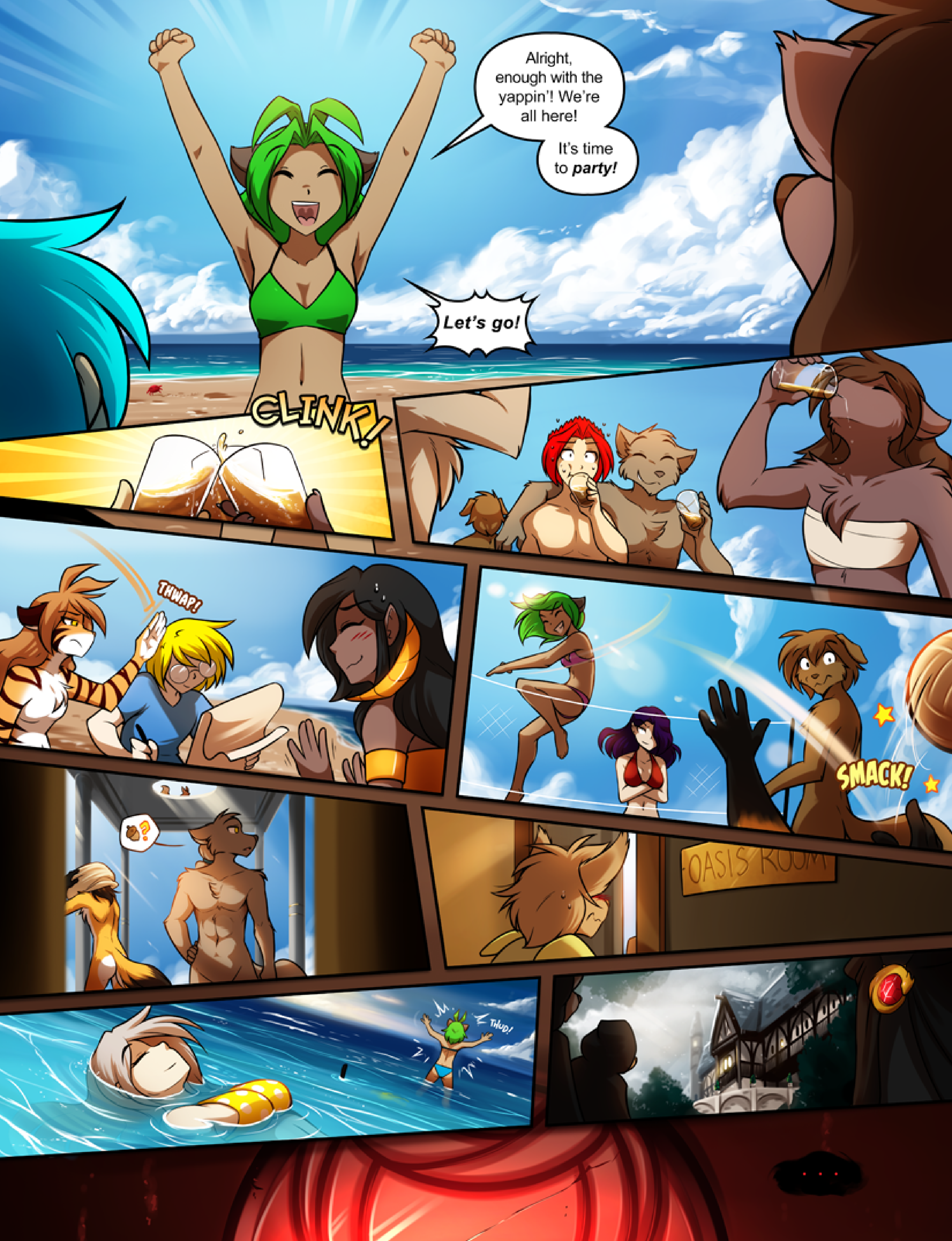
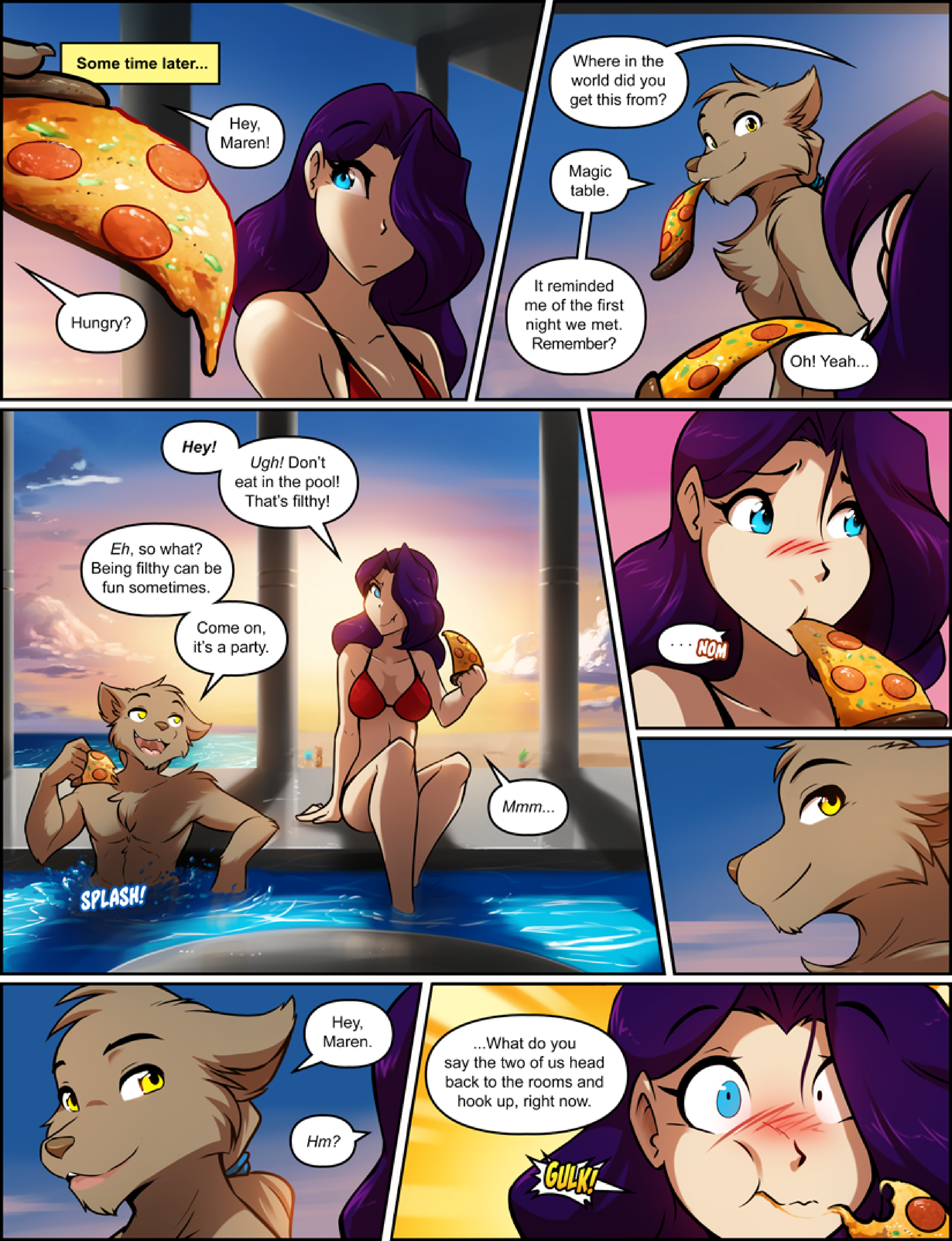

Hey!
<Guess who brought lunch?>
(It's me!)
<Oh, Kat! You don't have to do that. You should be down at the party with the others.>
<I will, later, but I wanted to do this first.>
<Natani and Keith left already?>
<You know... it's funny.
This isn't exactly how I pictured our reunion. I thought things would kind of just... go back to the way they were. The Assassin Brothers, together again!
But seeing them together, it's started dawning on me that... Natani's been building a new life.
And I'm... not really part of it anymore.>
<Yeah, but it's fine. With a mental link, we're never really apart.
And... they've got their own stuff going on now.>
<Don't say that. Things are going to change, it's a part of life...
But you'll always be family.>
<Keith's just... a part of your pack now too!>
<Our pack, huh? Hm...
Never thought I'd have one of those. Never in a million years thought it'd be Natani to start one before me.>

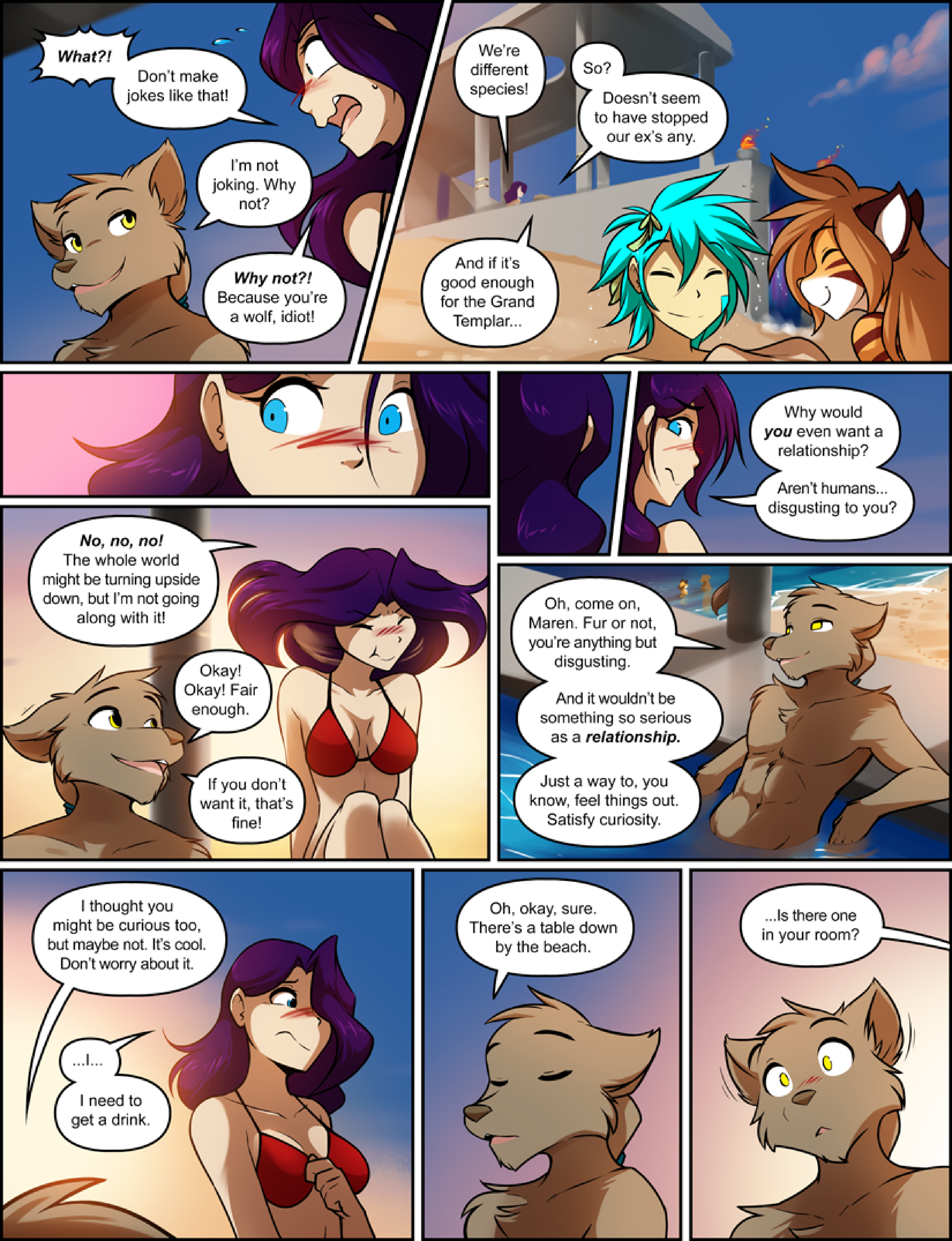

Yo!
We made it! And it looks like everyone else did too.
Sorry for the wait.
Well, you didn't miss anything.
We haven't started mingling yet. Honestly...
I'm not really sure how to interact with any of Trace's new... *friends*.
You were right though, this place really is a zoo.
Wow, no kidding.
It's almost like Trace went out of his way to collect one of every breed of fleab–
Er... f... furred... folk!
But, you know. It's... whatever.
...Did sword-for-brains just... think before talking for once?
I don't even know how to react to that.
Trace dating a Keidran is one thing, but this...
This is truly a sign of the apocalypse.

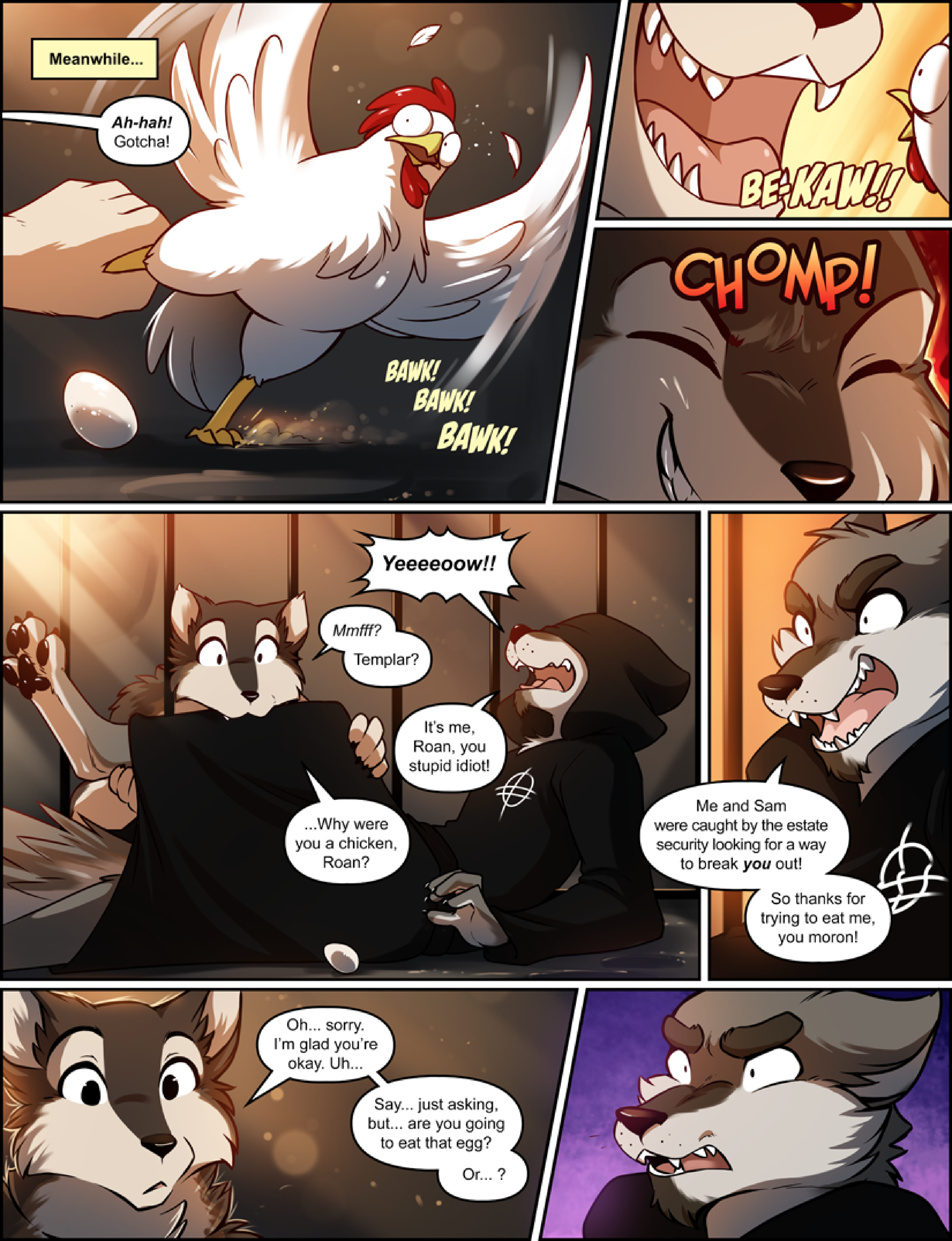

Seems like everyone's here. I'm gunna go find a drink.
Hang on! Reni's not back yet!
Erm... I'm here.
Huh? Wha— ...Reni?
H-hi...
This... is the current version of my human form.
It's still a work in progress!
Woah, that's ***so cool!***
I thought dragons could only turn into animals?
We can be human, though it's hard not to look *off* in some way.
Most just don't out of pride, I think– *eh?!*
You forgot two things.
Karen! Boundaries!
POKE!
POKE!
Oh, yeah...
Well, I did consider other sizes in the past, but I'm not a mammal, so I could never tell if I got them right.
Besides, being on two legs is strange enough without being top-heavy too.

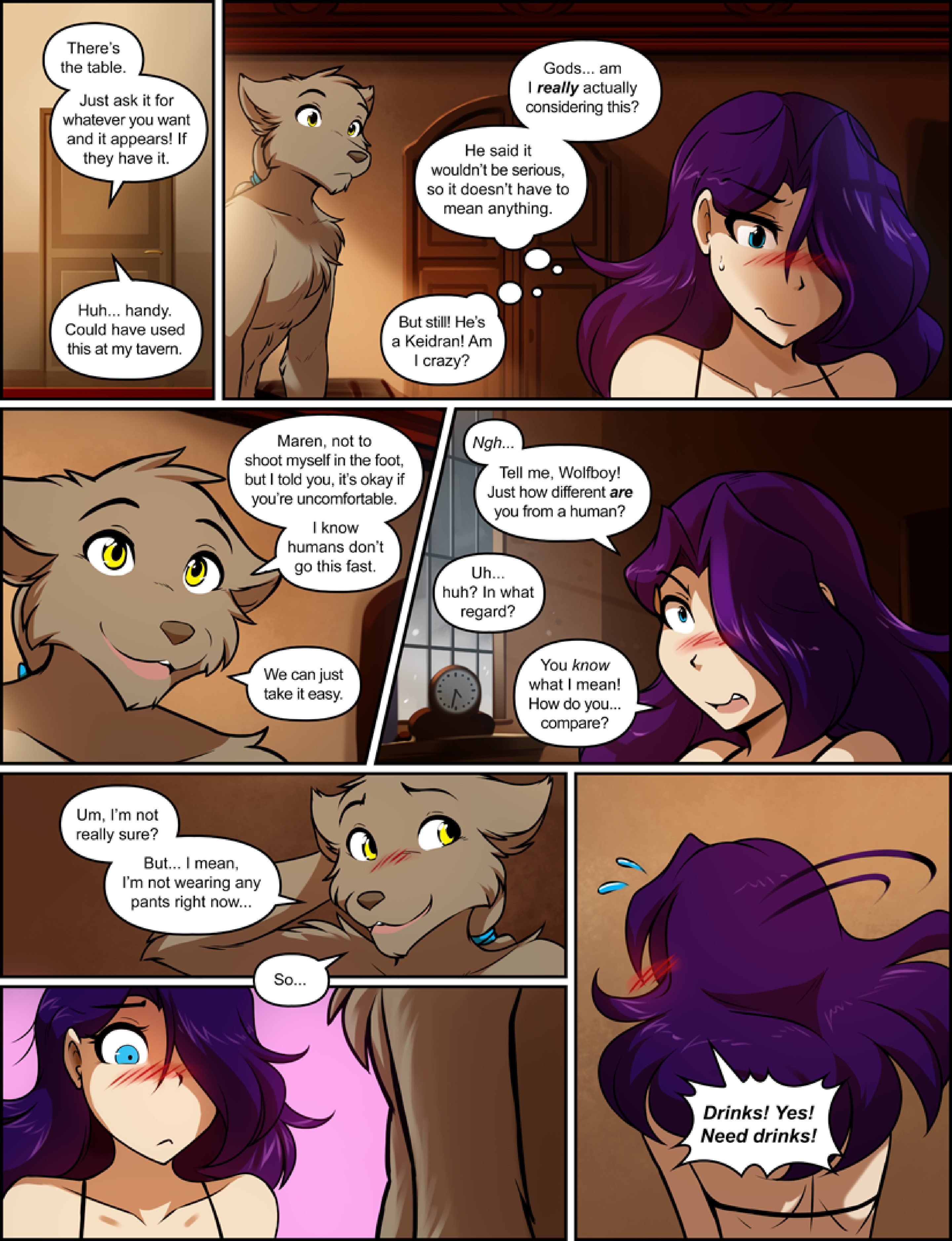

‹Natani? You're...
Are you okay being like that?›
‹Well, it's too hot for a sweater in this place!
And... I... want to be here with everyone. I've never been able to do stuff like this before.
Ngh... so, I guess I'm just... seeing how this goes...›
?
‹Hey Natani! What's up with the wrapped chest?›
Huh?
‹Wait, you... don't know?›
‹Know what?›
‹F-Flora, leave it-!›
‹No, it's okay, Keith.
She's going to find out eventually. I'd rather it came from me first.›
‹*Hm?* Wait... what?!›
‹You... Huh?!›
‹Really?›
‹Wow. So, under there... *huh*...›
‹Well, they can't possibly be very big if you can hide them so well like that!
And that means, with Reni, there's now ***two*** people here with breasts smaller than mine! Sure it's a guy and a dragon, but I'll take it! ***Victory!***›
‹...Seriously, Flora? ***That's*** what you think of first?›
‹I'm fine with this! Don't correct her!›

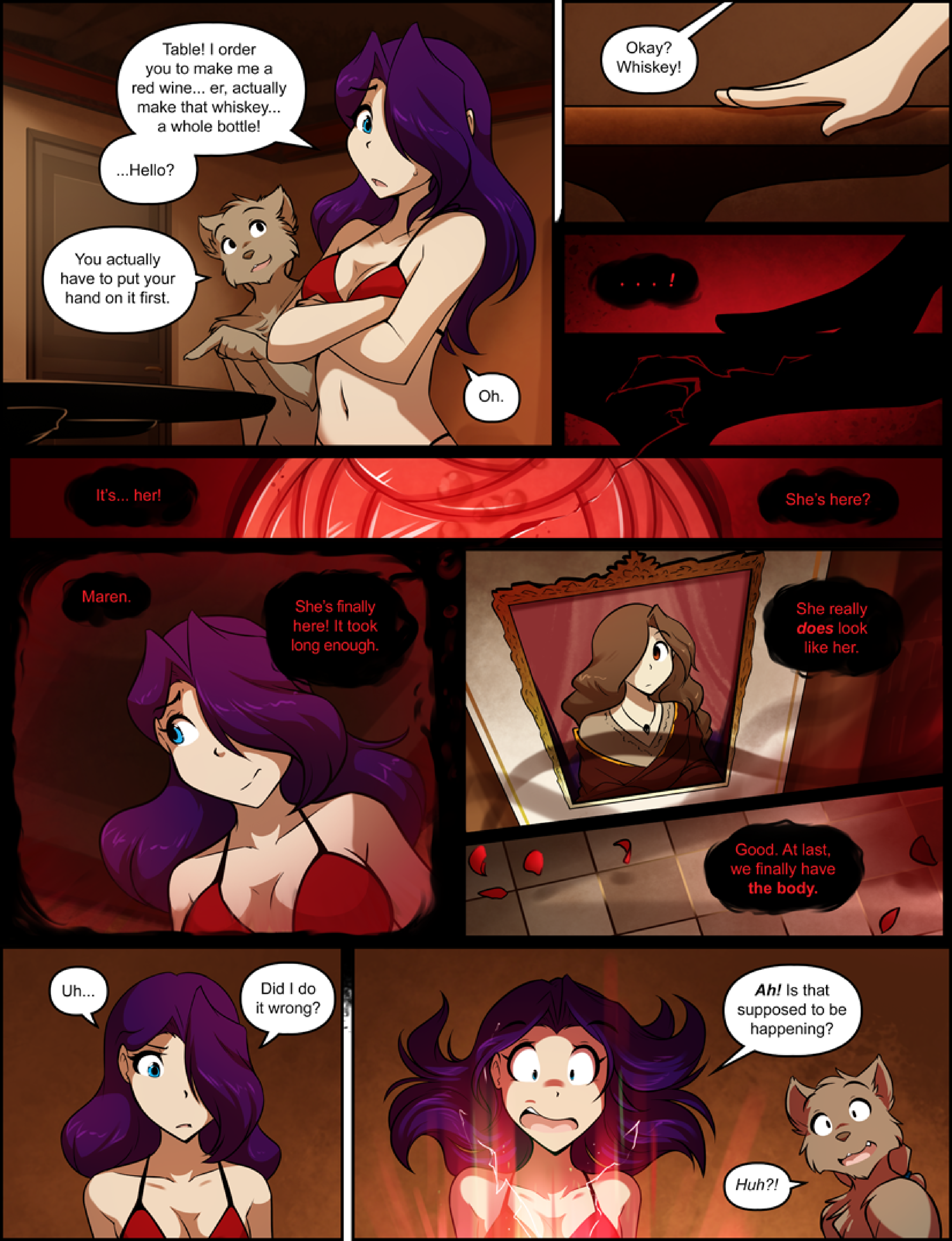

Alright, enough with the yappin'! We're all here!
It's time to *party!*
Let's go!
CLINK!
THWAP!
SMACK!
OASIS ROOM
THUD!
...

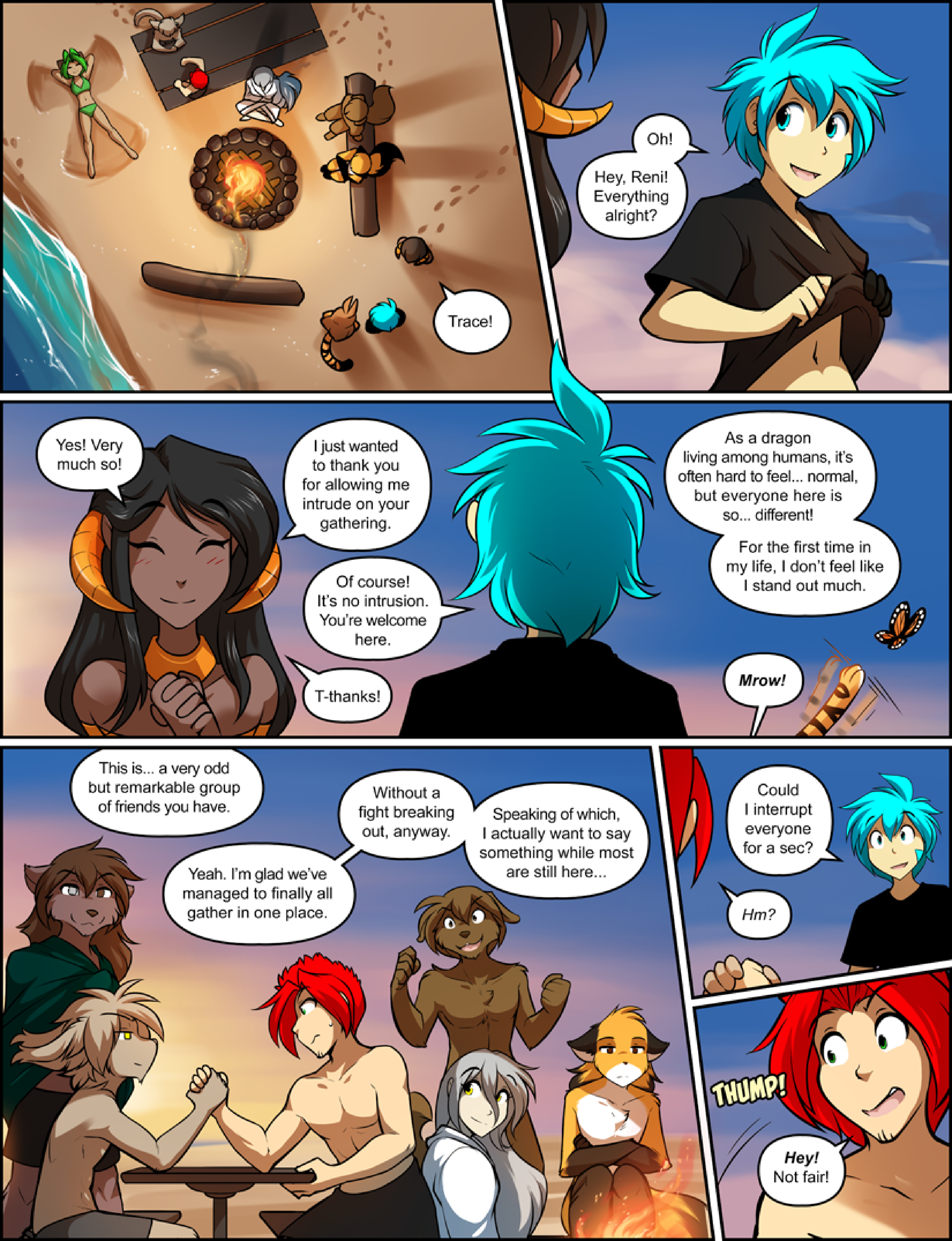

Some time later...
Hey, Maren!
Hungry?
Where in the world did you get this from?
Magic table.
It reminded me of the first night we met. Remember?
Oh! Yeah...
Hey!
Ugh! Don't eat in the pool! That's filthy!
Eh, so what? Being filthy can be fun sometimes.
Come on, it's a party.
Mmm...
SPLASH!
...NOM
Hey, Maren.
Hm?
...What do you say the two of us head back to the rooms and hook up, right now.
GULK!

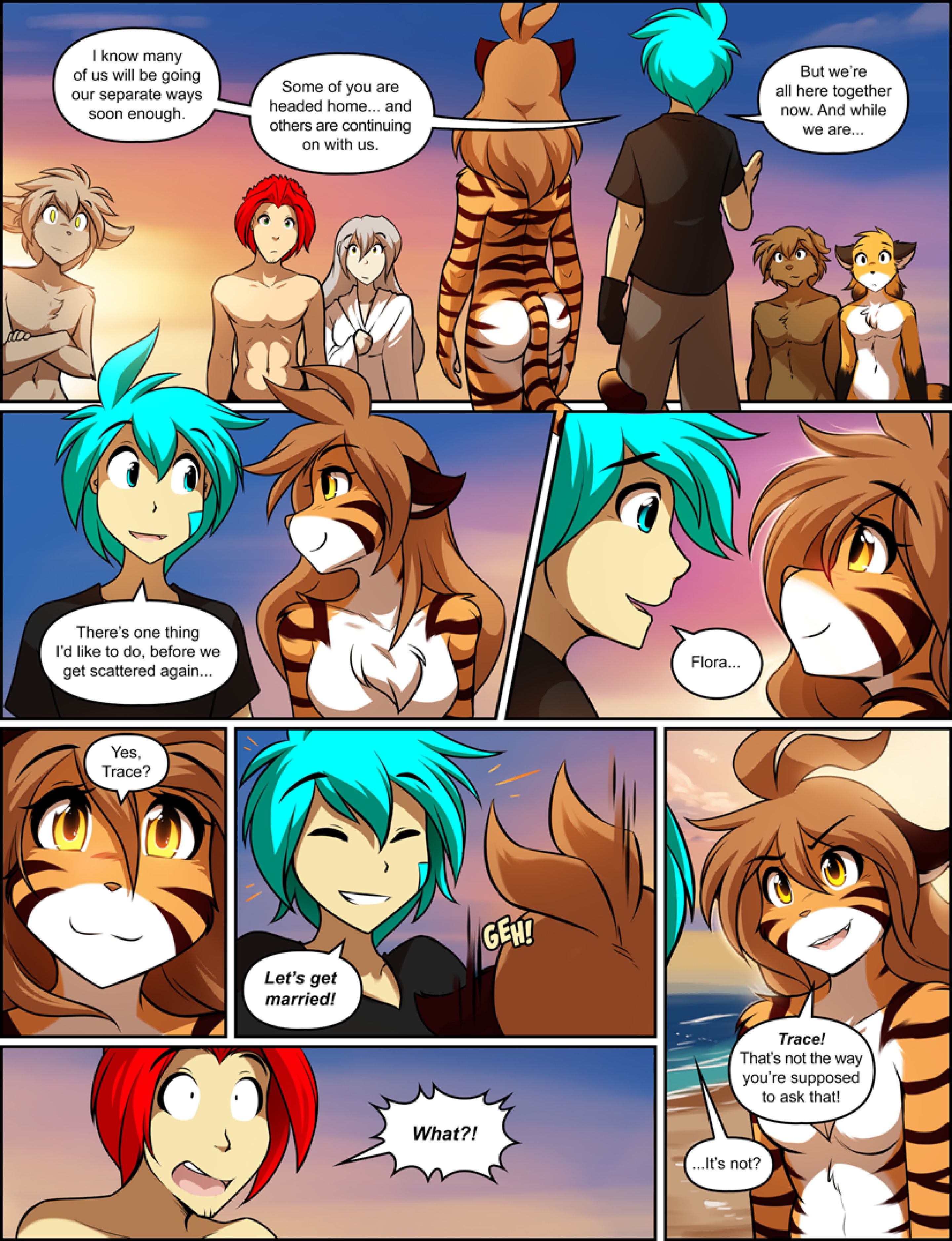

What?!
Don't make jokes like that!
I'm not joking. Why not?
Why not?! Because you're a wolf, idiot!
We're different species!
So?
Doesn't seem to have stopped our ex's any.
And if it's good enough for the Grand Templar...
Why would *you* even want a relationship?
Aren't humans... disgusting to you?
No, no, no! The whole world might be turning upside down, but I'm not going along with it!
Okay! Okay! Fair enough.
If you don't want it, that's fine!
Oh, come on, Maren. Fur or not, you're anything but disgusting.
And it wouldn't be something so serious as a *relationship.*
Just a way to, you know, feel things out. Satisfy curiosity.
I thought you might be curious too, but maybe not. It's cool. Don't worry about it.
...I...
I need to get a drink.
Oh, okay, sure. There's a table down by the beach.
...Is there one in your room?

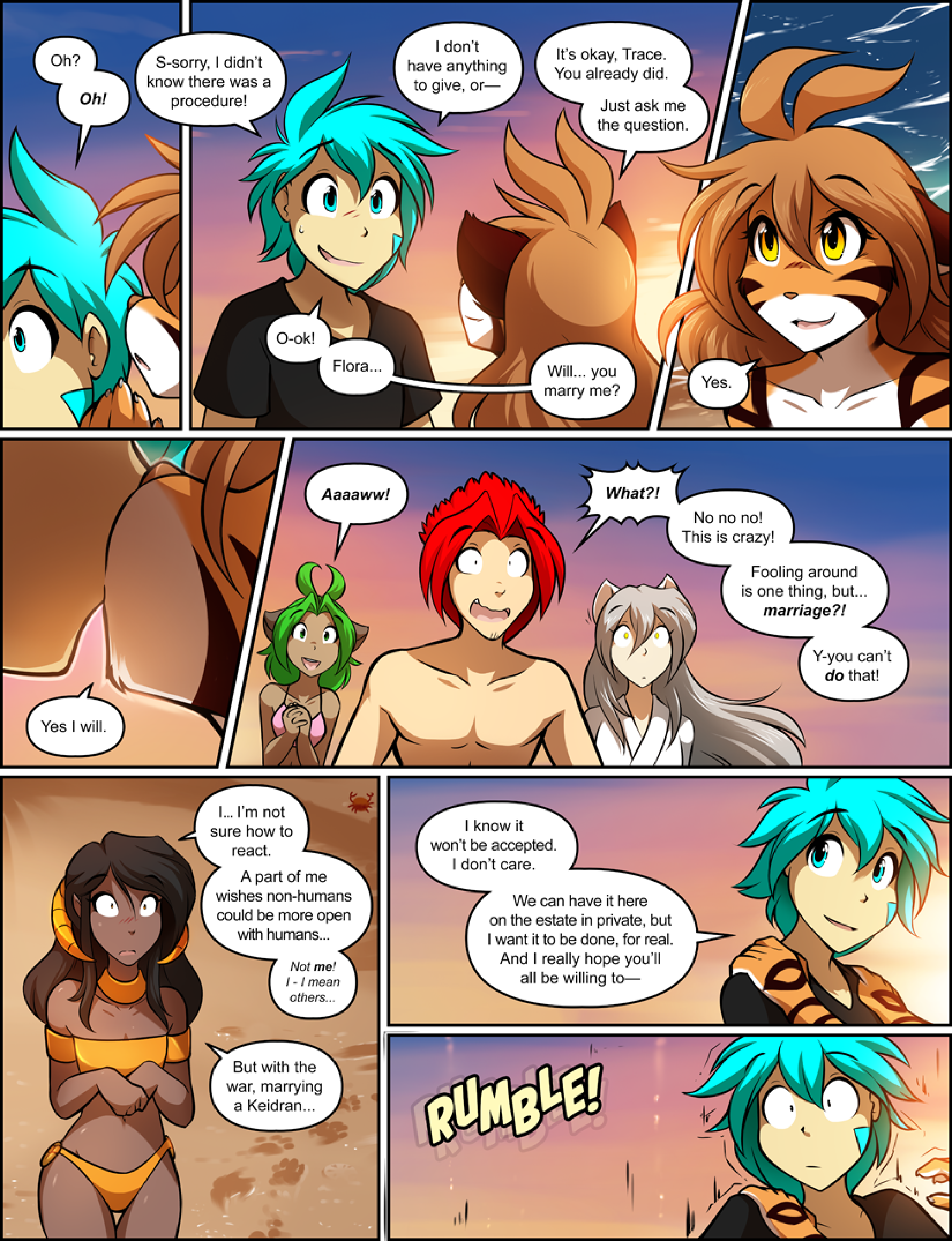

Meanwhile...
Ah-hah! Gotcha!
BAWK! BAWK! BAWK!
BE-KAW!!
CHOMP!
Yeeeeoow!!
Mmfff?
Templar?
It's me, Roan, you stupid idiot!
...Why were you a chicken, Roan?
Me and Sam were caught by the estate security looking for a way to break ***you*** out!
So thanks for trying to eat me, you moron!
Oh... sorry. I'm glad you're okay. Uh...
Say... just asking, but... are you going to eat that egg?
Or... ?

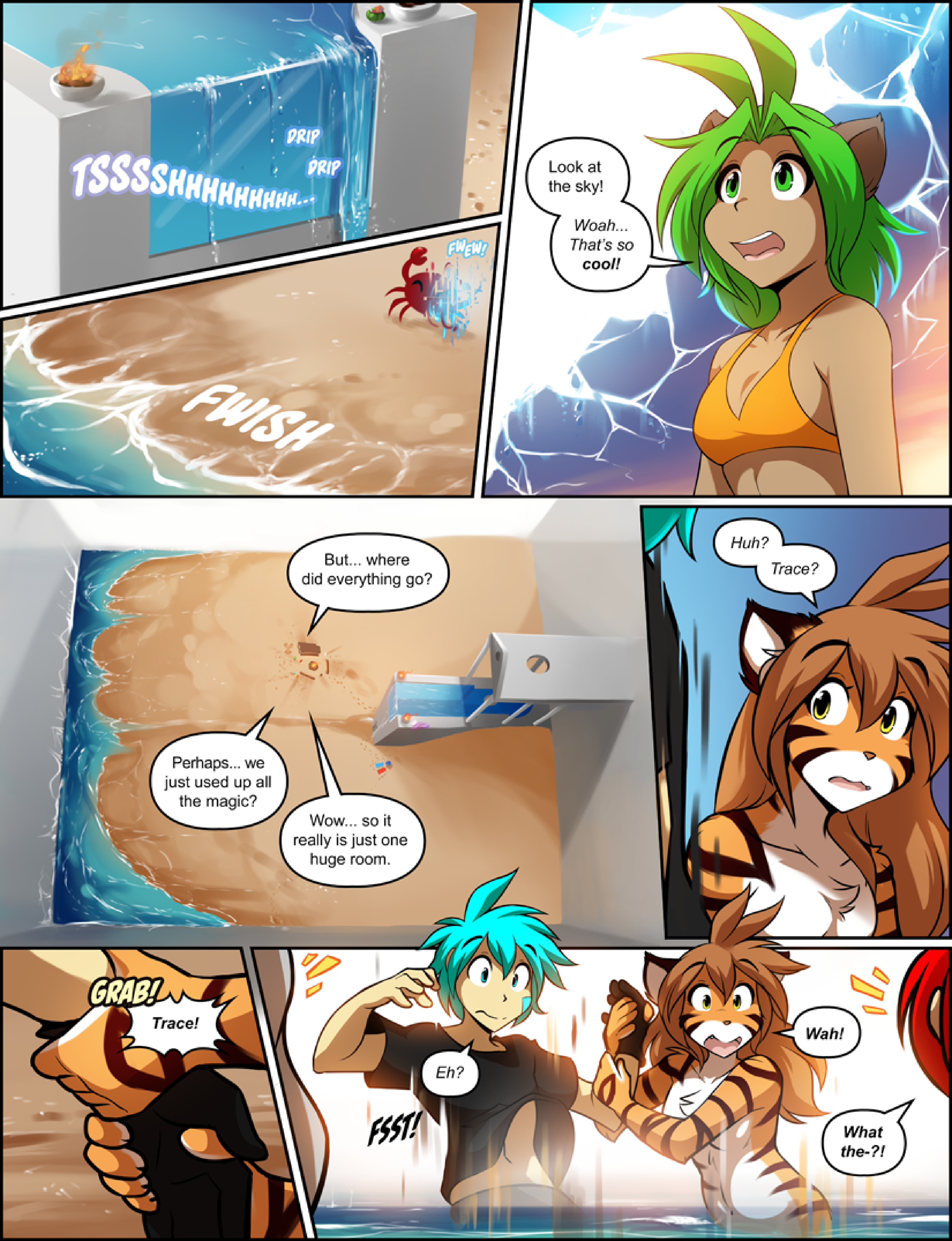

There's the table.
Just ask it for whatever you want and it appears! If they have it.
Huh... handy. Could have used this at my tavern.
Gods... am I ***really*** actually considering this?
He said it wouldn't be serious, so it doesn't have to mean anything.
But still! He's a Keidran! Am I crazy?
Maren, not to shoot myself in the foot, but I told you, it's okay if you're uncomfortable.
I know humans don't go this fast.
We can just take it easy.
Ngh...
Tell me, Wolfboy! Just how different ***are*** you from a human?
Uh... huh? In what regard?
You *know* what I mean! How do you... compare?
Um, I'm not really sure?
But... I mean, I'm not wearing any pants right now...
So...
Drinks! Yes! Need drinks!

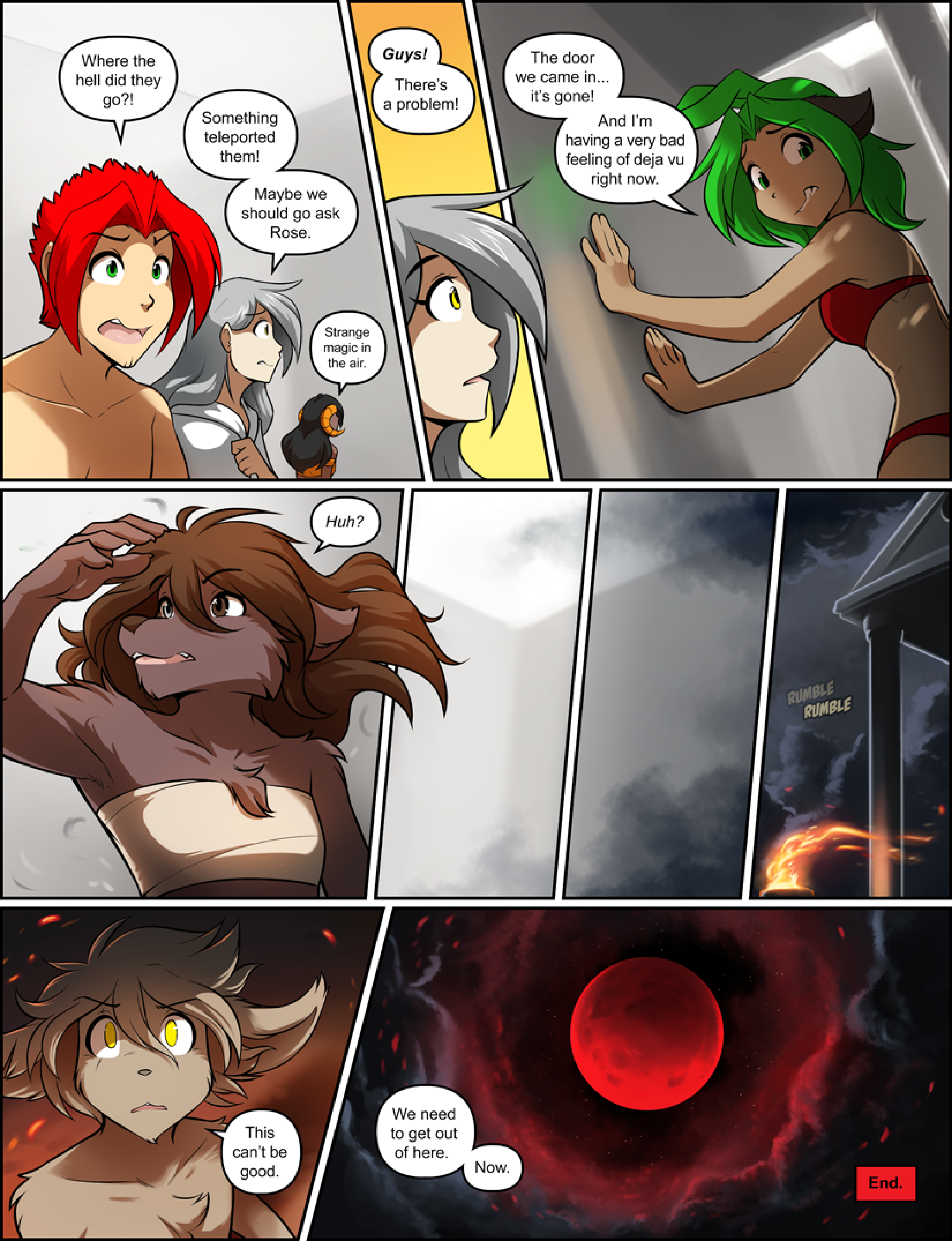

Table! I order you to make me a red wine... er, actually make that whiskey... a whole bottle!
...Hello?
You actually have to put your hand on it first.
Oh.
Okay? Whiskey!
. . . !
It's... her!
She's here?
Maren.
She's finally here! It took long enough.
She really *does* look like her.
Good. At last, we finally have **the body.**
Uh...
Did I do it wrong?
Ah! Is that supposed to be happening?
Huh?!

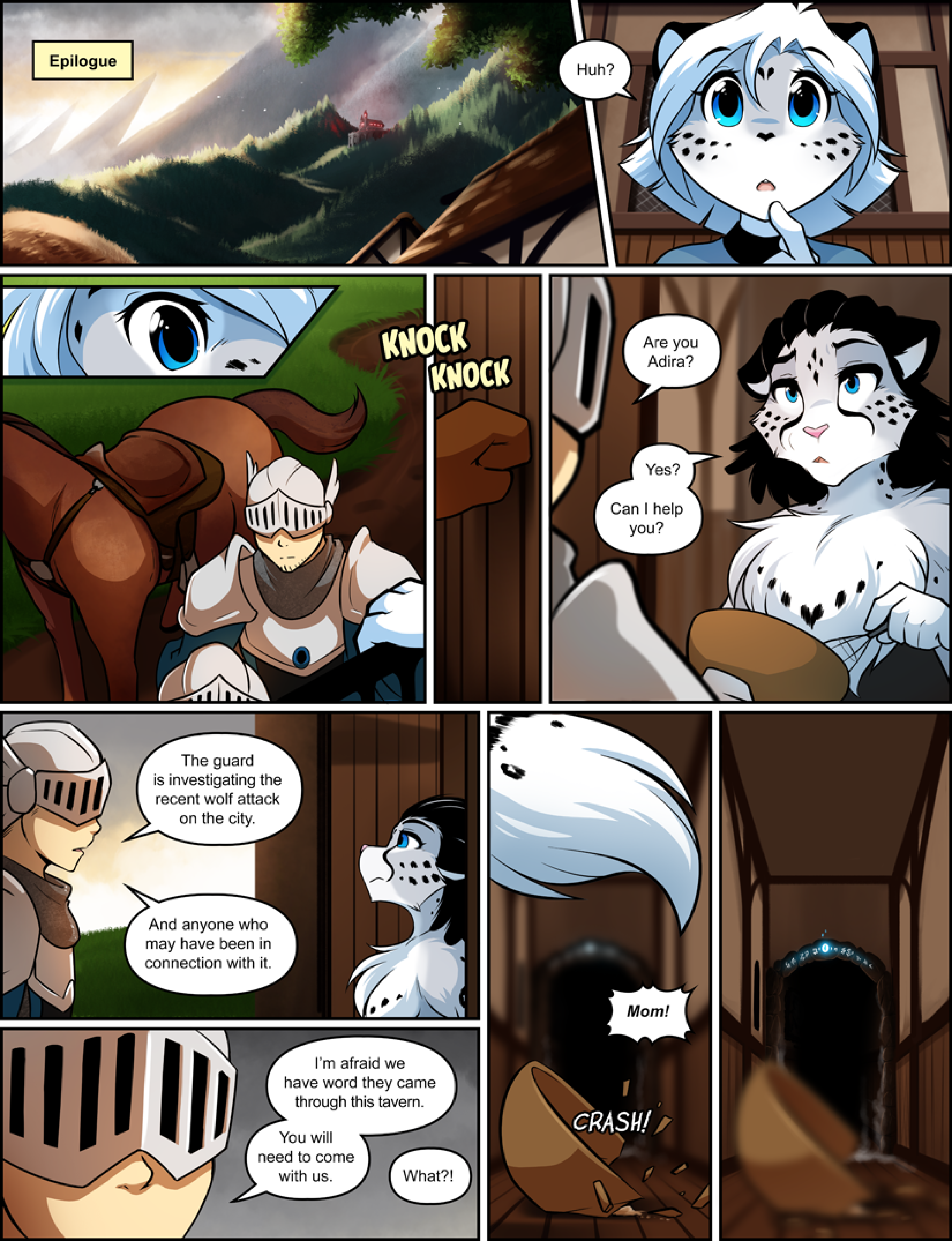

Trace!
Oh!
Hey, Reni! Everything alright?
Yes! Very much so!
I just wanted to thank you for allowing me intrude on your gathering.
Of course! It's no intrusion. You're welcome here.
T-thanks!
As a dragon living among humans, it's often hard to feel... normal, but everyone here is so... different!
For the first time in my life, I don't feel like I stand out much.
Mrow!
This is... a very odd but remarkable group of friends you have.
Yeah. I'm glad we've managed to finally all gather in one place.
Without a fight breaking out, anyway.
Speaking of which, I actually want to say something while most are still here...
Could I interrupt everyone for a sec?
Hm?
THUMP!
Hey! Not fair!


I know many of us will be going our separate ways soon enough.
Some of you are headed home... and others are continuing on with us.
But we're all here together now. And while we are...
There's one thing I'd like to do, before we get scattered again...
Flora...
Yes, Trace?
Let's get married!
GEH!
Trace! That's not the way you're supposed to ask that!
...It's not?
What?!


Oh?
Oh!
S-sorry, I didn't know there was a procedure!
I don't have anything to give, or—
It's okay, Trace. You already did.
Just ask me the question.
O-ok!
Flora...
Will... you marry me?
Yes.
Yes I will.
Aaaaww!
What?!
No no no! This is crazy!
Fooling around is one thing, but... ***marriage?!***
Y-you can't ***do*** that!
I... I'm not sure how to react.
A part of me wishes non-humans could be more open with humans...
*Not **me**! I - I mean others...*
But with the war, marrying a Keidran...
I know it won't be accepted. I don't care.
We can have it here on the estate in private, but I want it to be done, for real. And I really hope you'll all be willing to—
RUMBLE!


DRIP
DRIP
TSSSSHHHHHHHHhh...
FWEW!
FWISH
Look at the sky!
Woah... That's so **cool!**
But... where did everything go?
Perhaps... we just used up all the magic?
Wow... so it really is just one huge room.
Huh?
Trace?
GRAB!
Trace!
Eh?
Wah!
FSST!
What the-?!

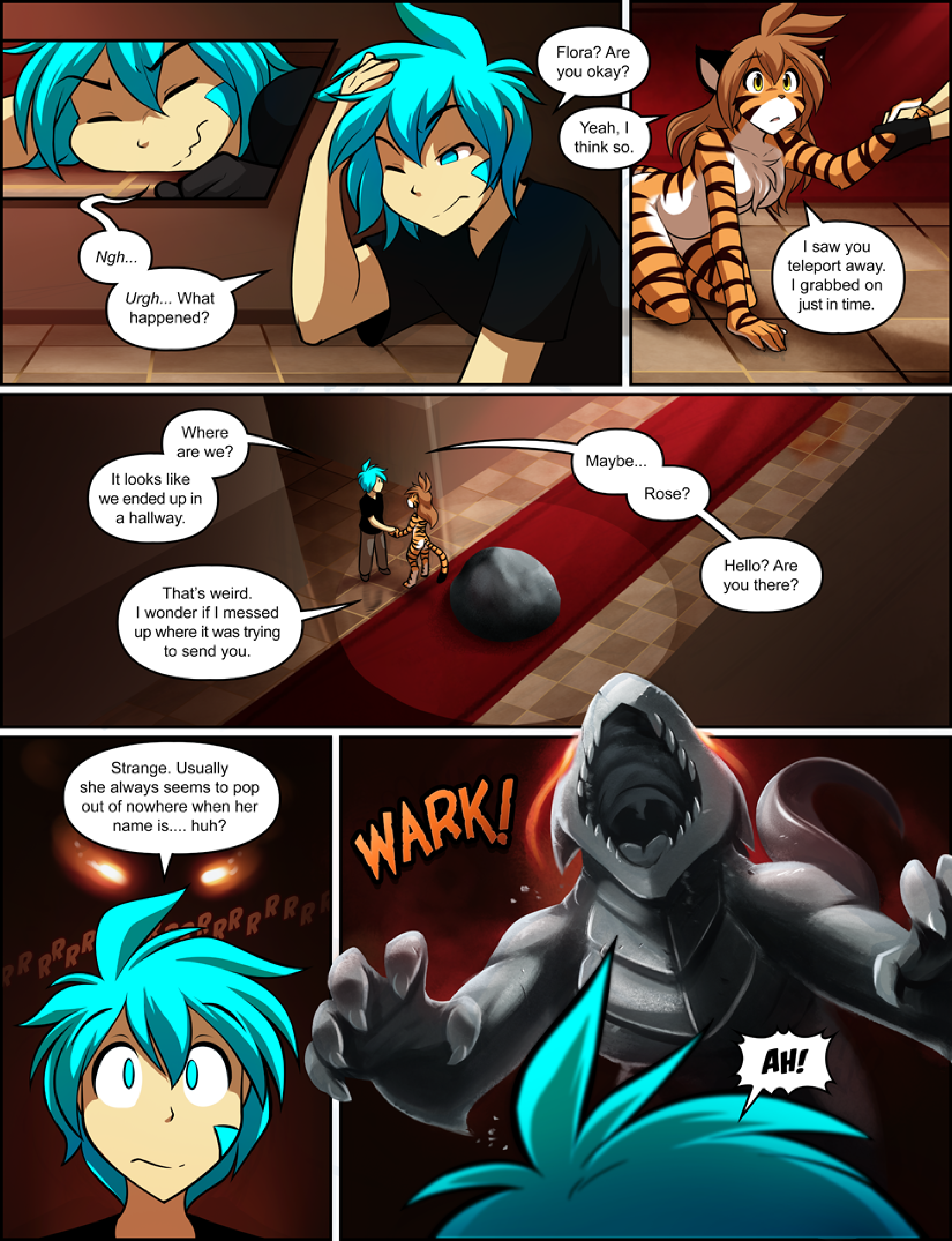

Where the hell did they go?!
Something teleported them!
Maybe we should go ask Rose.
Strange magic in the air.
Guys!
There's a problem!
The door we came in... it's gone!
And I'm having a very bad feeling of deja vu right now.
Huh?
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
This can't be good.
We need to get out of here.
Now.
End.

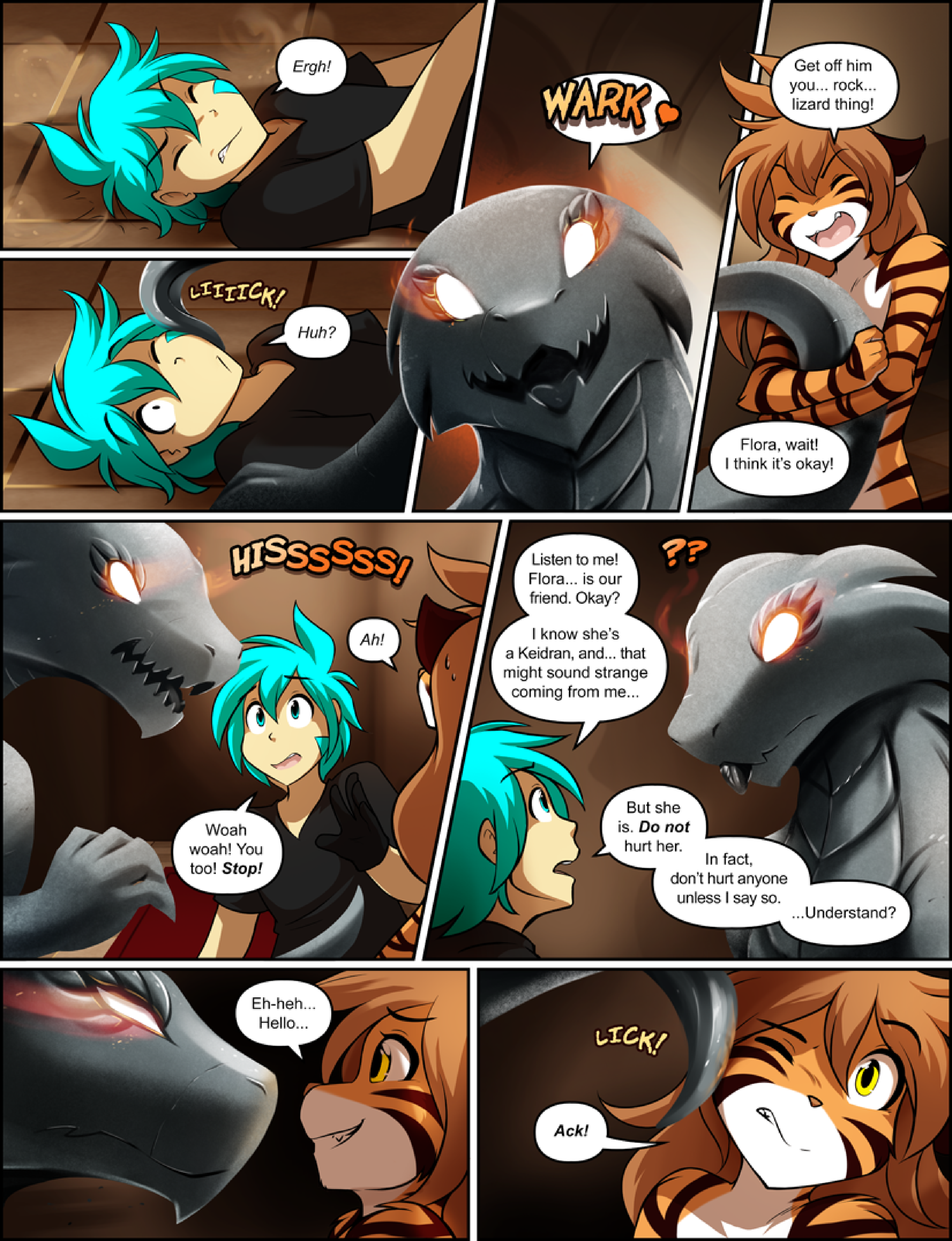

Epilogue
Huh?
KNOCK
KNOCK
Are you Adira?
Yes?
Can I help you?
The guard is investigating the recent wolf attack on the city.
And anyone who may have been in connection with it.
I'm afraid we have word they came through this tavern.
You will need to come with us.
What?!
Mom!
CRASH!

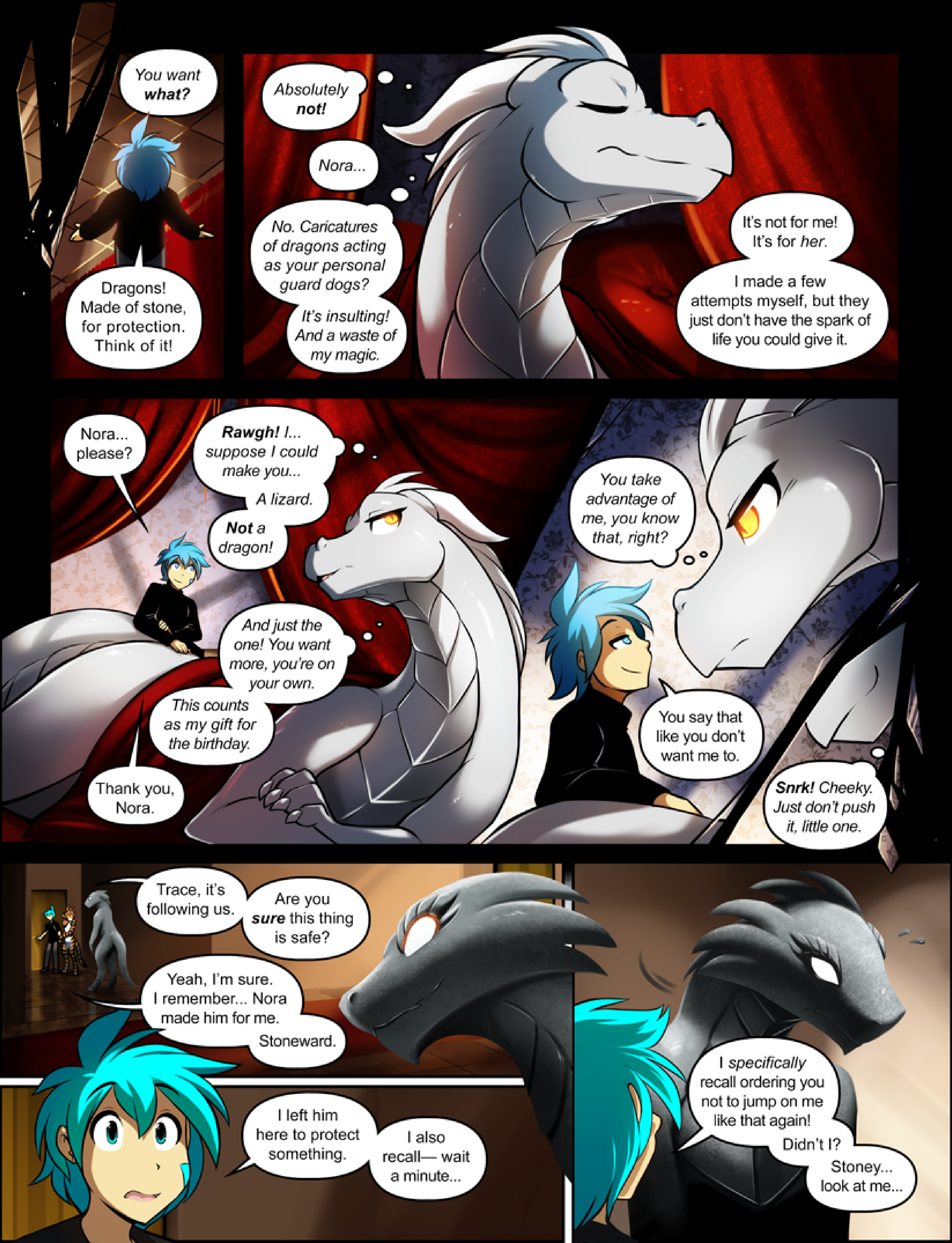
TWOKINDS

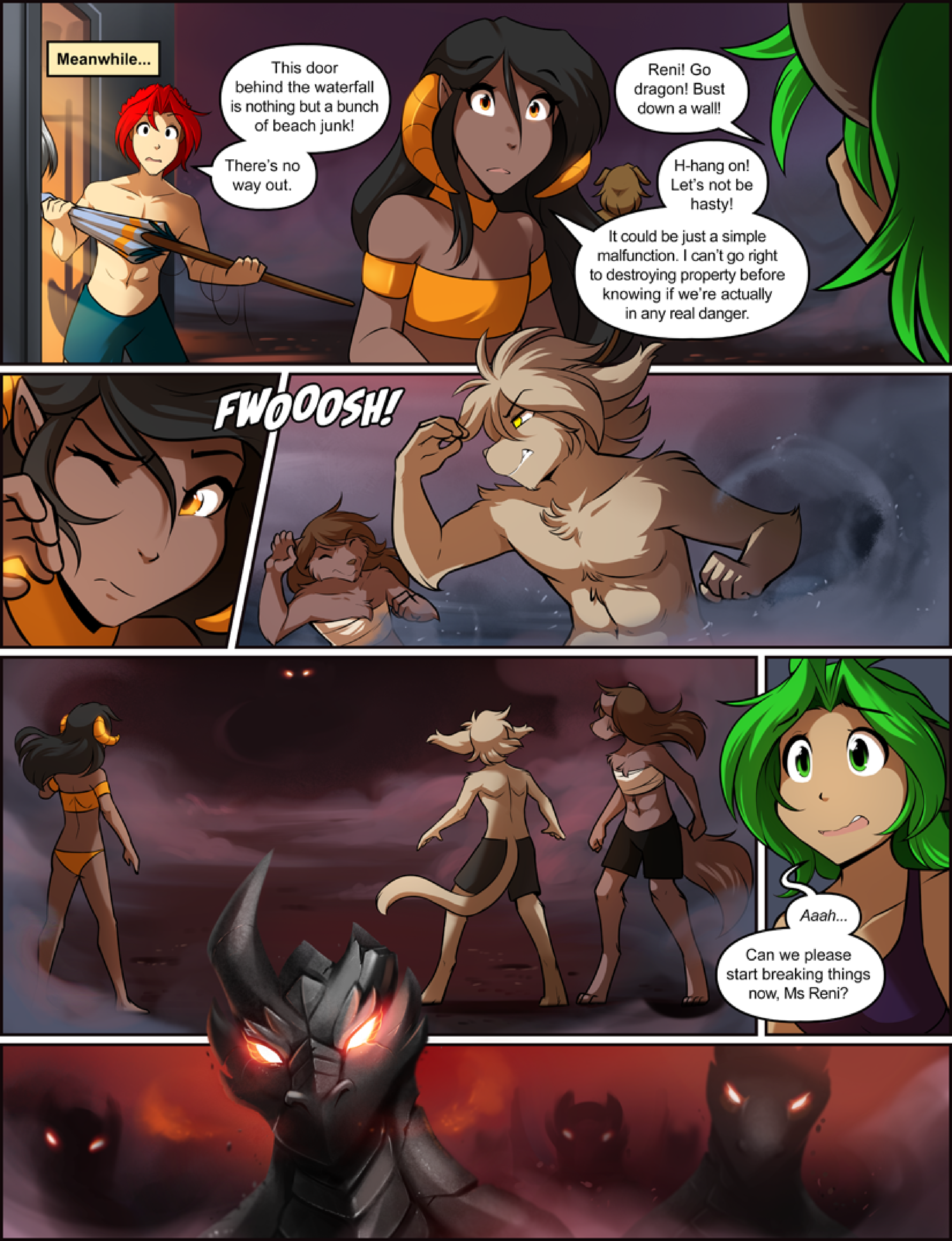
Chapter 21

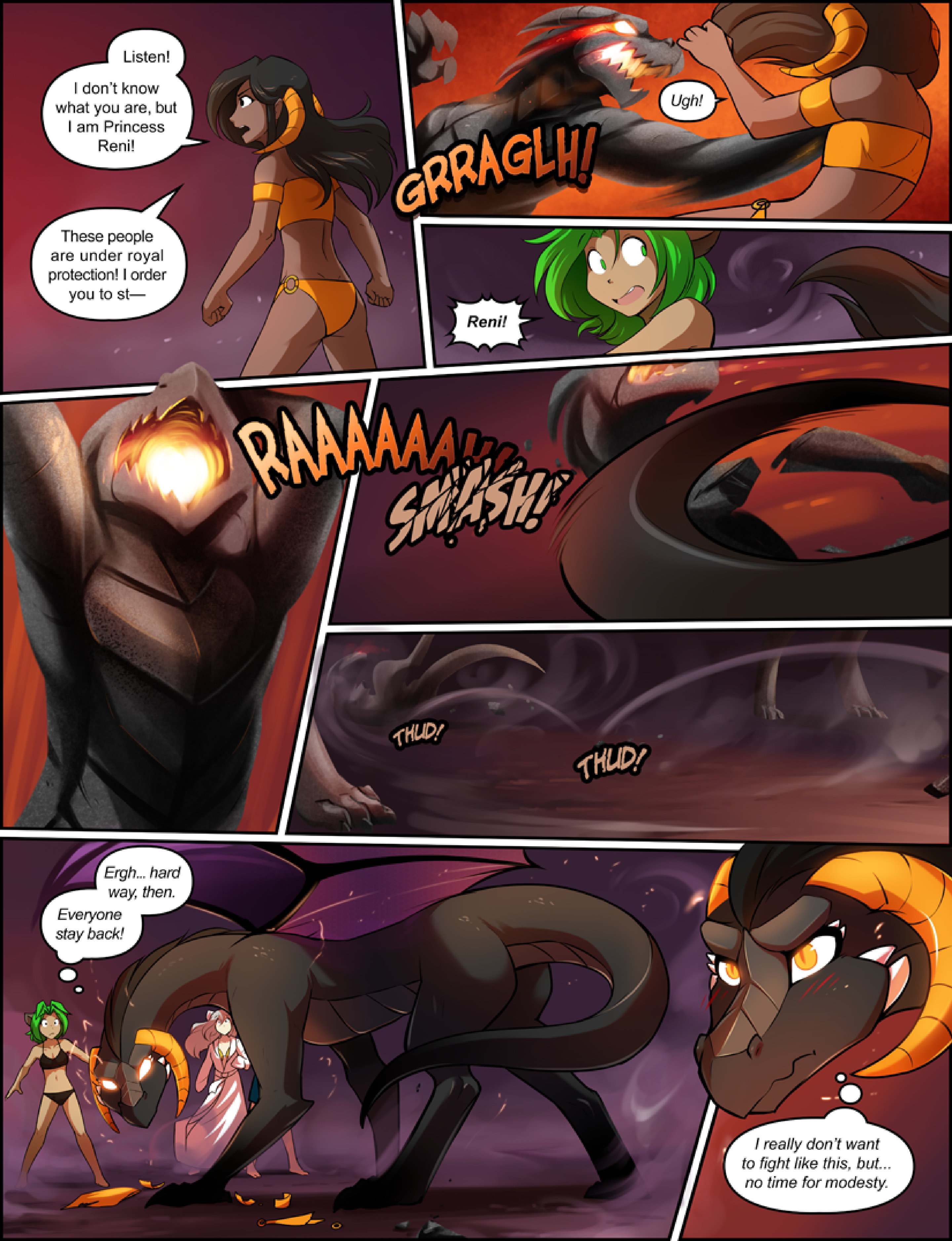
SACRIFICES OF THE PAST

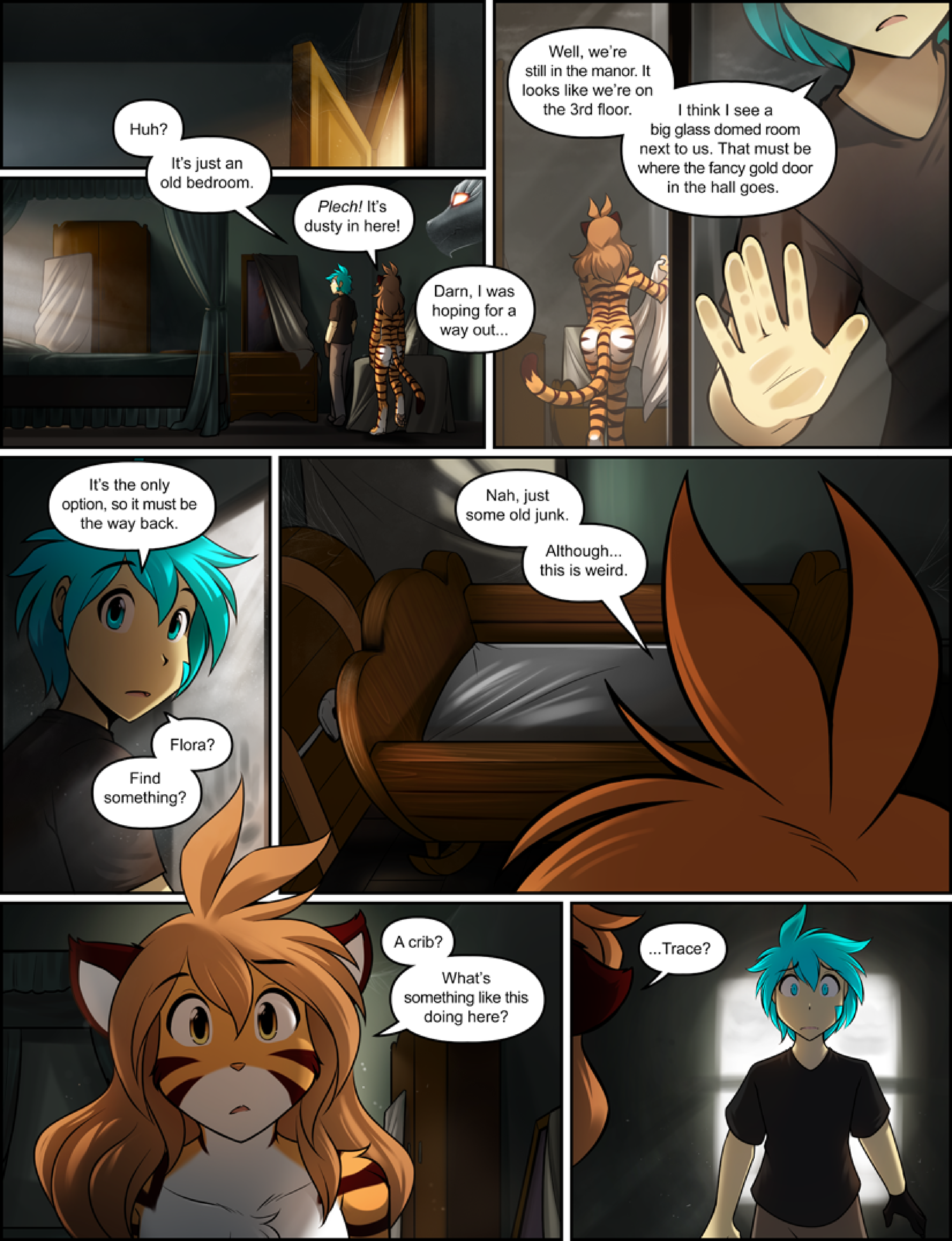

Ngh...
Urgh... What happened?
Flora? Are you okay?
Yeah, I think so.
I saw you teleport away. I grabbed on just in time.
Where are we?
It looks like we ended up in a hallway.
Maybe...
Rose?
Hello? Are you there?
That's weird. I wonder if I messed up where it was trying to send you.
Strange. Usually she always seems to pop out of nowhere when her name is.... huh?
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
WARK!
AH!

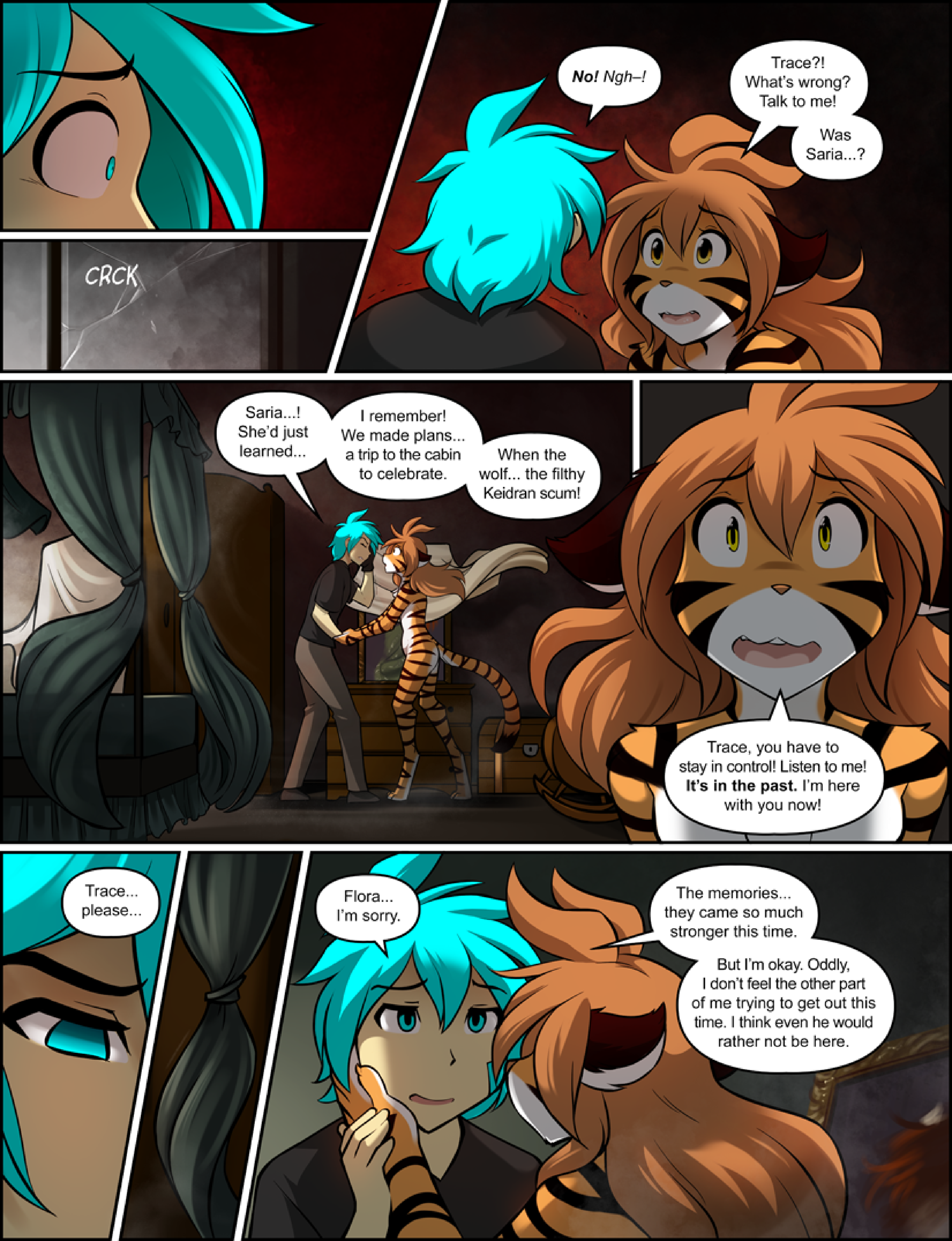

Ergh!
WARK
Get off him you... rock... lizard thing!
LIIIICK!
Huh?
Flora, wait! I think it's okay!
HISSSSSSS!
Ah!
Woah woah! You too! *Stop!*
??
Listen to me! Flora... is our friend. Okay?
I know she's a Keidran, and... that might sound strange coming from me...
But she is. ***Do not*** hurt her.
In fact, don't hurt anyone unless I say so.
...Understand?
Eh-heh... Hello...
LICK!
Ack!

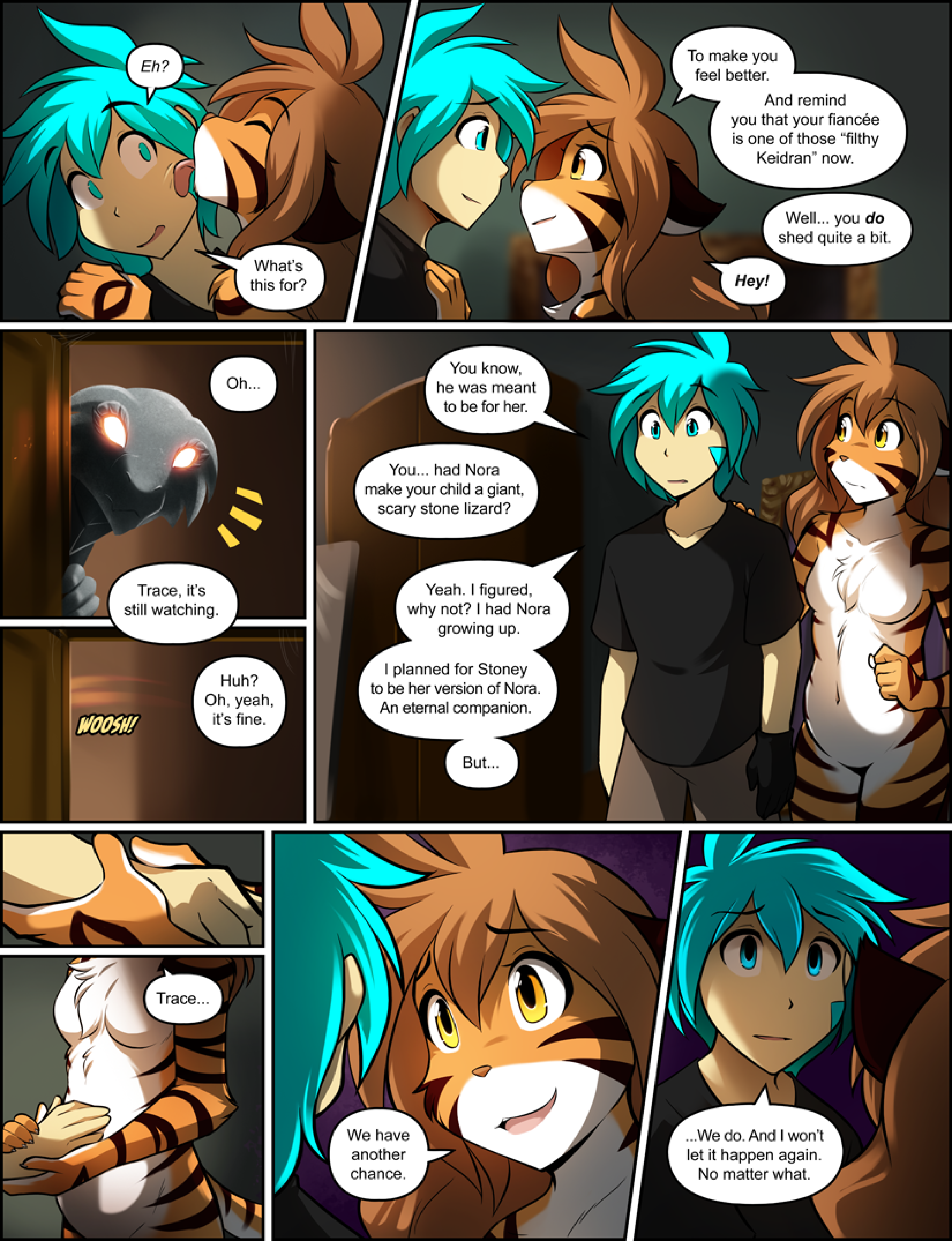

You want **what?**
Dragons! Made of stone, for protection. Think of it!
*Absolutely **not!***
Nora...
No. Caricatures of dragons acting as your personal guard dogs?
It's insulting! And a waste of my magic.
It's not for me! It's for *her*.
I made a few attempts myself, but they just don't have the spark of life you could give it.
Nora... please?
***Rawgh!** I... suppose I could make you...*
A lizard.
***Not** a dragon!*
And just the one! You want more, you're on your own.
This counts as my gift for the birthday.
Thank you, Nora.
You take advantage of me, you know that, right?
You say that like you don't want me to.
***Snrk!** Cheeky. Just don't push it, little one.*
Trace, it's following us.
Are you ***sure*** this thing is safe?
Yeah, I'm sure. I remember... Nora made him for me.
Stoneward.
I left him here to protect something.
I also recall— wait a minute...
I *specifically* recall ordering you not to jump on me like that again!
Didn't I?
Stoney... look at me...

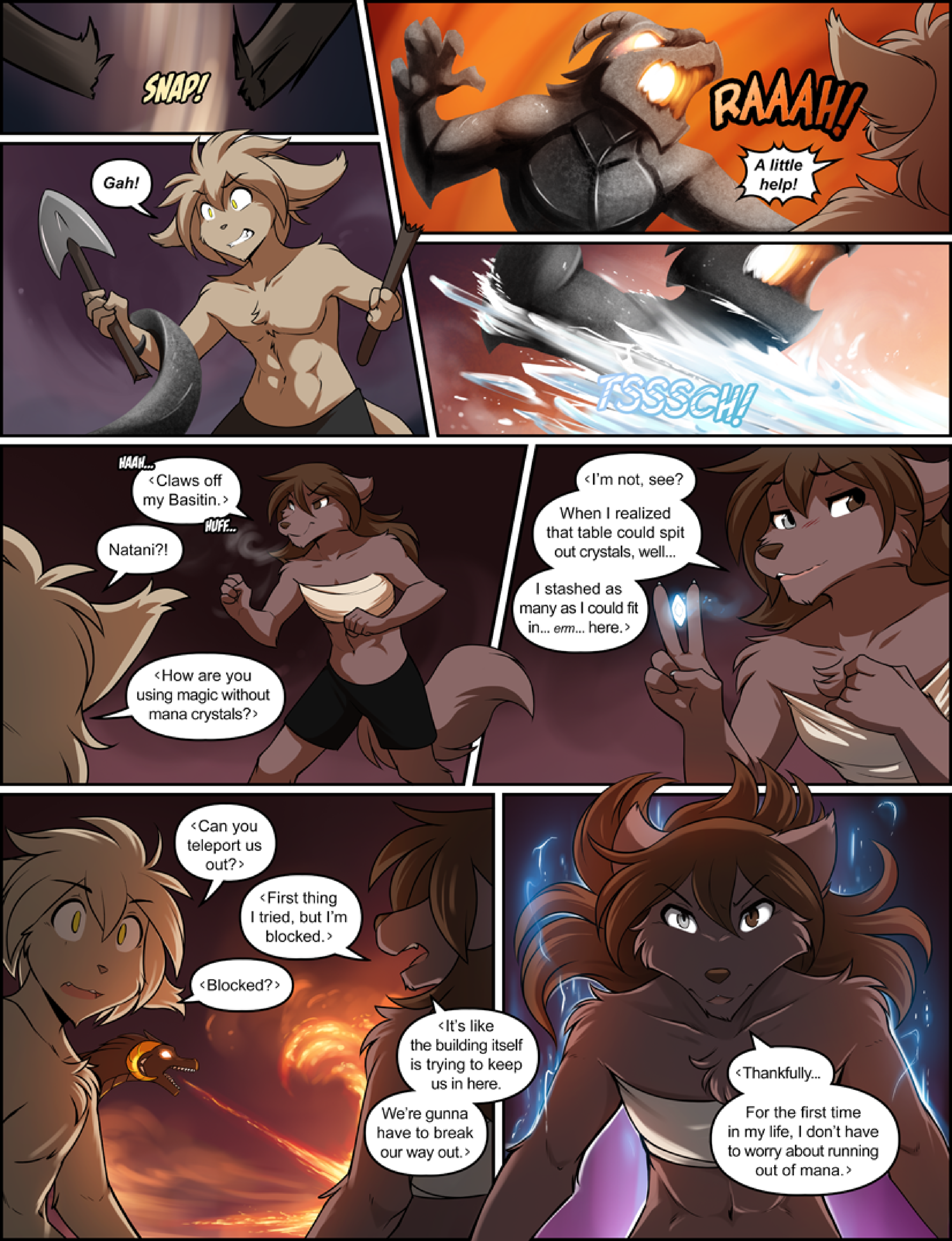

Meanwhile...
This door behind the waterfall is nothing but a bunch of beach junk!
There's no way out.
Reni! Go dragon! Bust down a wall!
H-hang on! Let's not be hasty!
It could be just a simple malfunction. I can't go right to destroying property before knowing if we're actually in any real danger.
FWOOOSH!
Aaah...
Can we please start breaking things now, Ms Reni?

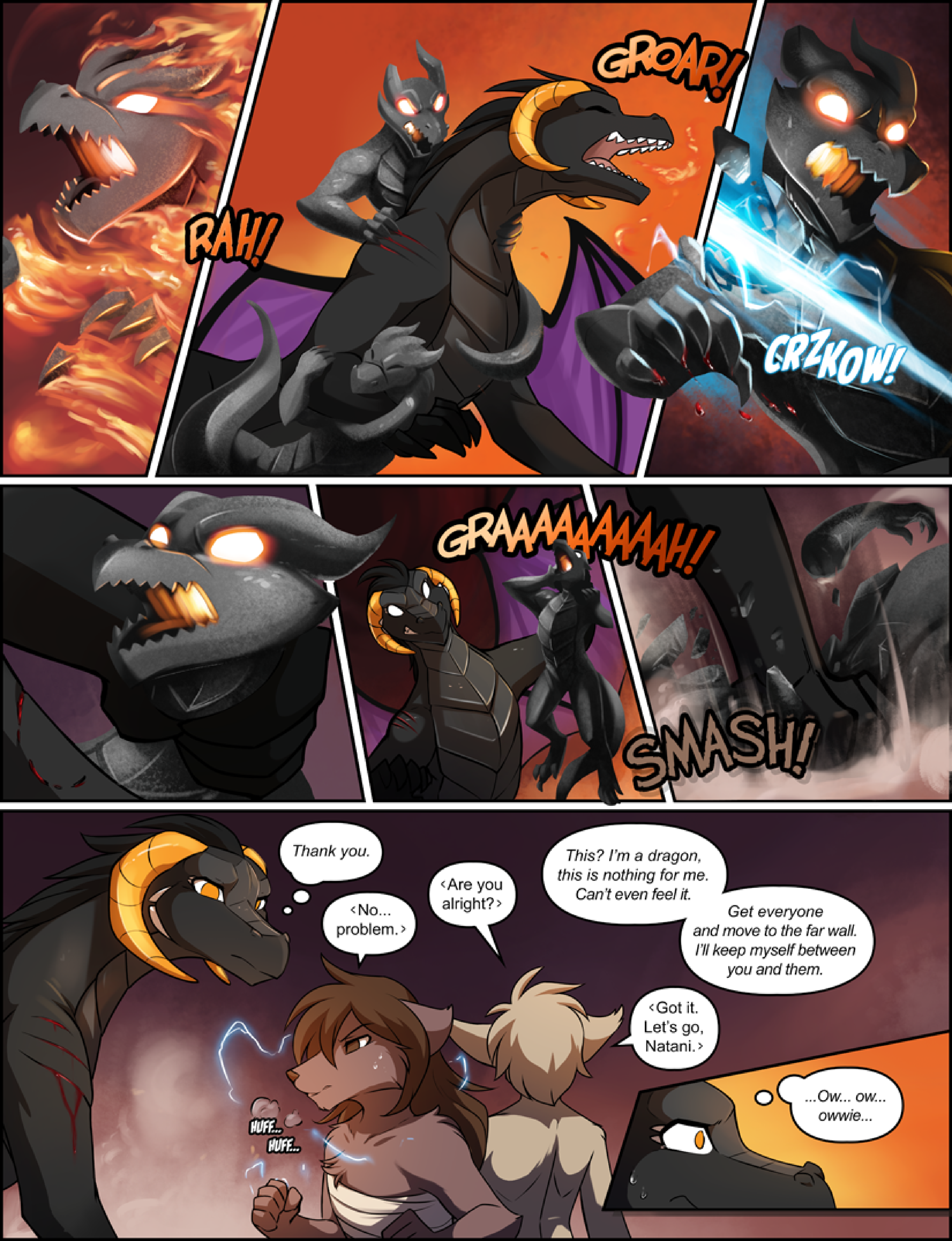

Listen!
I don't know what you are, but I am Princess Reni!
These people are under royal protection! I order you to st—
Ugh!
GRRAGLH!
Reni!
RAAAAAA!!!
SMASH!
THUD!
THUD!
Ergh... hard way, then.
Everyone stay back!
I really don't want to fight like this, but... no time for modesty.

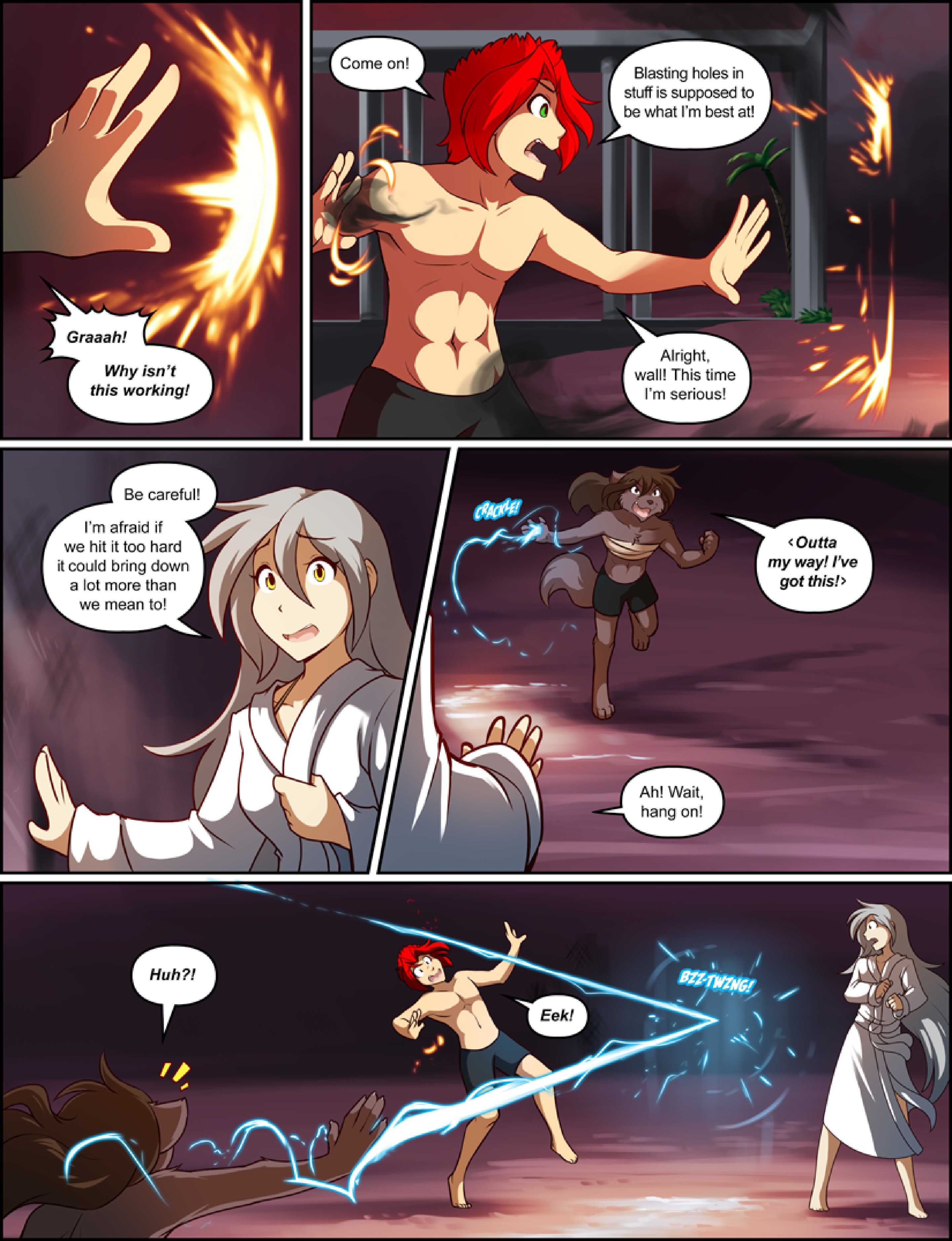

Huh?
It's just an old bedroom.
Plech! It's dusty in here!
Darn, I was hoping for a way out...
Well, we're still in the manor. It looks like we're on the 3rd floor.
I think I see a big glass domed room next to us. That must be where the fancy gold door in the hall goes.
It's the only option, so it must be the way back.
Flora?
Find something?
Nah, just some old junk.
Although... this is weird.
A crib?
What's something like this doing here?
...Trace?

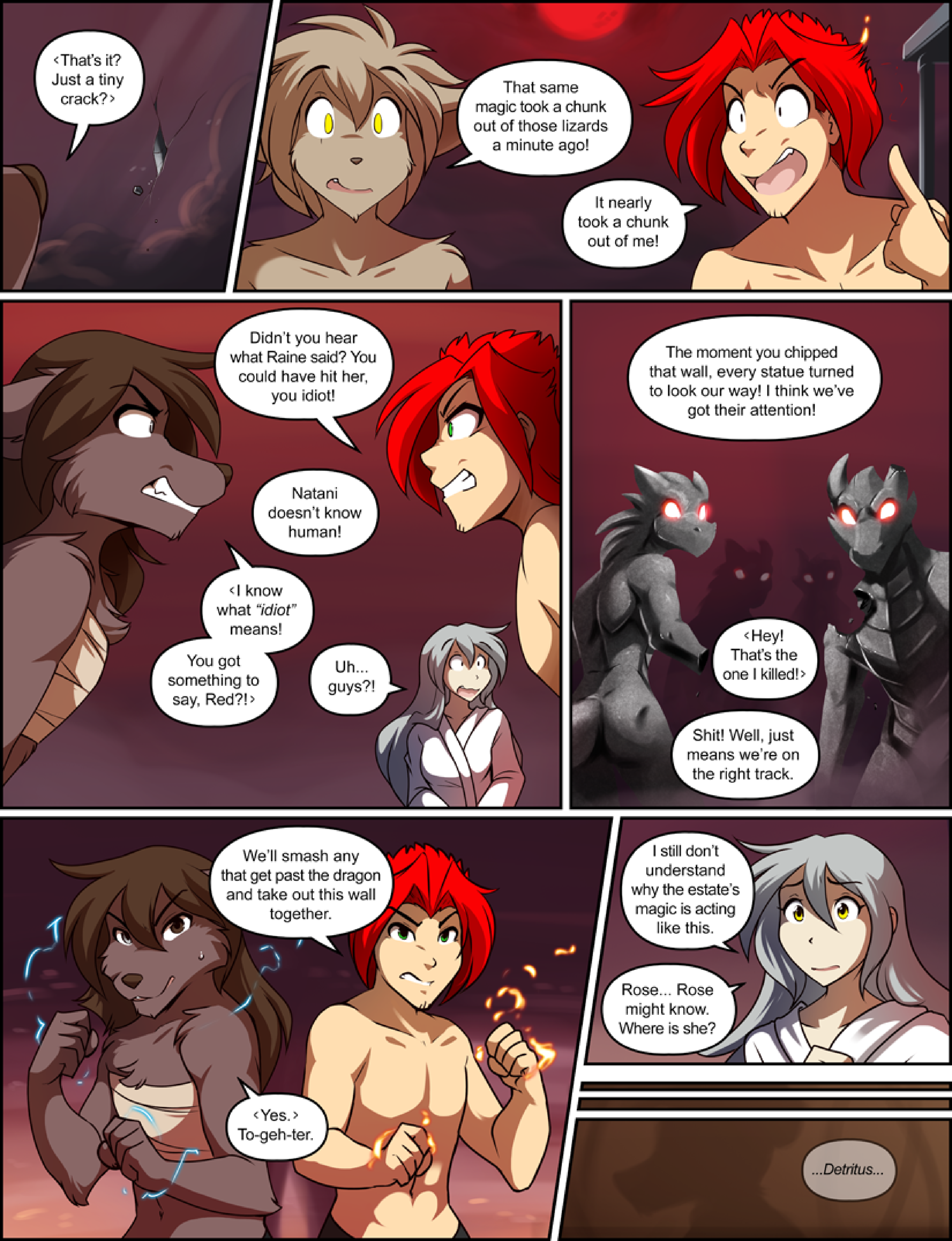

CRCK
No! Ngh–!
Trace?! What's wrong? Talk to me!
Was Saria...?
Saria...! She'd just learned...
I remember! We made plans... a trip to the cabin to celebrate.
When the wolf... the filthy Keidran scum!
Trace, you have to stay in control! Listen to me! **It's in the past.** I'm here with you now!
Trace... please...
Flora... I'm sorry.
The memories... they came so much stronger this time.
But I'm okay. Oddly, I don't feel the other part of me trying to get out this time. I think even he would rather not be here.

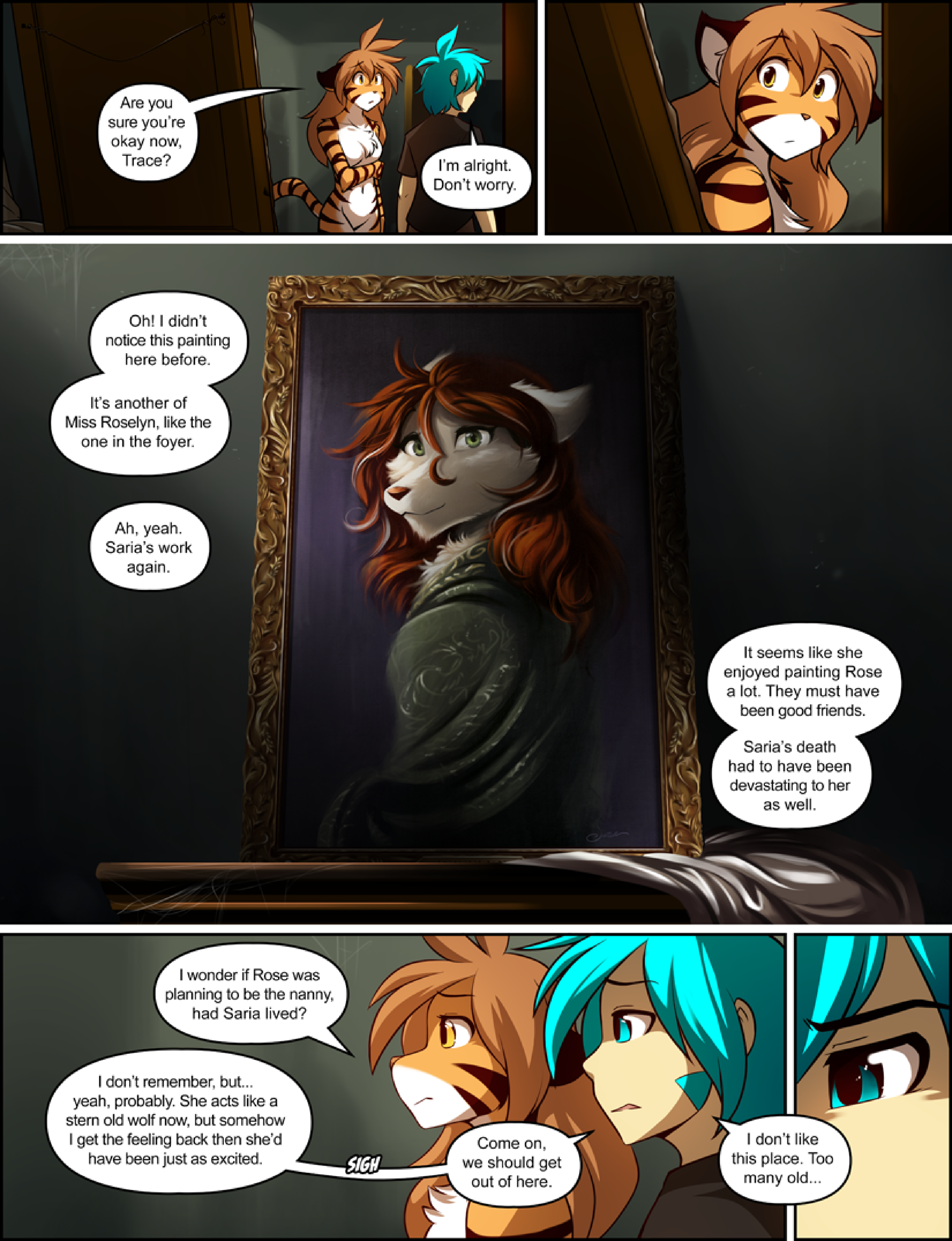

Eh?
What's this for?
To make you feel better.
And remind you that your fiancée is one of those "filthy Keidran" now.
Well... you *do* shed quite a bit.
Hey!
Oh...
Trace, it's still watching.
Huh? Oh, yeah, it's fine.
WOOSH!
You know, he was meant to be for her.
You... had Nora make your child a giant, scary stone lizard?
Yeah. I figured, why not? I had Nora growing up.
I planned for Stoney to be her version of Nora. An eternal companion.
But...
Trace...
We have another chance.
...We do. And I won't let it happen again. No matter what.

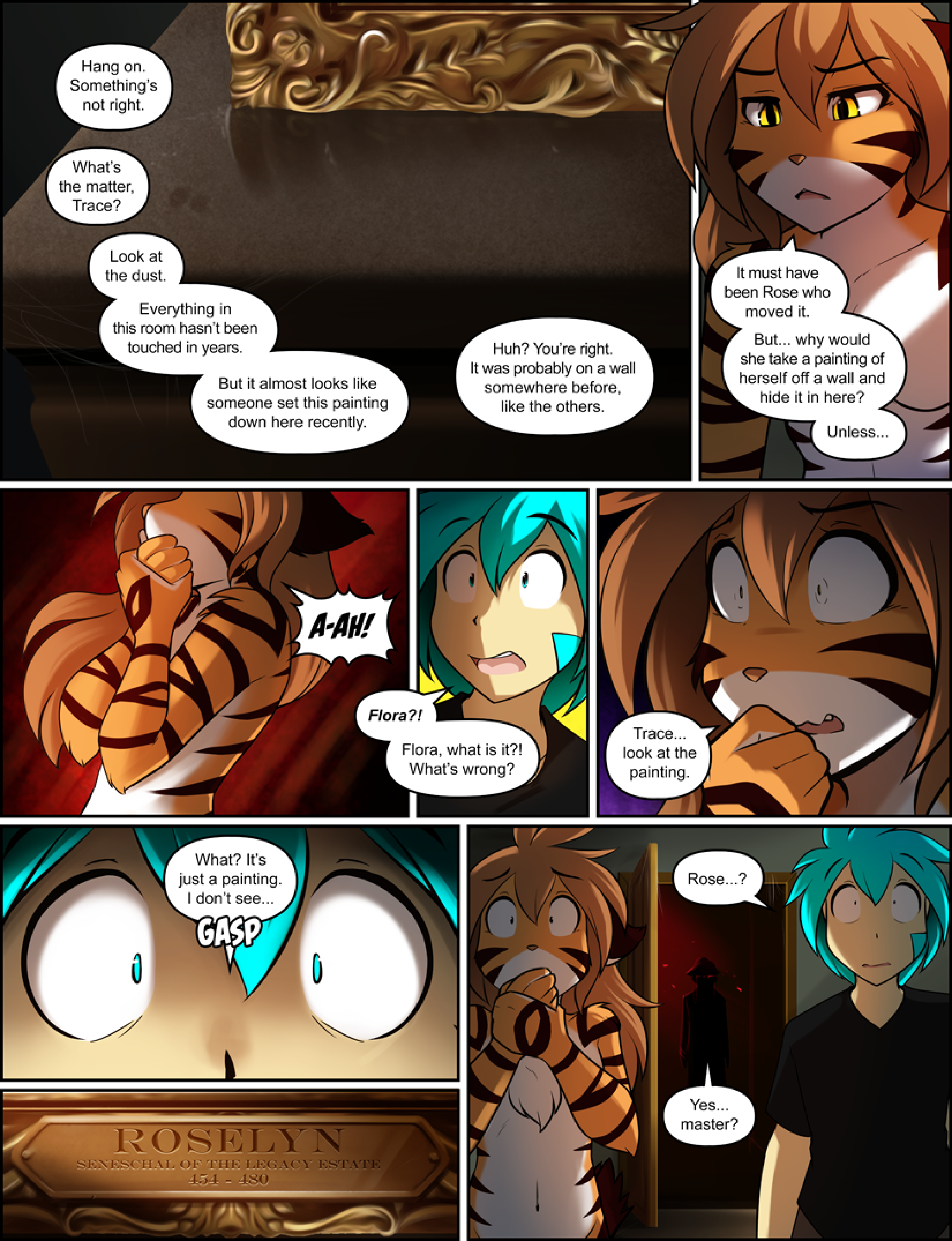

SNAP!
Gah!
RAAAH!
A little help!
TSSSCH!
HAAH...
<Claws off my Basitin.>
HUFF...
Natani?!
<How are you using magic without mana crystals?>
<I'm not, see?
When I realized that table could spit out crystals, well...
I stashed as many as I could fit in... *erm*... here.>
<Can you teleport us out?>
<First thing I tried, but I'm blocked.>
<Blocked?>
<It's like the building itself is trying to keep us in here.
We're gunna have to break our way out.>
<Thankfully...
For the first time in my life, I don't have to worry about running out of mana.>

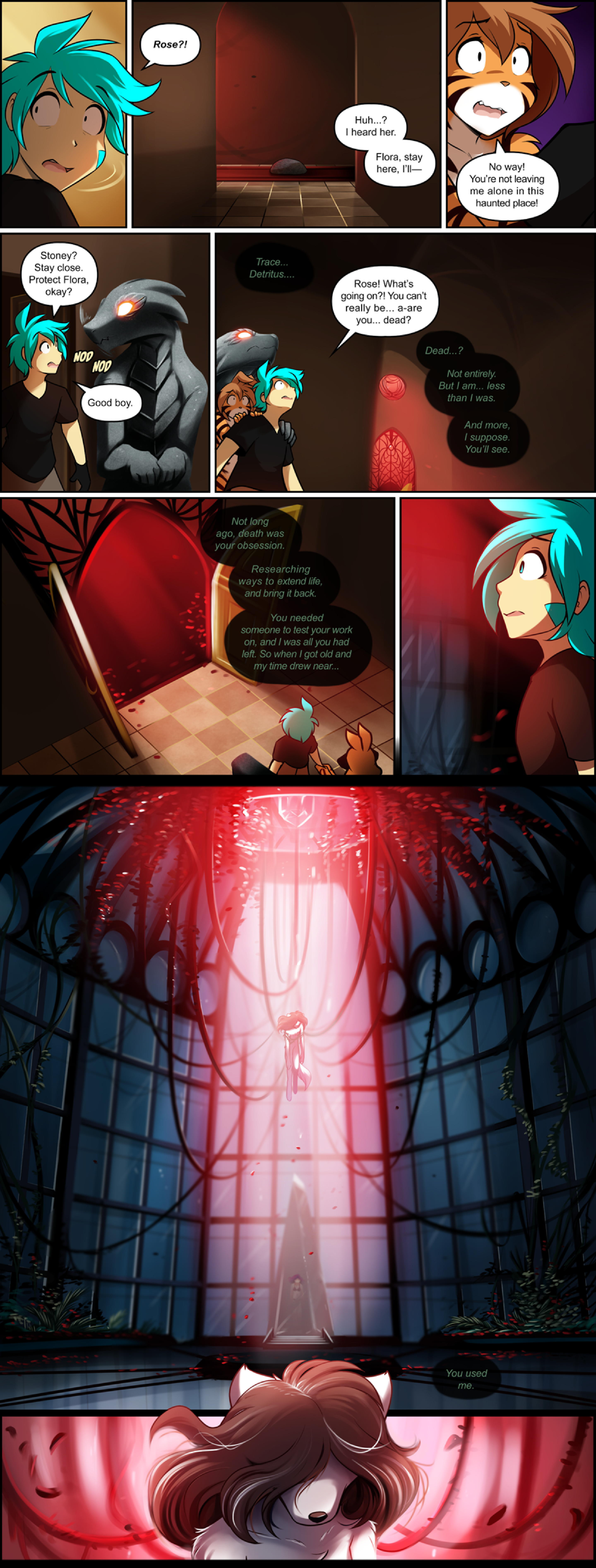

RAH!
GROAR!
CRZKOW!
GRAAAAAAAAAAH!
SMASH!
Thank you.
‹No... problem.›
‹Are you alright?›
This? I'm a dragon, this is nothing for me. Can't even feel it.
Get everyone and move to the far wall. I'll keep myself between you and them.
‹Got it. Let's go, Natani.›
HUFF... HUFF...
...Ow... ow... owwie...

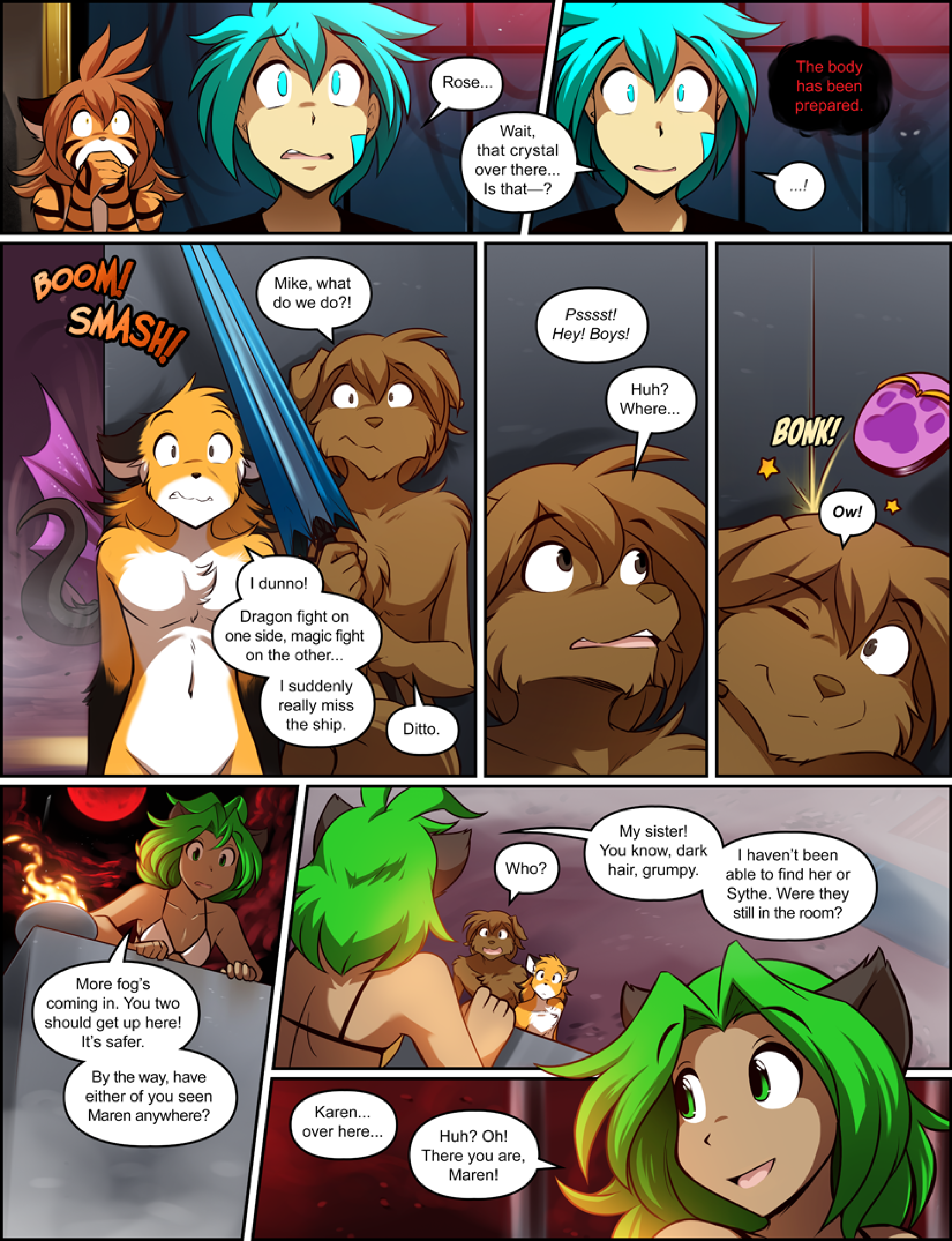

Graaah!
Why isn't this working!
Come on!
Blasting holes in stuff is supposed to be what I'm best at!
Alright, wall! This time I'm serious!
Be careful!
I'm afraid if we hit it too hard it could bring down a lot more than we mean to!
CRACKLE!
‹Outta my way! I've got this!›
Ah! Wait, hang on!
Huh?!
Eek!
BZZ-TWZNG!

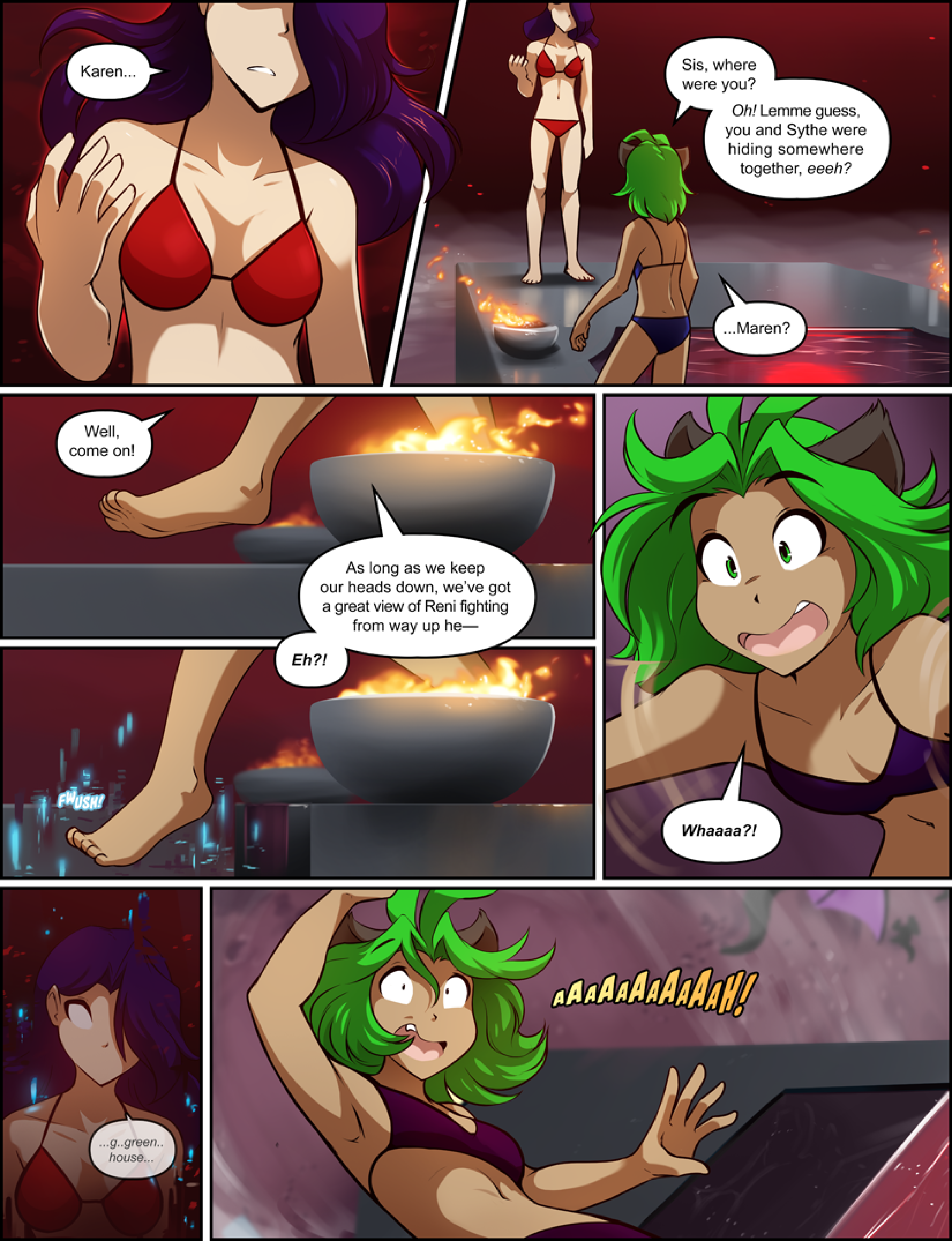

<That's it? Just a tiny crack?>
That same magic took a chunk out of those lizards a minute ago!
It nearly took a chunk out of me!
Didn't you hear what Raine said? You could have hit her, you idiot!
Natani doesn't know human!
<I know what *"idiot"* means!
You got something to say, Red?!>
Uh... guys?!
The moment you chipped that wall, every statue turned to look our way! I think we've got their attention!
<Hey! That's the one I killed!>
Shit! Well, just means we're on the right track.
We'll smash any that get past the dragon and take out this wall together.
<Yes.> To-geh-ter.
I still don't understand why the estate's magic is acting like this.
Rose... Rose might know. Where is she?
...Detritus...

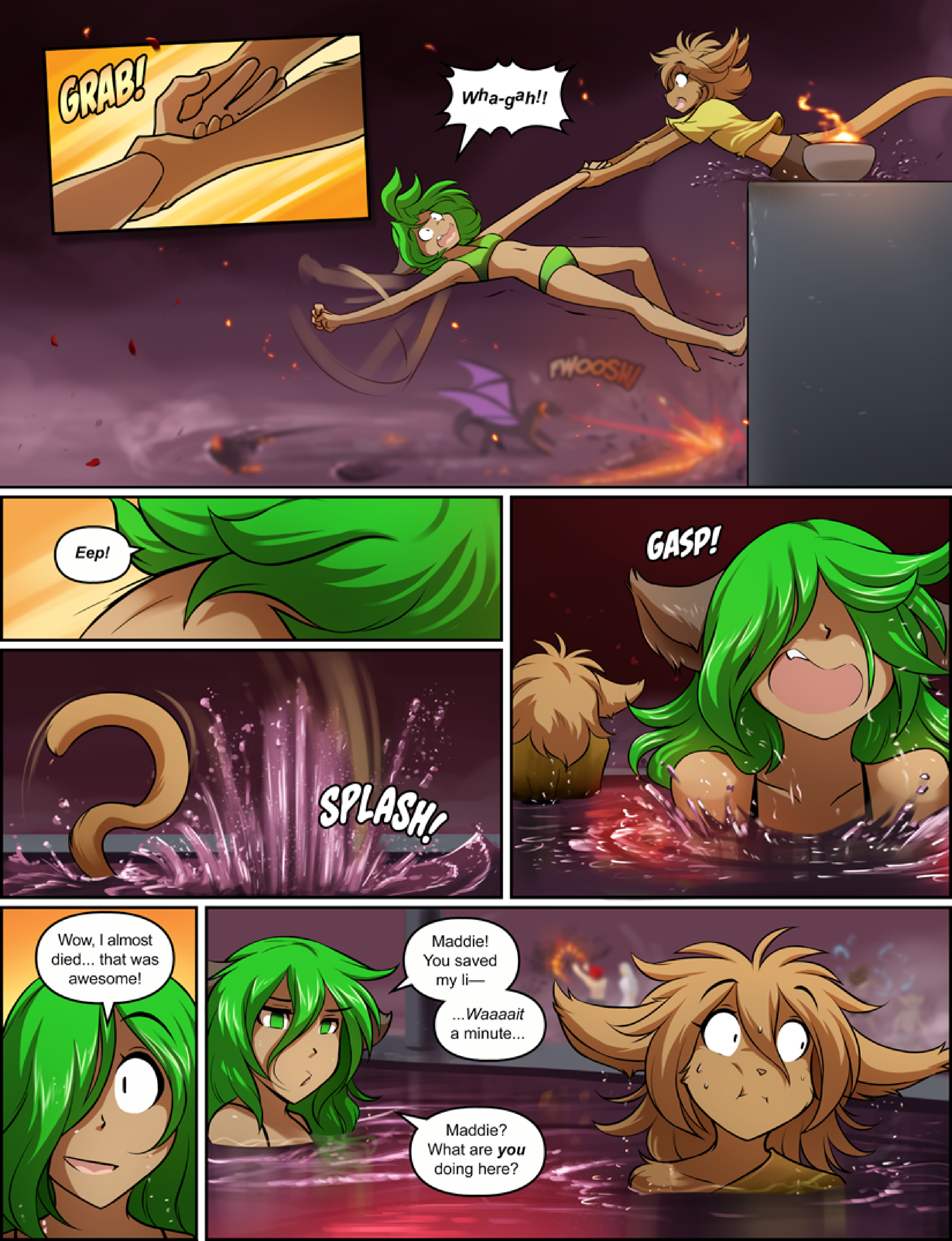

Are you sure you're okay now, Trace?
I'm alright. Don't worry.
Oh! I didn't notice this painting here before.
It's another of Miss Roselyn, like the one in the foyer.
Ah, yeah. Saria's work again.
It seems like she enjoyed painting Rose a lot. They must have been good friends.
Saria's death had to have been devastating to her as well.
I wonder if Rose was planning to be the nanny, had Saria lived?
I don't remember, but... yeah, probably. She acts like a stern old wolf now, but somehow I get the feeling back then she'd have been just as excited.
SIGH
Come on, we should get out of here.
I don't like this place. Too many old...

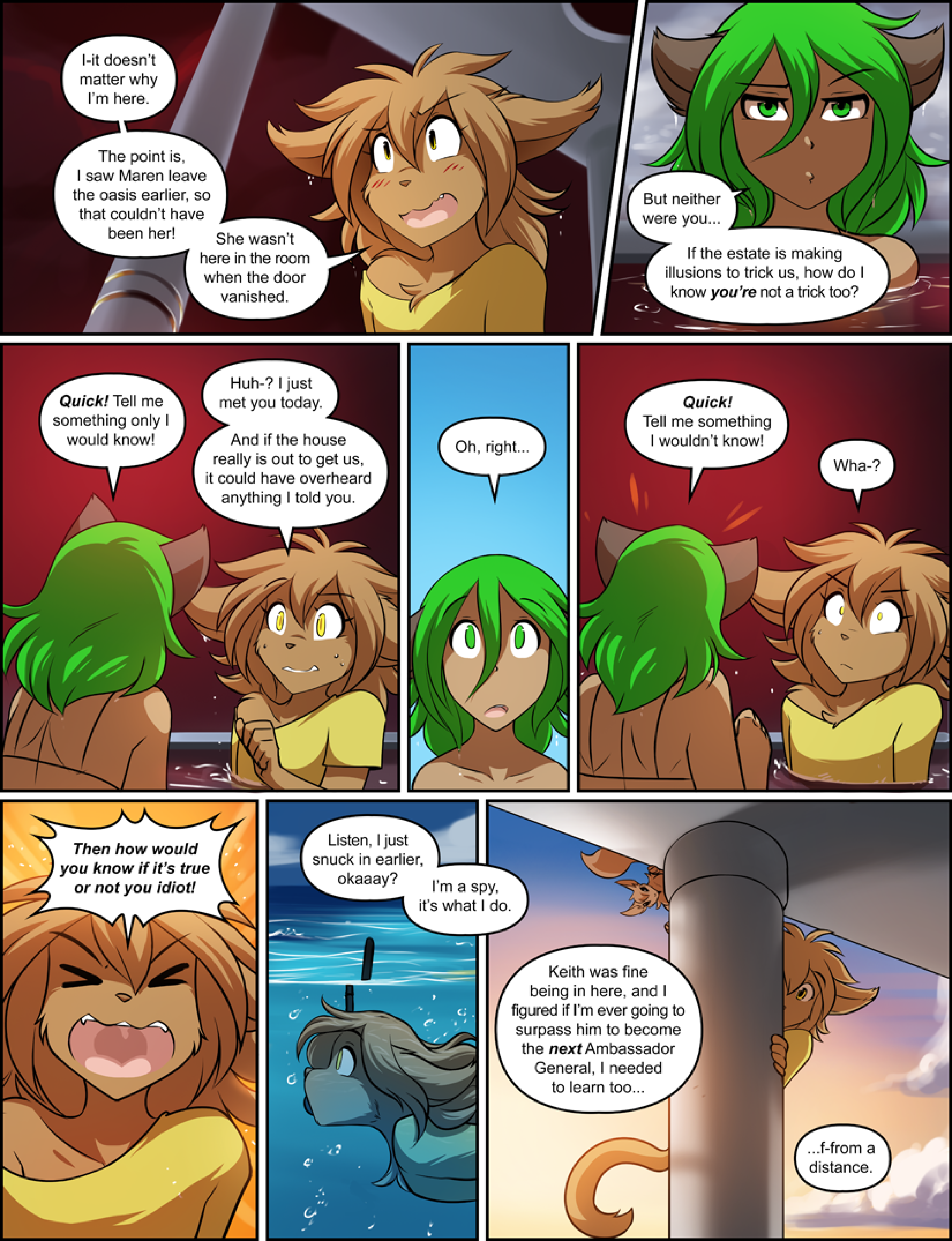

Hang on. Something's not right.
What's the matter, Trace?
Look at the dust.
Everything in this room hasn't been touched in years.
But it almost looks like someone set this painting down here recently.
Huh? You're right. It was probably on a wall somewhere before, like the others.
It must have been Rose who moved it.
But... why would she take a painting of herself off a wall and hide it in here?
Unless...
A-AH!
Flora?!
Flora, what is it?! What's wrong?
Trace... look at the painting.
What? It's just a painting. I don't see...
GASP
ROSELYN
SENESCHAL OF THE LEGACY ESTATE
454 - 480
Rose...?
Yes... master?

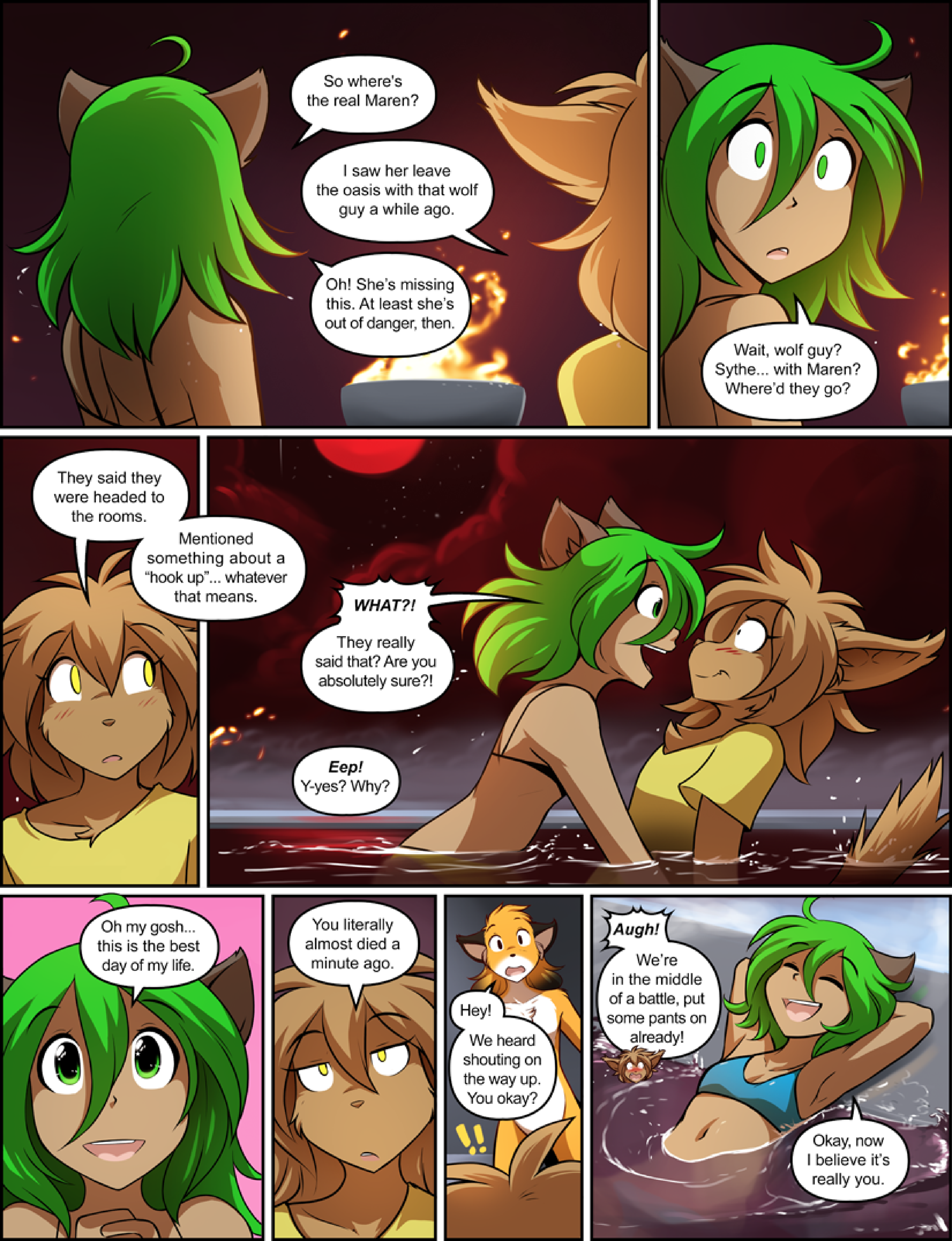

Rose?!
Huh...? I heard her.
Flora, stay here, I'll—
No way! You're not leaving me alone in this haunted place!
Stoney? Stay close. Protect Flora, okay?
NOD NOD
Good boy.
Trace... Detritus....
Rose! What's going on?! You can't really be... a-are you... dead?
Dead...?
Not entirely. But I am... less than I was.
And more, I suppose. You'll see.
Not long ago, death was your obsession.
Researching ways to extend life, and bring it back.
You needed someone to test your work on, and I was all you had left. So when I got old and my time drew near...
You used me.

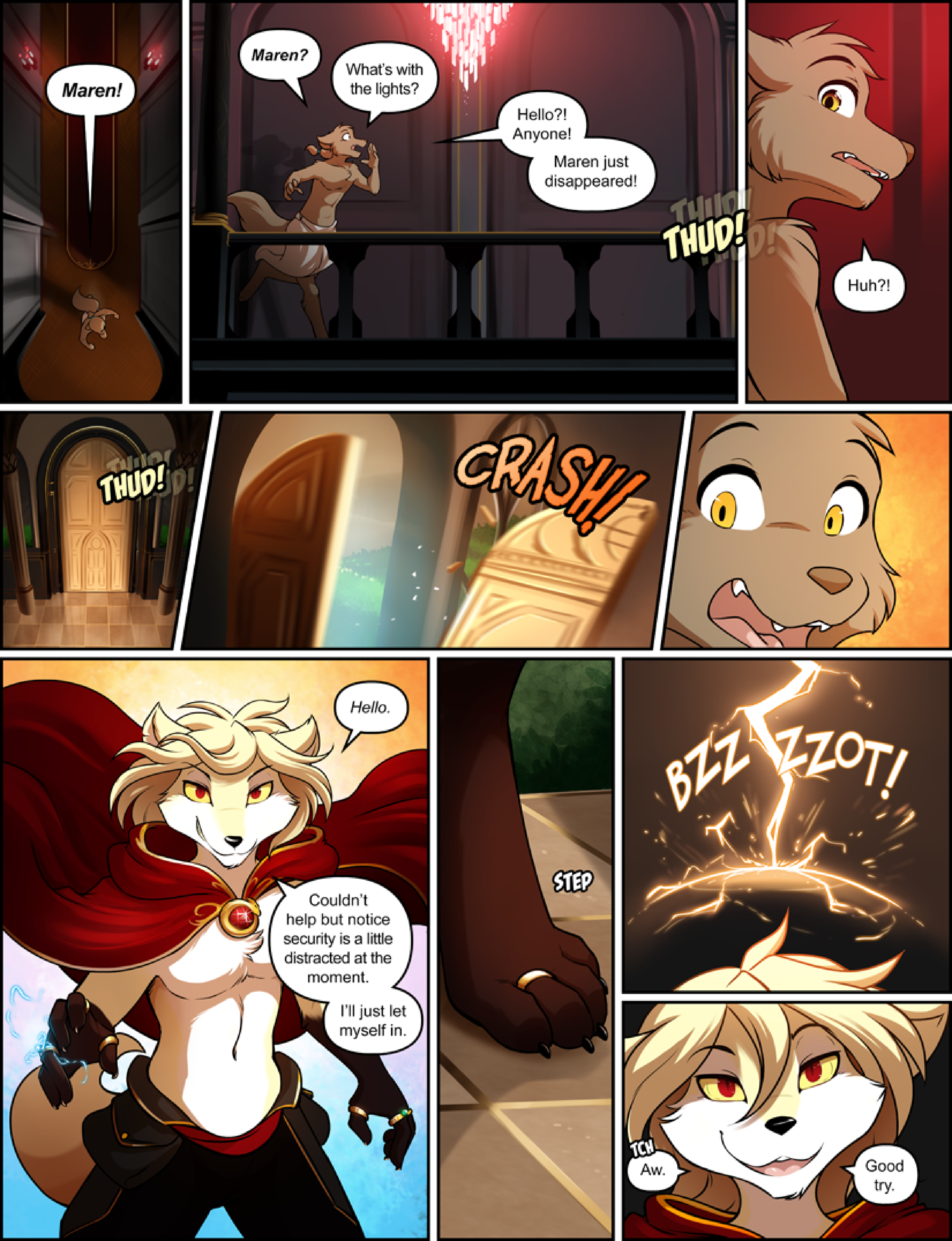

Rose...
Wait, that crystal over there... Is that—?
The body has been prepared.
...!
BOOM!
SMASH!
Mike, what do we do?!
I dunno!
Dragon fight on one side, magic fight on the other...
I suddenly really miss the ship.
Ditto.
Psssst! Hey! Boys!
Huh? Where...
BONK!
Ow!
More fog's coming in. You two should get up here! It's safer.
By the way, have either of you seen Maren anywhere?
Who?
My sister! You know, dark hair, grumpy.
I haven't been able to find her or Sythe. Were they still in the room?
Karen... over here...
Huh? Oh! There you are, Maren!

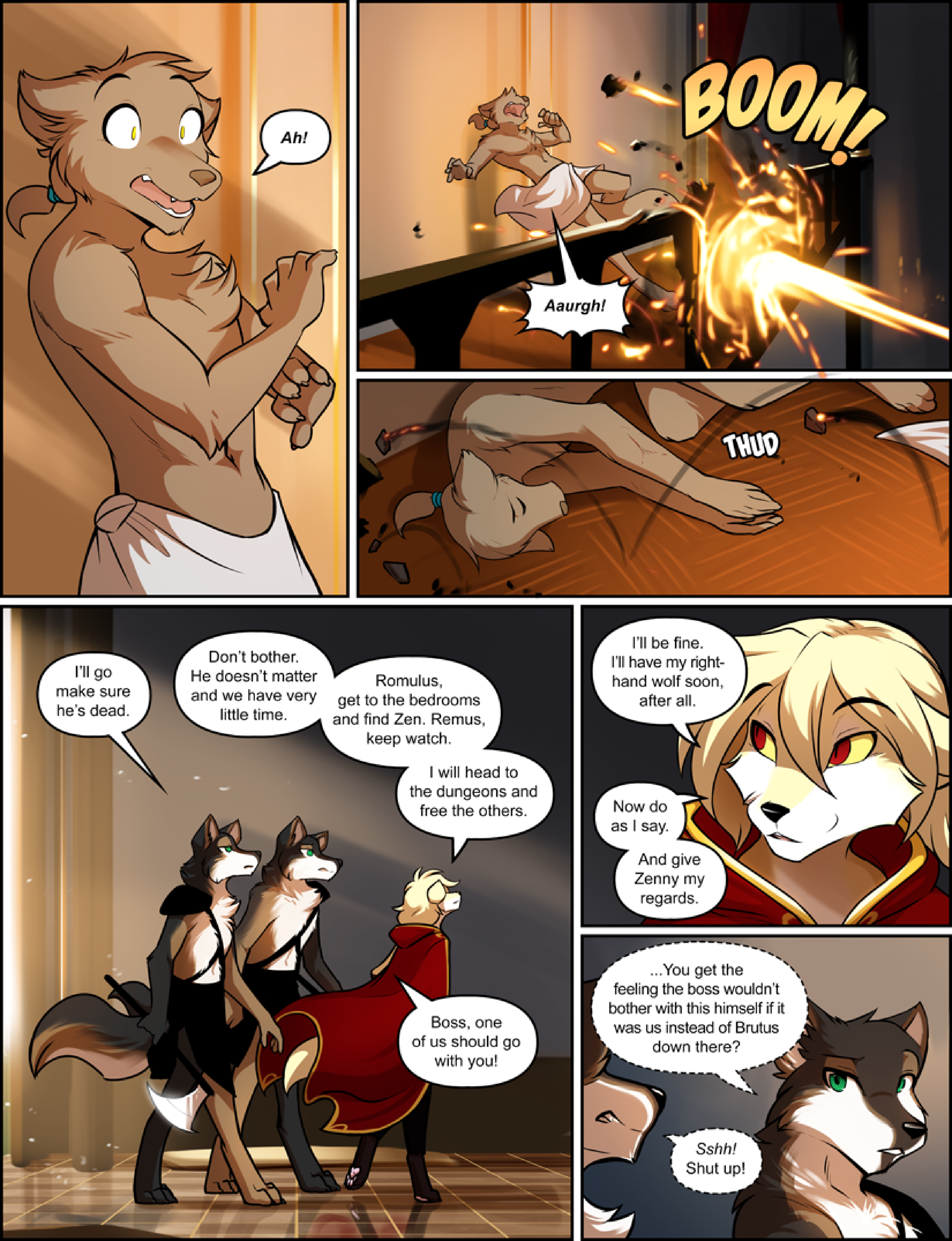

Karen...
Sis, where were you?
Oh! Lemme guess, you and Sythe were hiding somewhere together, *eeeh?*
...Maren?
Well, come on!
As long as we keep our heads down, we've got a great view of Reni fighting from way up he—
Eh?!
FWUSH!
Whaaaa?!
...g..green.. house...
AAAAAAAAAAH!

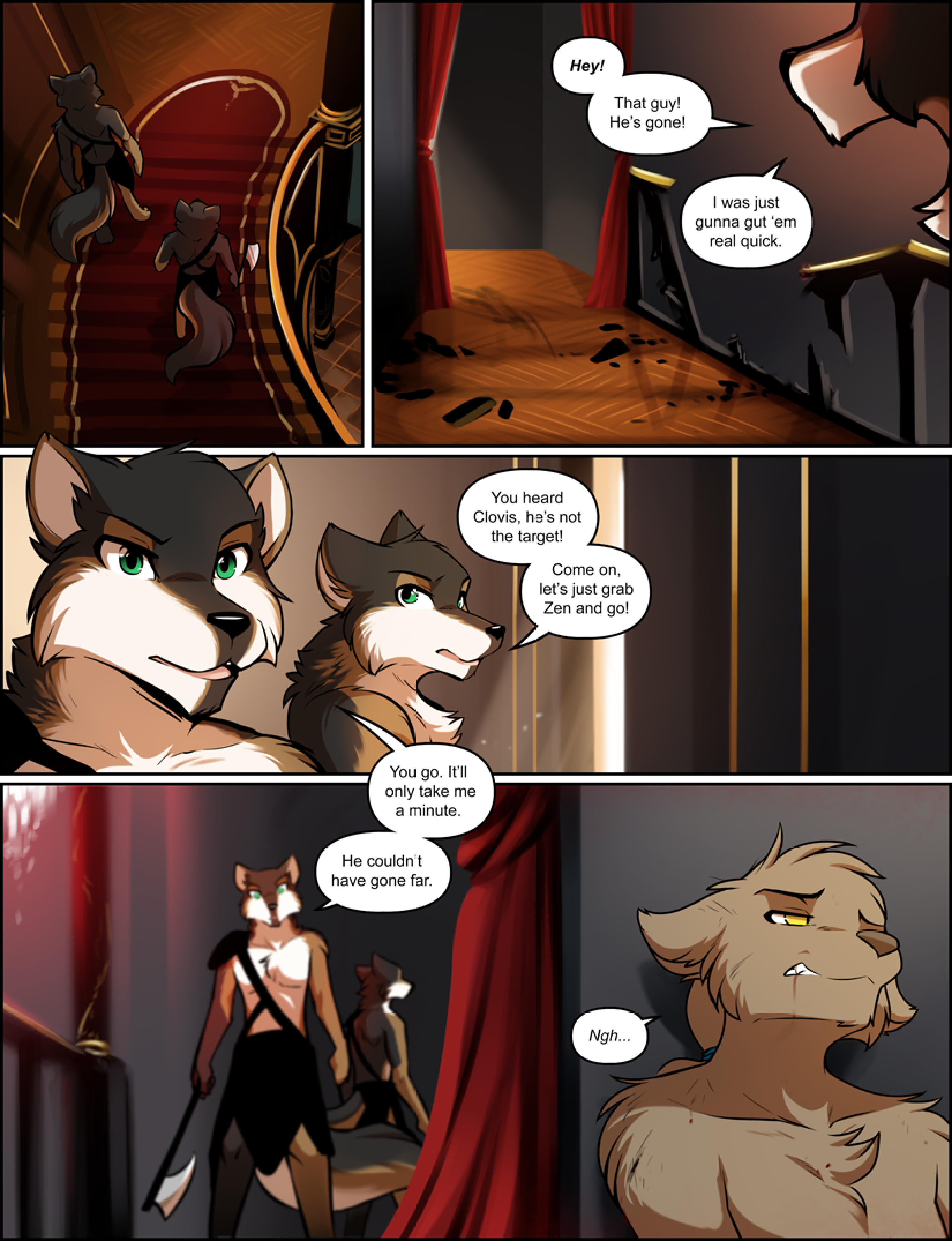

GRAB!
Wha-gah!!
FWOOSH
Eep!
SPLASH!
GASP!
Wow, I almost died... that was awesome!
Maddie! You saved my li—
...*Waaaait* a minute...
Maddie? What are *you* doing here?

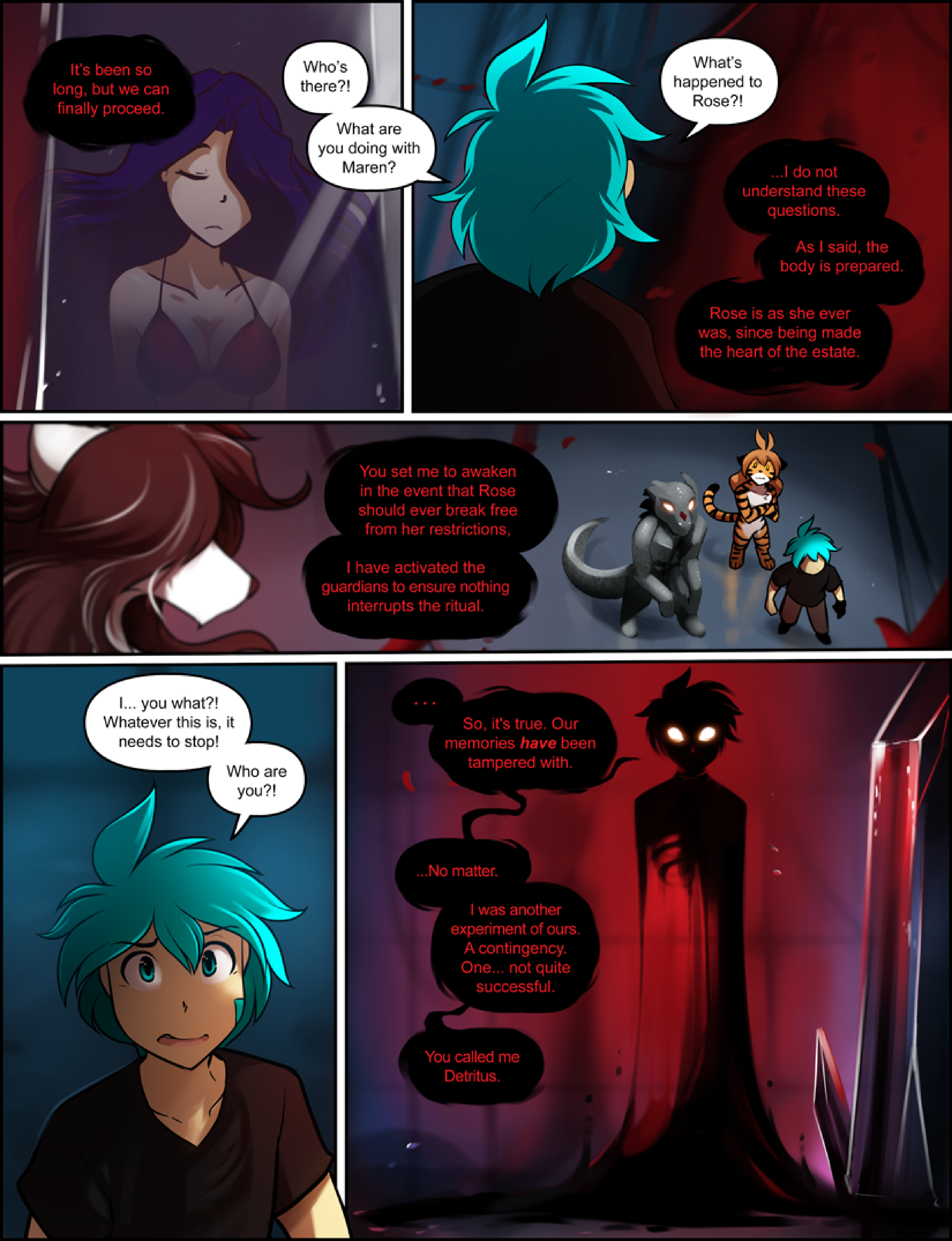

I-it doesn't matter why I'm here.
The point is, I saw Maren leave the oasis earlier, so that couldn't have been her!
She wasn't here in the room when the door vanished.
But neither were you...
If the estate is making illusions to trick us, how do I know ***you're*** not a trick too?
Quick! Tell me something only I would know!
Huh-? I just met you today.
And if the house really is out to get us, it could have overheard anything I told you.
Oh, right...
Quick! Tell me something I wouldn't know!
Wha-?
Then how would you know if it's true or not you idiot!
Listen, I just snuck in earlier, okaaay?
I'm a spy, it's what I do.
Keith was fine being in here, and I figured if I'm ever going to surpass him to become the ***next*** Ambassador General, I needed to learn too...
...f-from a distance.

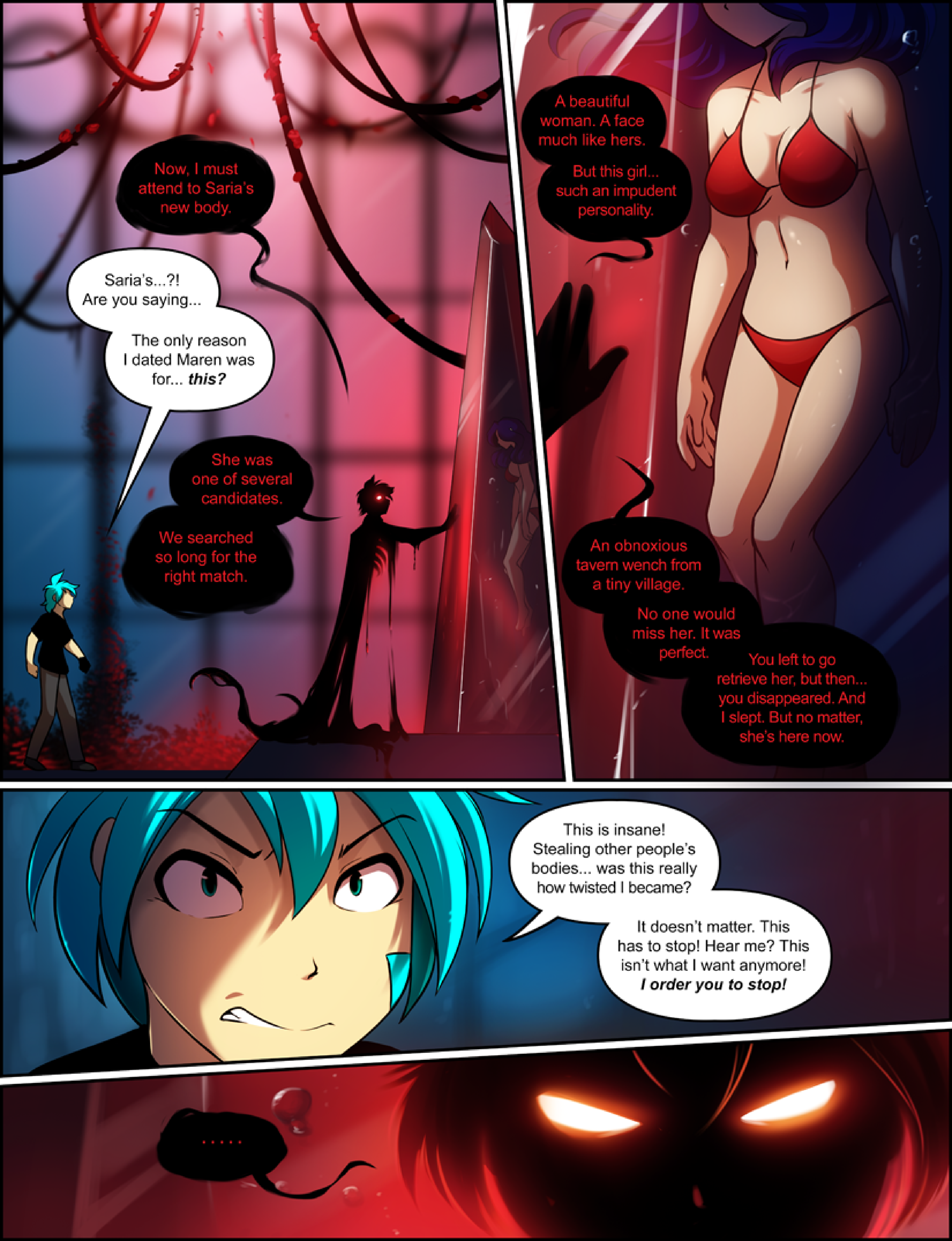

So where's the real Maren?
I saw her leave the oasis with that wolf guy a while ago.
Oh! She's missing this. At least she's out of danger, then.
Wait, wolf guy? Sythe... with Maren? Where'd they go?
They said they were headed to the rooms.
Mentioned something about a "hook up"... whatever that means.
WHAT?!
They really said that? Are you absolutely sure?!
Eep! Y-yes? Why?
Oh my gosh... this is the best day of my life.
You literally almost died a minute ago.
Hey!
We heard shouting on the way up. You okay?
!!
Augh!
We're in the middle of a battle, put some pants on already!
Okay, now I believe it's really you.

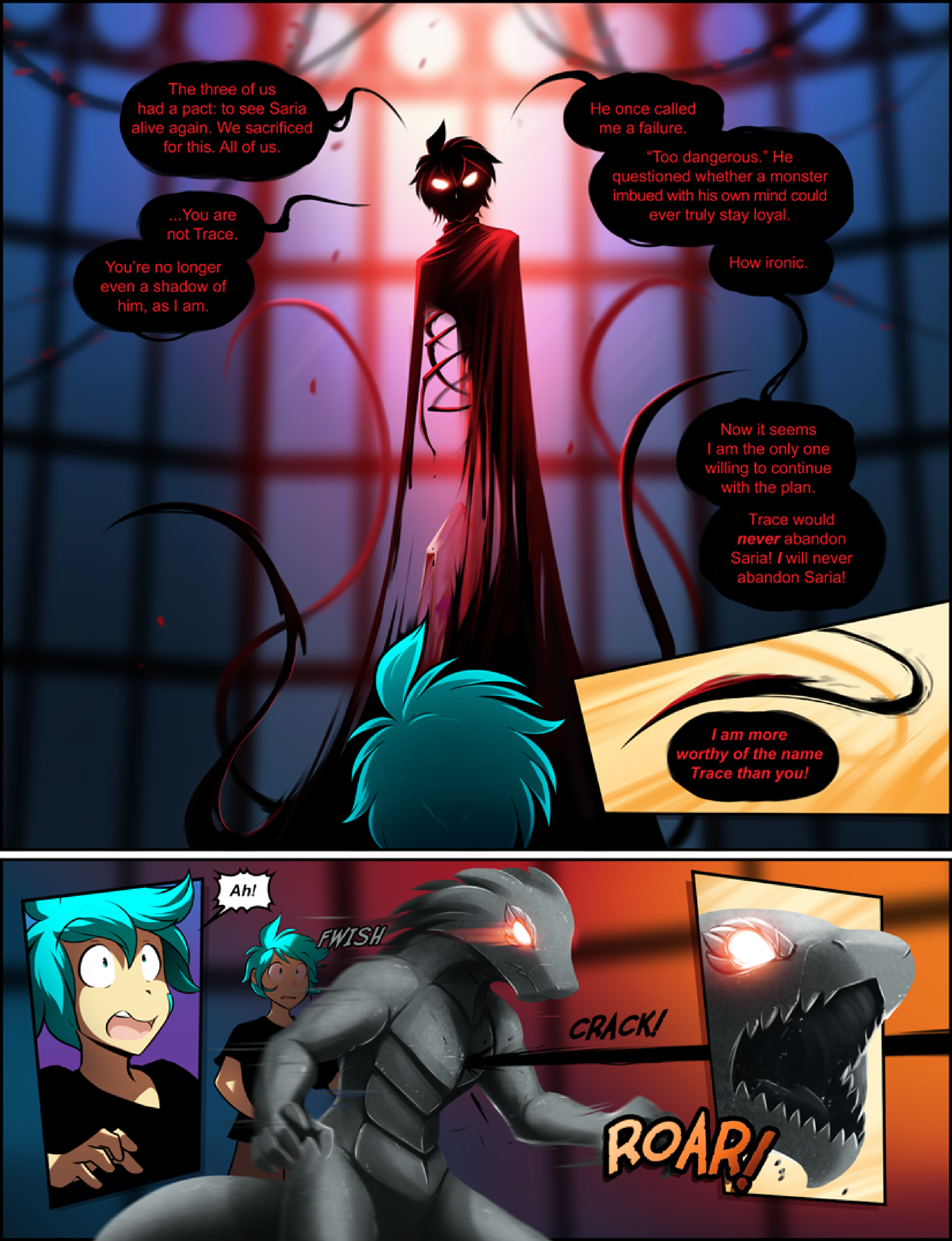

Maren!
Maren?
What's with the lights?
Hello?! Anyone!
Maren just disappeared!
THUD!
Huh?!
THUD!
CRASH!!
Hello.
Couldn't help but notice security is a little distracted at the moment.
I'll just let myself in.
STEP
BZZZZZOT!
TCH
Aw.
Good try.

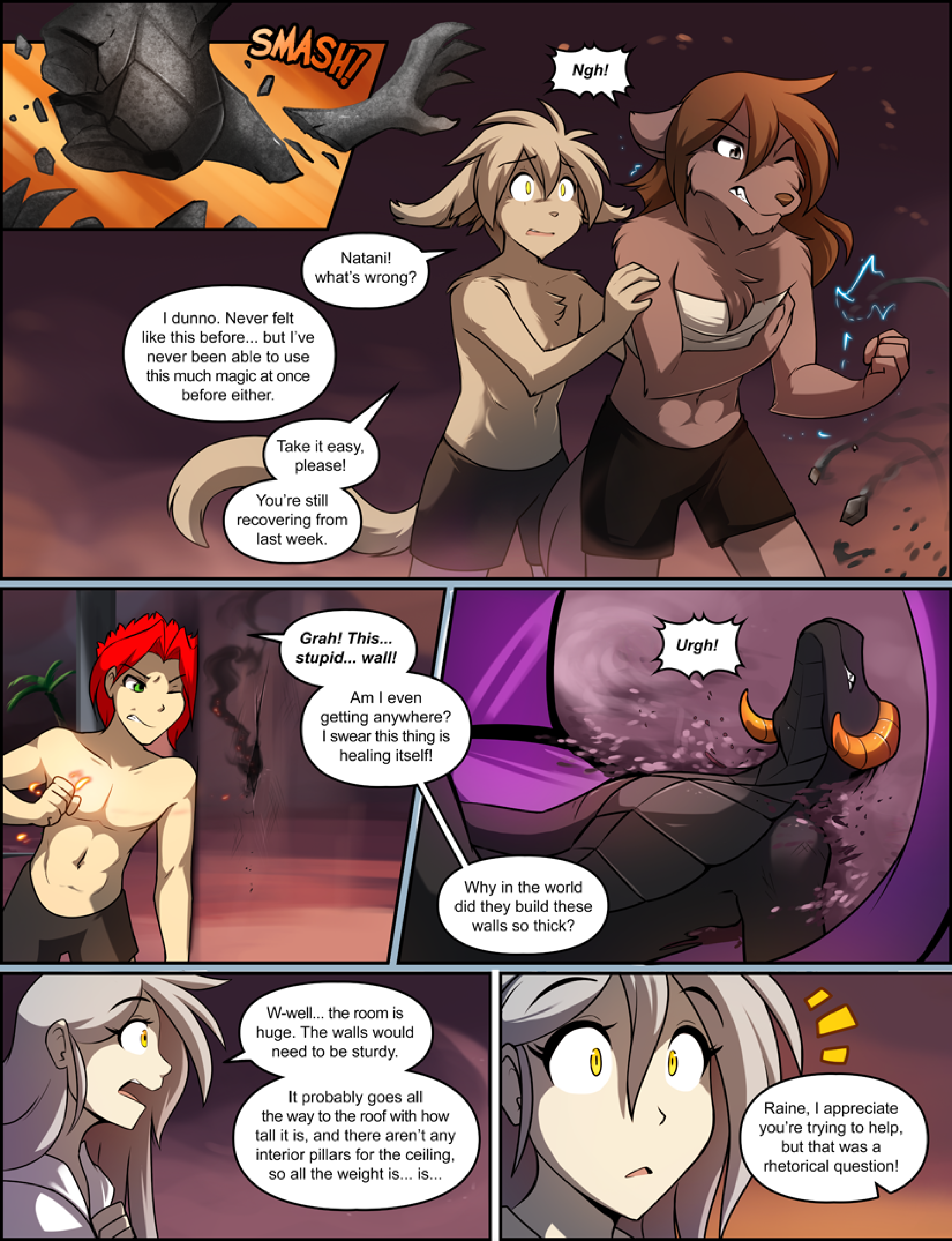

Ah!
BOOM!
Aaurgh!
THUD
I'll go make sure he's dead.
Don't bother. He doesn't matter and we have very little time.
Romulus, get to the bedrooms and find Zen. Remus, keep watch.
I will head to the dungeons and free the others.
Boss, one of us should go with you!
I'll be fine. I'll have my right-hand wolf soon, after all.
Now do as I say.
And give Zenny my regards.
...You get the feeling the boss wouldn't bother with this himself if it was us instead of Brutus down there?
Sshh! Shut up!

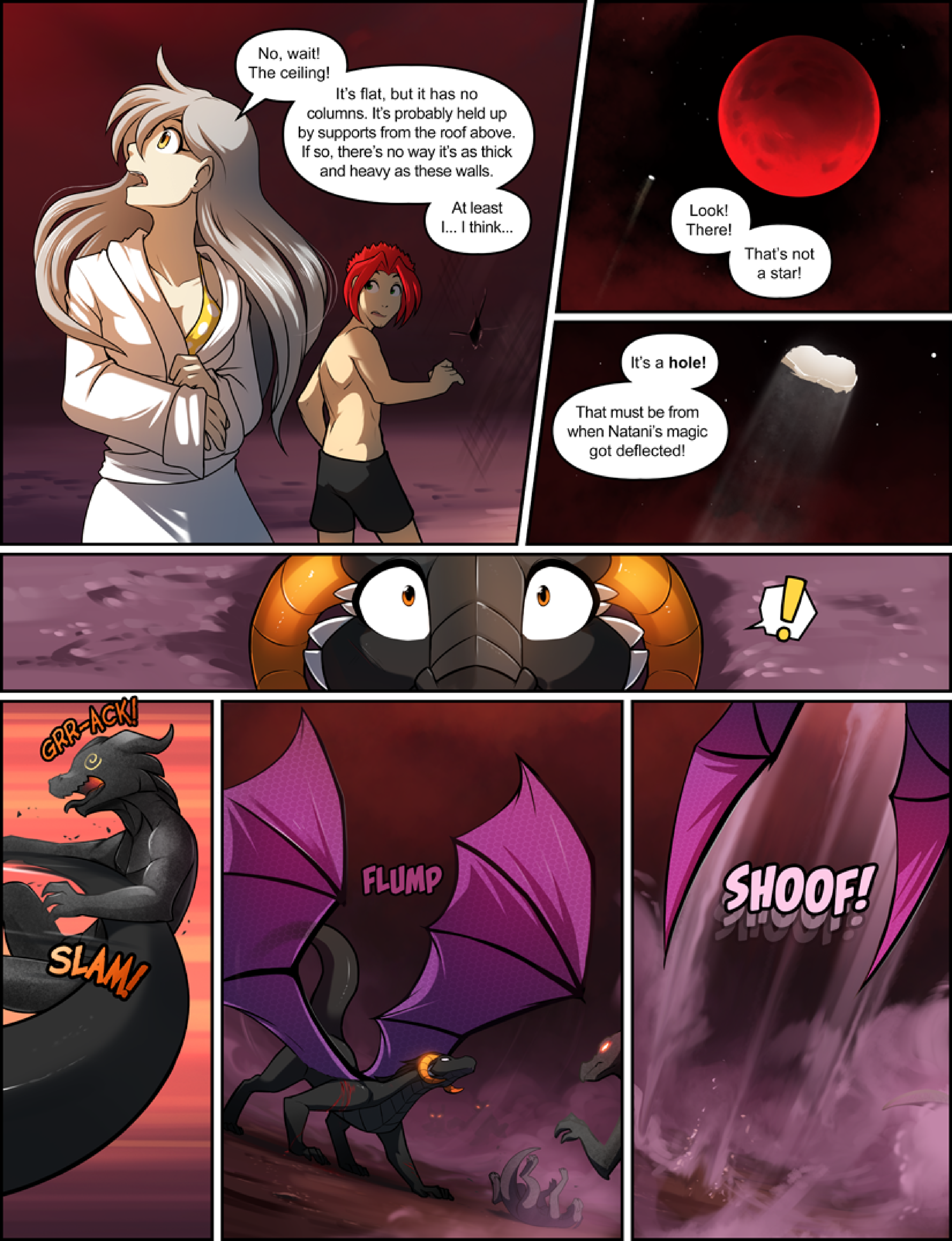

Hey!
That guy! He's gone!
I was just gunna gut 'em real quick.
You heard Clovis, he's not the target!
Come on, let's just grab Zen and go!
You go. It'll only take me a minute.
He couldn't have gone far.
Ngh...

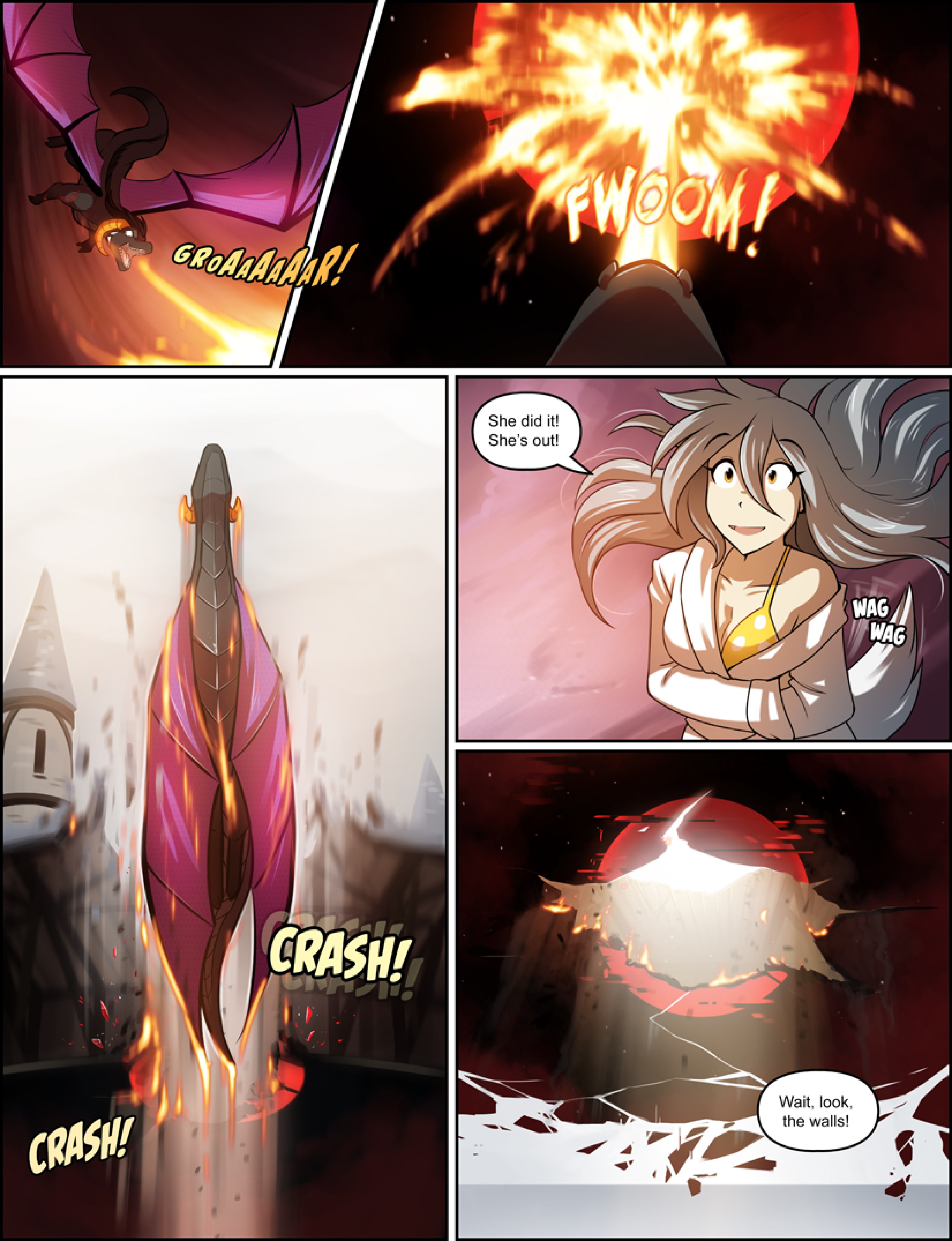

It's been so long, but we can finally proceed.
Who's there?!
What are you doing with Maren?
What's happened to Rose?!
...I do not understand these questions.
As I said, the body is prepared.
Rose is as she ever was, since being made the heart of the estate.
You set me to awaken in the event that Rose should ever break free from her restrictions,
I have activated the guardians to ensure nothing interrupts the ritual.
I... you what?! Whatever this is, it needs to stop!
Who are you?!
. . .
So, it's true. Our memories *have* been tampered with.
...No matter.
I was another experiment of ours. A contingency. One... not quite successful.
You called me Detritus.

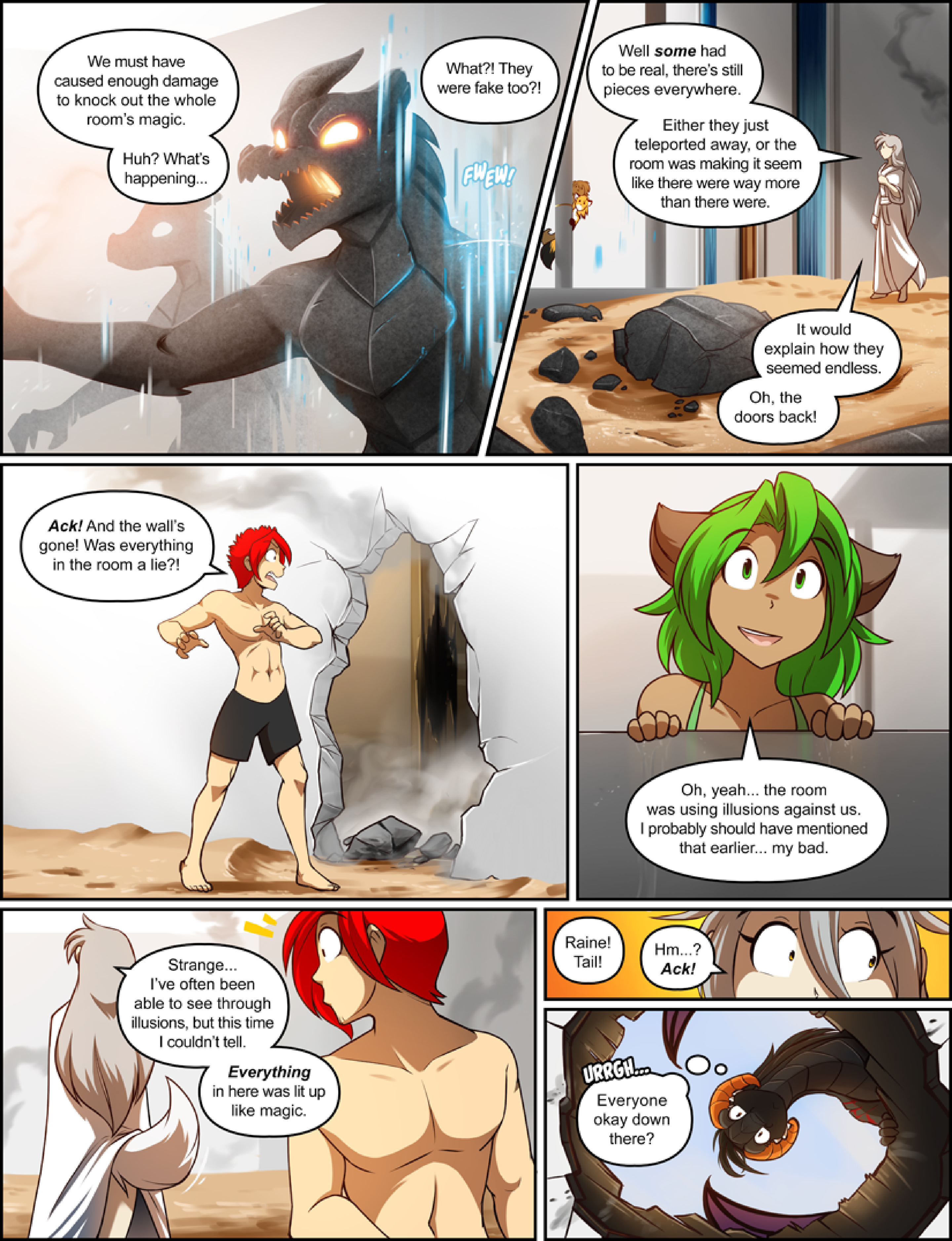

Now, I must attend to Saria's new body.
Saria's...?! Are you saying...
The only reason I dated Maren was for... ***this?***
She was one of several candidates.
We searched so long for the right match.
A beautiful woman. A face much like hers.
But this girl... such an impudent personality.
An obnoxious tavern wench from a tiny village.
No one would miss her. It was perfect.
You left to go retrieve her, but then... you disappeared. And I slept. But no matter, she's here now.
This is insane! Stealing other people's bodies... was this really how twisted I became?
It doesn't matter. This has to stop! Hear me? This isn't what I want anymore! ***I order you to stop!***
. . . . .

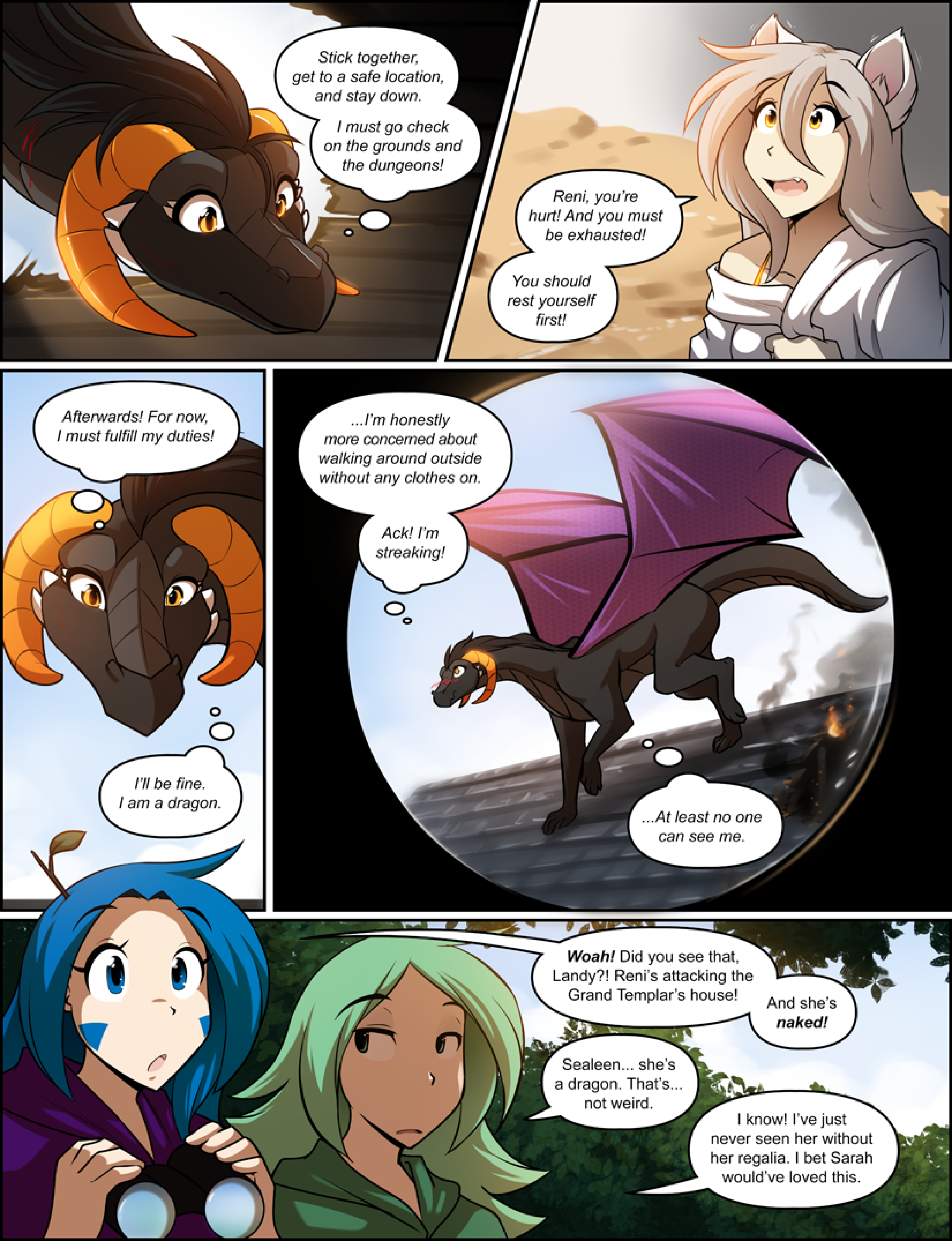

The three of us had a pact: to see Saria alive again. We sacrificed for this. All of us.
...You are not Trace.
You're no longer even a shadow of him, as I am.
He once called me a failure.
"Too dangerous." He questioned whether a monster imbued with his own mind could ever truly stay loyal.
How ironic.
Now it seems I am the only one willing to continue with the plan.
Trace would ***never*** abandon Saria! ***I*** will never abandon Saria!
I am more worthy of the name Trace than you!
Ah!
FWISH
CRACK!
ROAR!

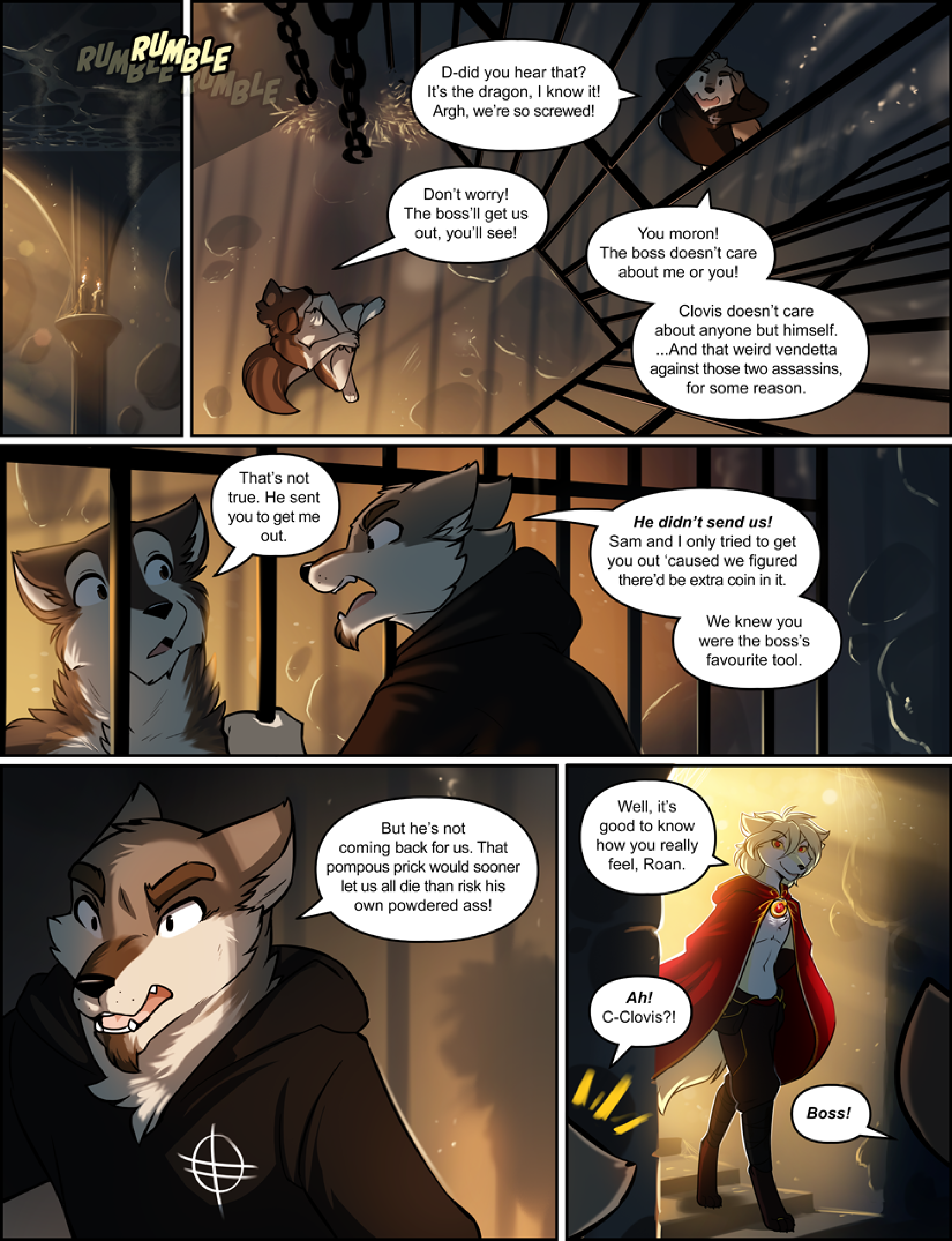

SMASH!
Ngh!
Natani! what's wrong?
I dunno. Never felt like this before... but I've never been able to use this much magic at once before either.
Take it easy, please!
You're still recovering from last week.
Grah! This... stupid... wall!
Am I even getting anywhere? I swear this thing is healing itself!
Urgh!
Why in the world did they build these walls so thick?
W-well... the room is huge. The walls would need to be sturdy.
It probably goes all the way to the roof with how tall it is, and there aren't any interior pillars for the ceiling, so all the weight is... is...
Raine, I appreciate you're trying to help, but that was a rhetorical question!

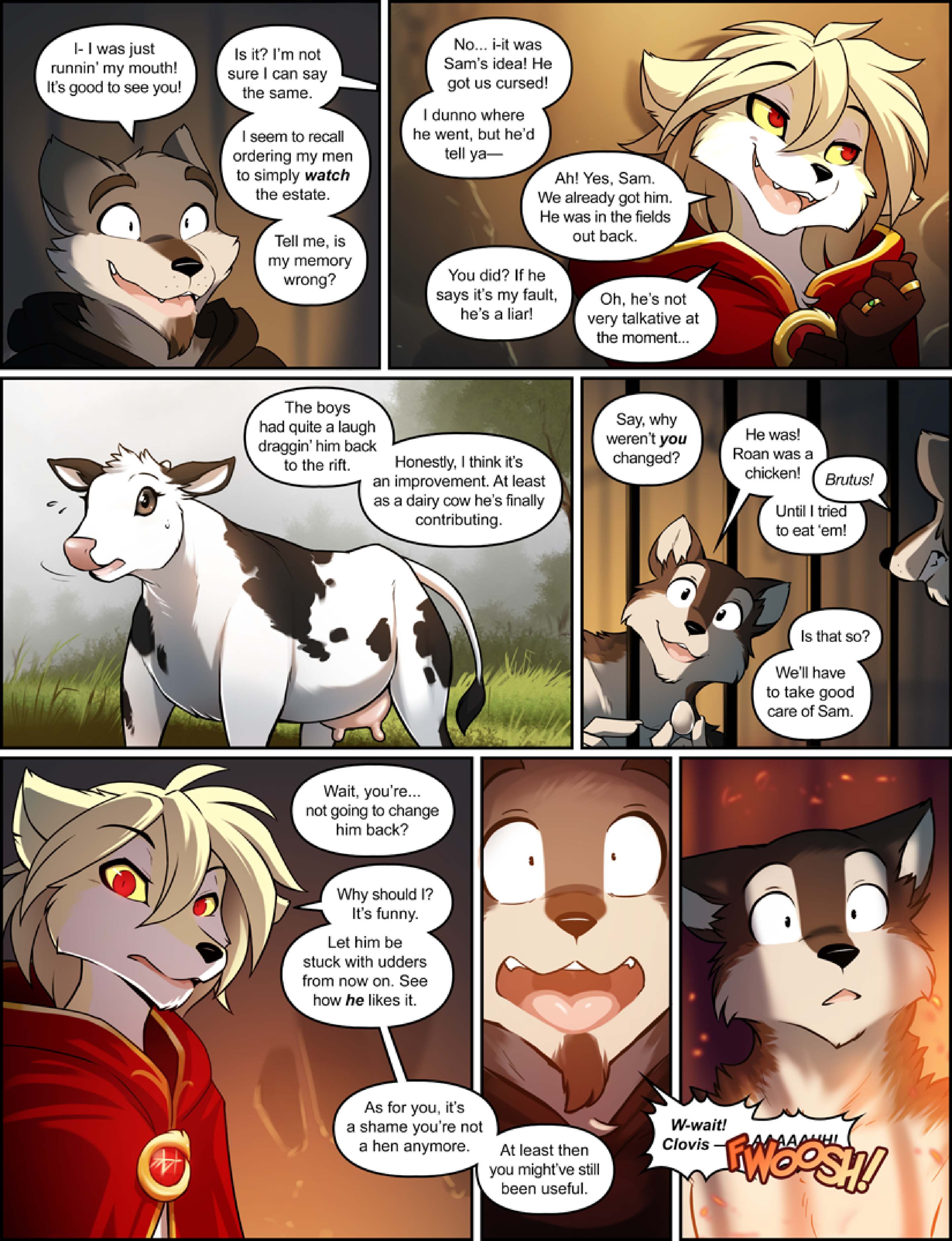

No, wait! The ceiling!
It's flat, but it has no columns. It's probably held up by supports from the roof above. If so, there's no way it's as thick and heavy as these walls.
At least I... I think...
Look! There!
That's not a star!
It's a **hole!**
That must be from when Natani's magic got deflected!
!
CRR-ACK!
SLAM!
FLUMP
SHOOF!

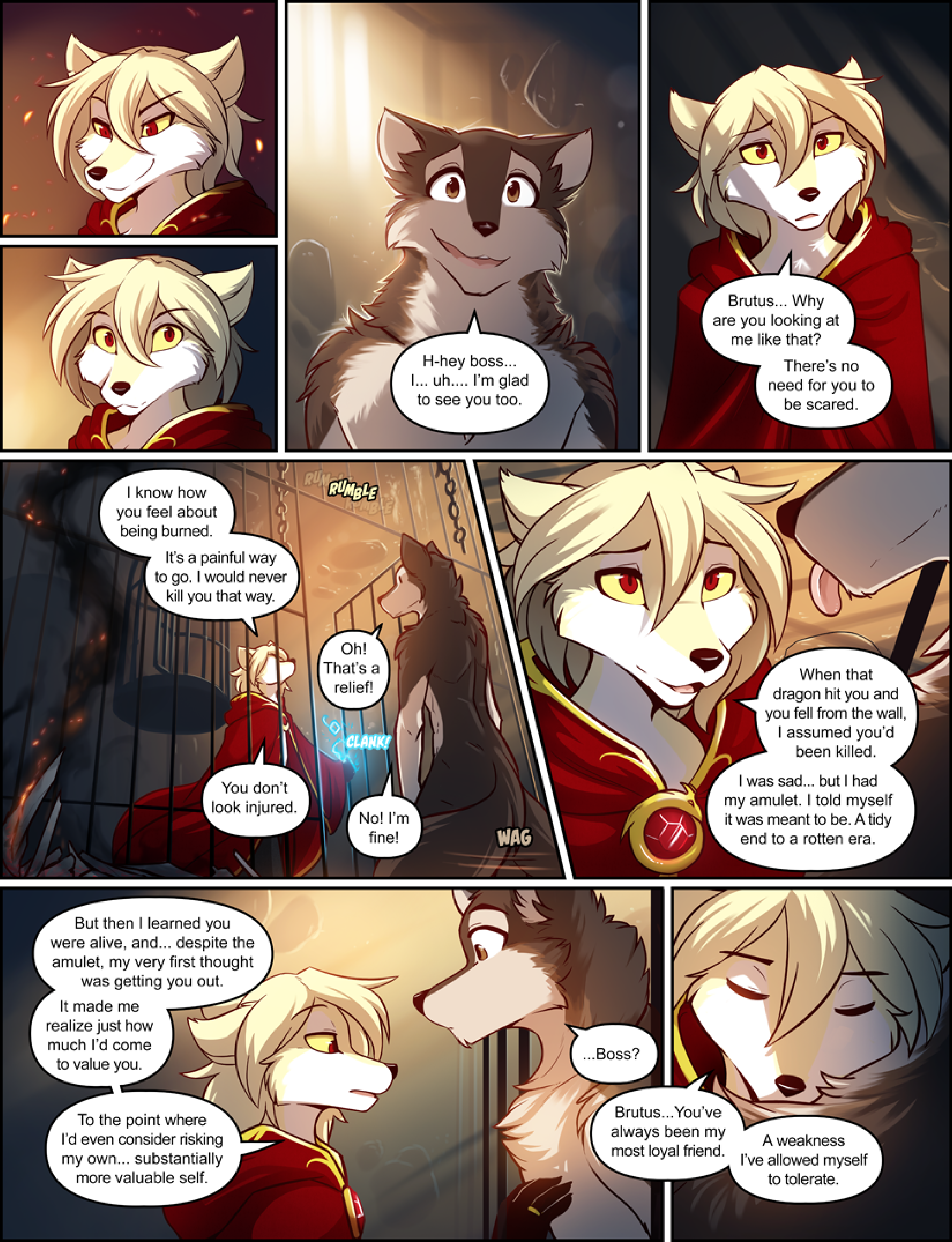

GROAAAAAAR!
FWOOM!
CRASH!
CRASH!
CRASH!
She did it! She's out!
WAG WAG
Wait, look, the walls!

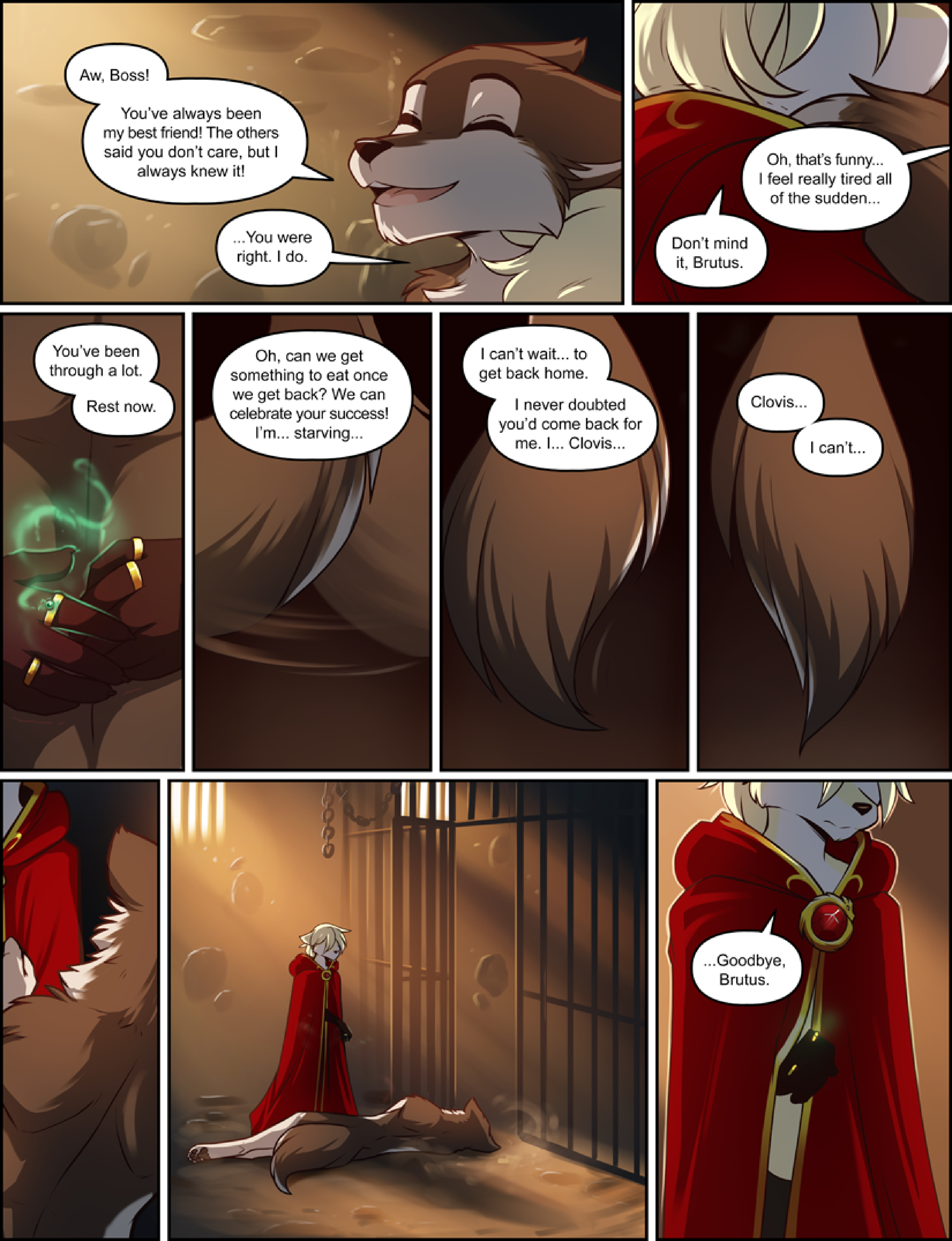

We must have caused enough damage to knock out the whole room's magic.
Huh? What's happening...
What?! They were fake too?!
FWEW!
Well *some* had to be real, there's still pieces everywhere.
Either they just teleported away, or the room was making it seem like there were way more than there were.
It would explain how they seemed endless.
Oh, the doors back!
Ack! And the wall's gone! Was everything in the room a lie?!
Oh, yeah... the room was using illusions against us. I probably should have mentioned that earlier... my bad.
Strange... I've often been able to see through illusions, but this time I couldn't tell.
Everything in here was lit up like magic.
Raine! Tail!
Hm...? *Ack!*
URRGH...
Everyone okay down there?

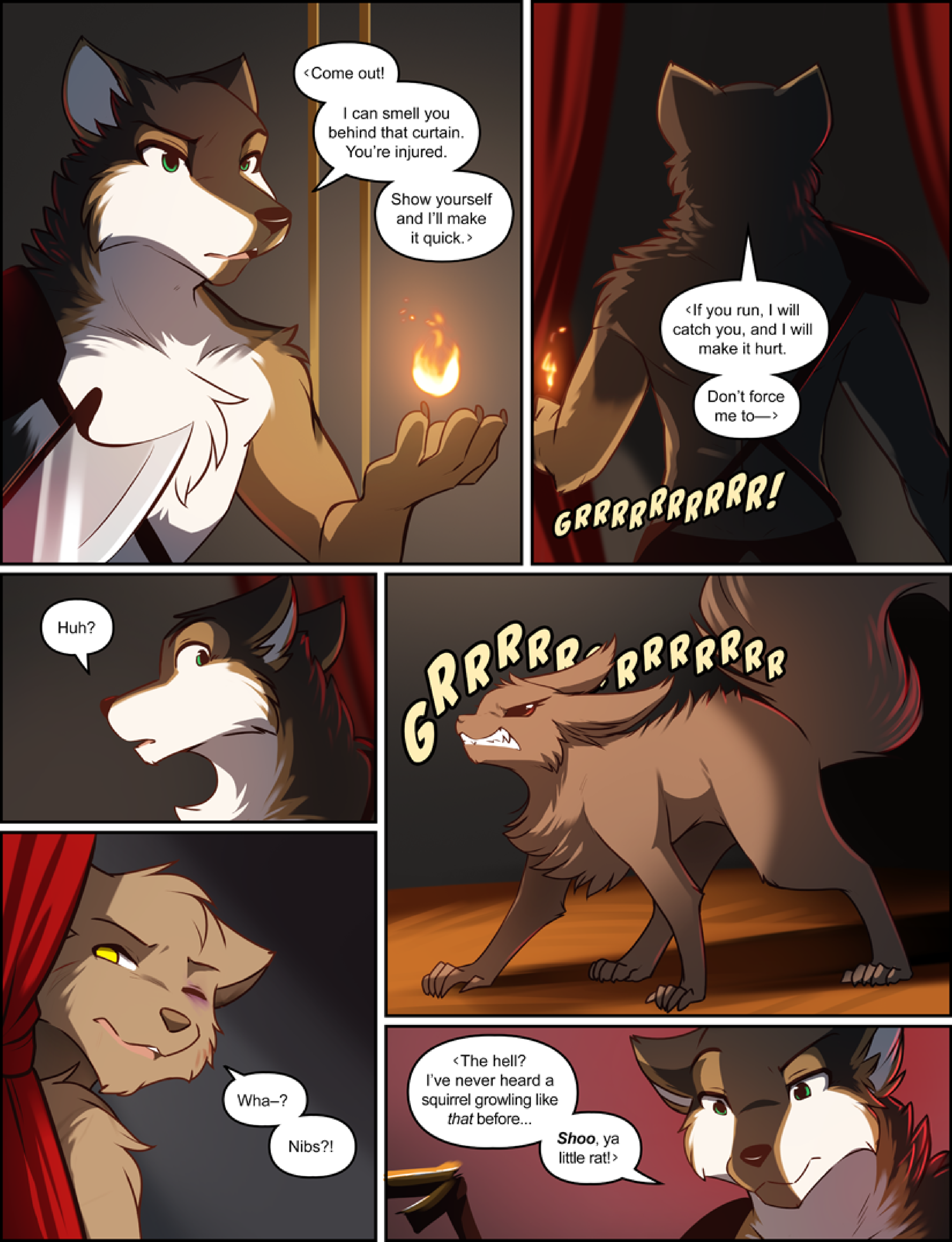

Stick together, get to a safe location, and stay down.
I must go check on the grounds and the dungeons!
Reni, you're hurt! And you must be exhausted!
You should rest yourself first!
Afterwards! For now, I must fulfill my duties!
I'll be fine. I am a dragon.
...I'm honestly more concerned about walking around outside without any clothes on.
Ack! I'm streaking!
...At least no one can see me.
Woah! Did you see that, Landy?! Reni's attacking the Grand Templar's house!
And she's ***naked!***
Sealeen... she's a dragon. That's... not weird.
I know! I've just never seen her without her regalia. I bet Sarah would've loved this.

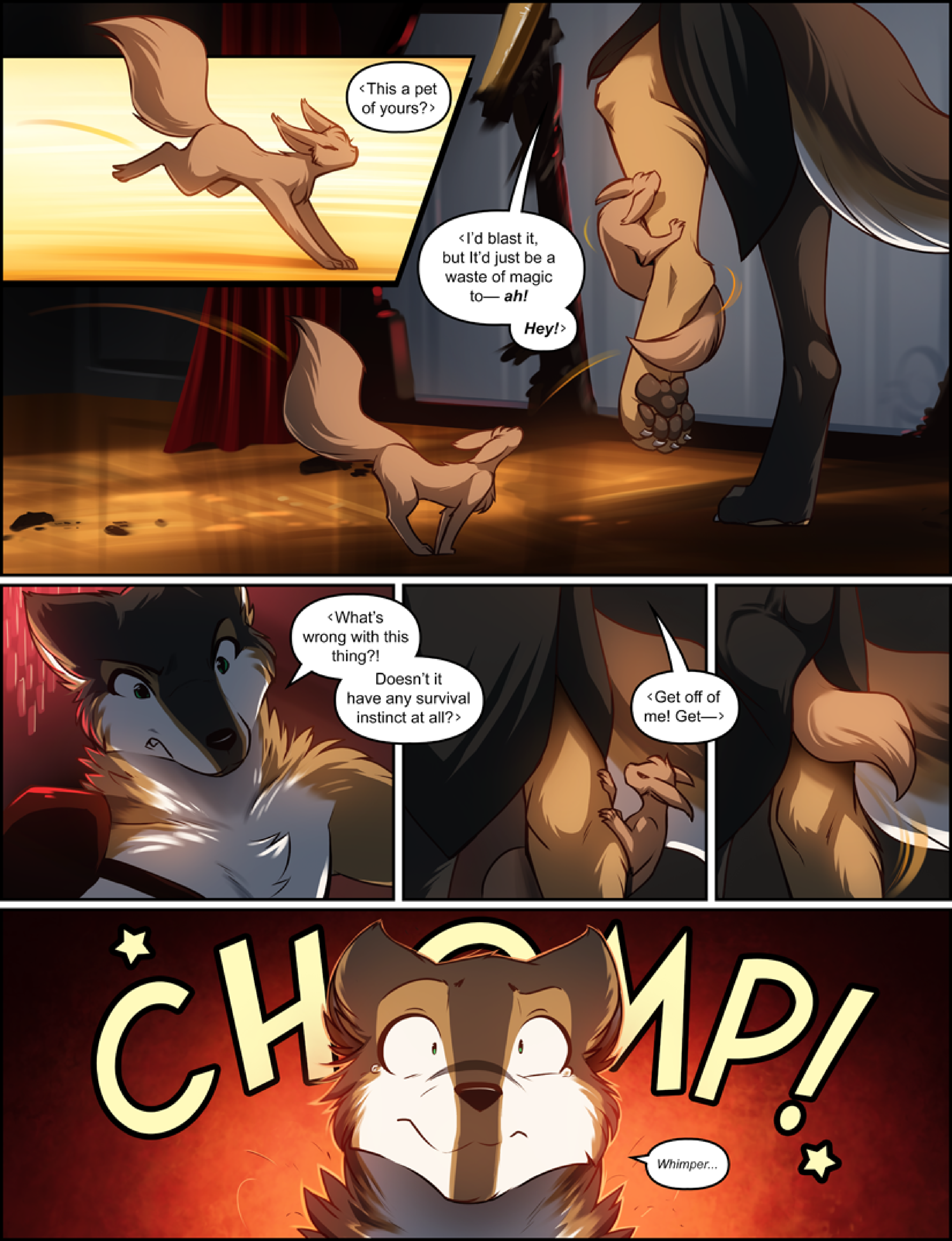

RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
D-did you hear that? It's the dragon, I know it! Argh, we're so screwed!
Don't worry! The boss'll get us out, you'll see!
You moron! The boss doesn't care about me or you!
Clovis doesn't care about anyone but himself. ...And that weird vendetta against those two assassins, for some reason.
That's not true. He sent you to get me out.
He didn't send us! Sam and I only tried to get you out 'caused we figured there'd be extra coin in it.
We knew you were the boss's favourite tool.
But he's not coming back for us. That pompous prick would sooner let us all die than risk his own powdered ass!
Well, it's good to know how you really feel, Roan.
Ah! C-Clovis?!
Boss!

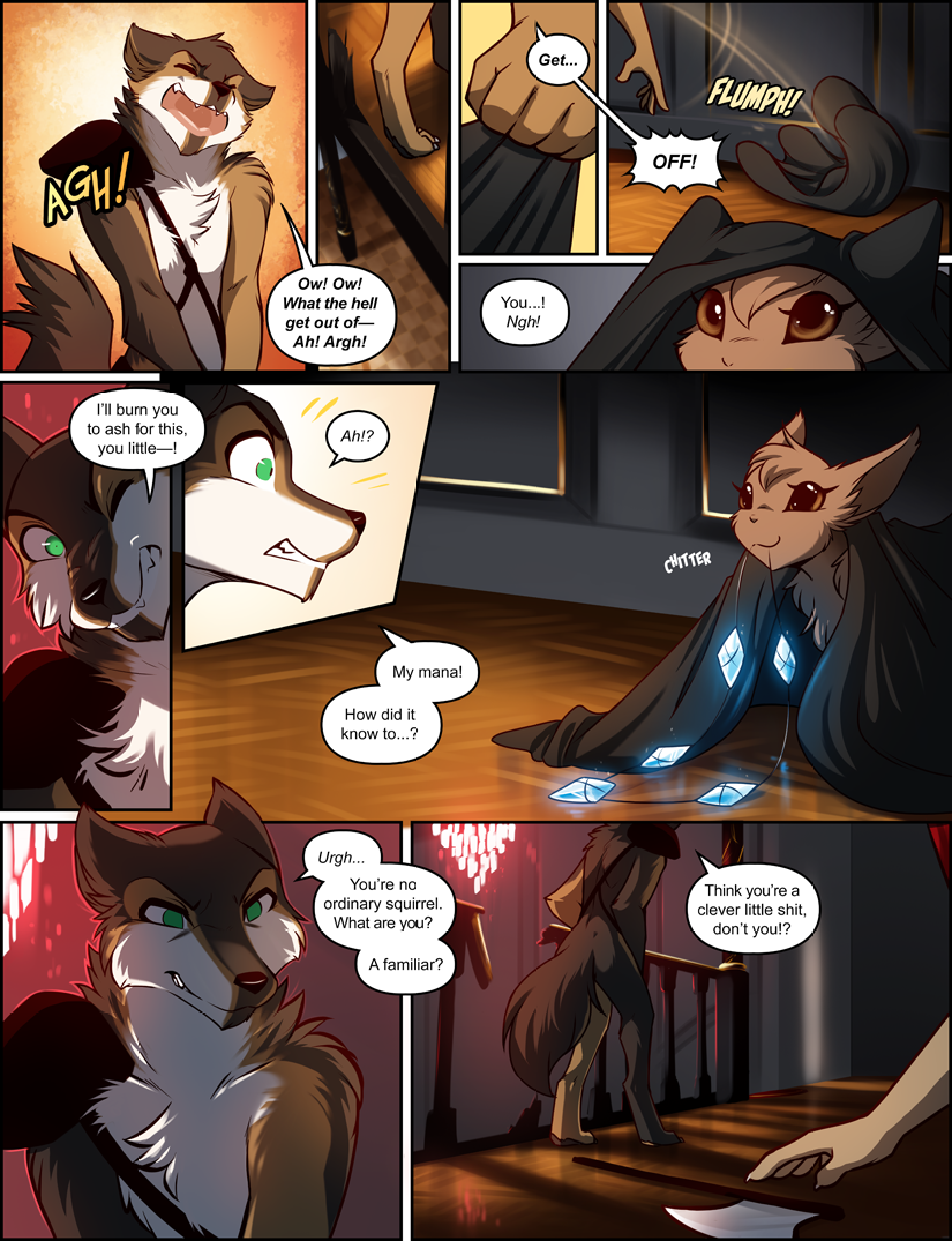

I- I was just runnin' my mouth! It's good to see you!
Is it? I'm not sure I can say the same.
I seem to recall ordering my men to simply ***watch*** the estate.
Tell me, is my memory wrong?
No... i-it was Sam's idea! He got us cursed!
I dunno where he went, but he'd tell ya—
Ah! Yes, Sam. We already got him. He was in the fields out back.
You did? If he says it's my fault, he's a liar!
Oh, he's not very talkative at the moment...
The boys had quite a laugh draggin' him back to the rift.
Honestly, I think it's an improvement. At least as a dairy cow he's finally contributing.
Say, why weren't ***you*** changed?
He was! Roan was a chicken!
Brutus!
Until I tried to eat 'em!
Is that so?
We'll have to take good care of Sam.
Wait, you're... not going to change him back?
Why should I? It's funny.
Let him be stuck with udders from now on. See how ***he*** likes it.
As for you, it's a shame you're not a hen anymore.
At least then you might've still been useful.
W-wait! Clovis — AAAAAAH!
FWOOSH!

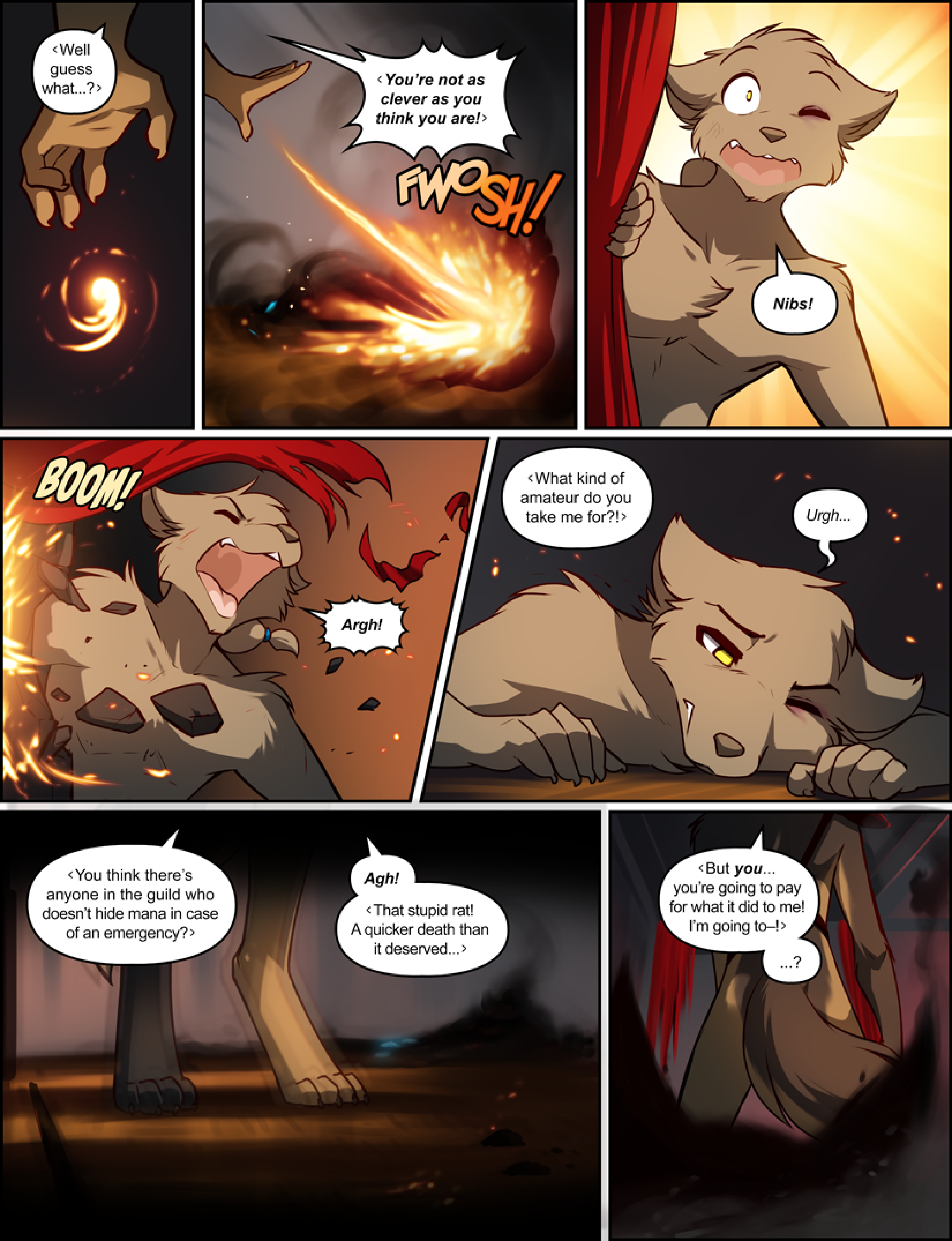

H-hey boss... I... uh.... I'm glad to see you too.
Brutus... Why are you looking at me like that?
There's no need for you to be scared.
RUMBLE
I know how you feel about being burned.
It's a painful way to go. I would never kill you that way.
Oh! That's a relief!
CLANK!
You don't look injured.
No! I'm fine!
WAG
When that dragon hit you and you fell from the wall, I assumed you'd been killed.
I was sad... but I had my amulet. I told myself it was meant to be. A tidy end to a rotten era.
But then I learned you were alive, and... despite the amulet, my very first thought was getting you out.
It made me realize just how much I'd come to value you.
To the point where I'd even consider risking my own... substantially more valuable self.
...Boss?
Brutus...You've always been my most loyal friend.
A weakness I've allowed myself to tolerate.

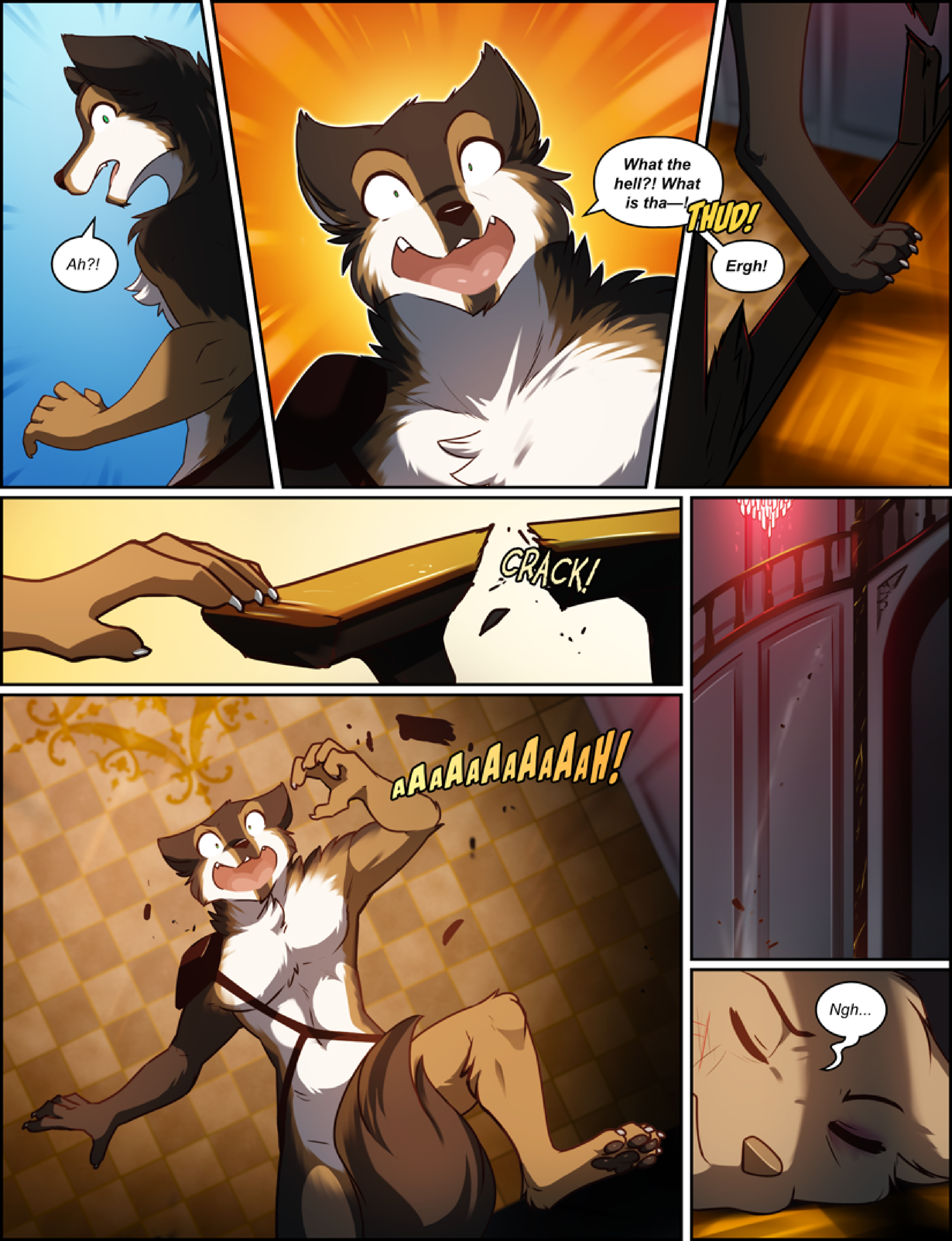

Aw, Boss!
You've always been my best friend! The others said you don't care, but I always knew it!
...You were right. I do.
Oh, that's funny... I feel really tired all of the sudden...
Don't mind it, Brutus.
You've been through a lot.
Rest now.
Oh, can we get something to eat once we get back? We can celebrate your success! I'm... starving...
I can't wait... to get back home.
I never doubted you'd come back for me. I... Clovis...
Clovis...
I can't...
...Goodbye, Brutus.

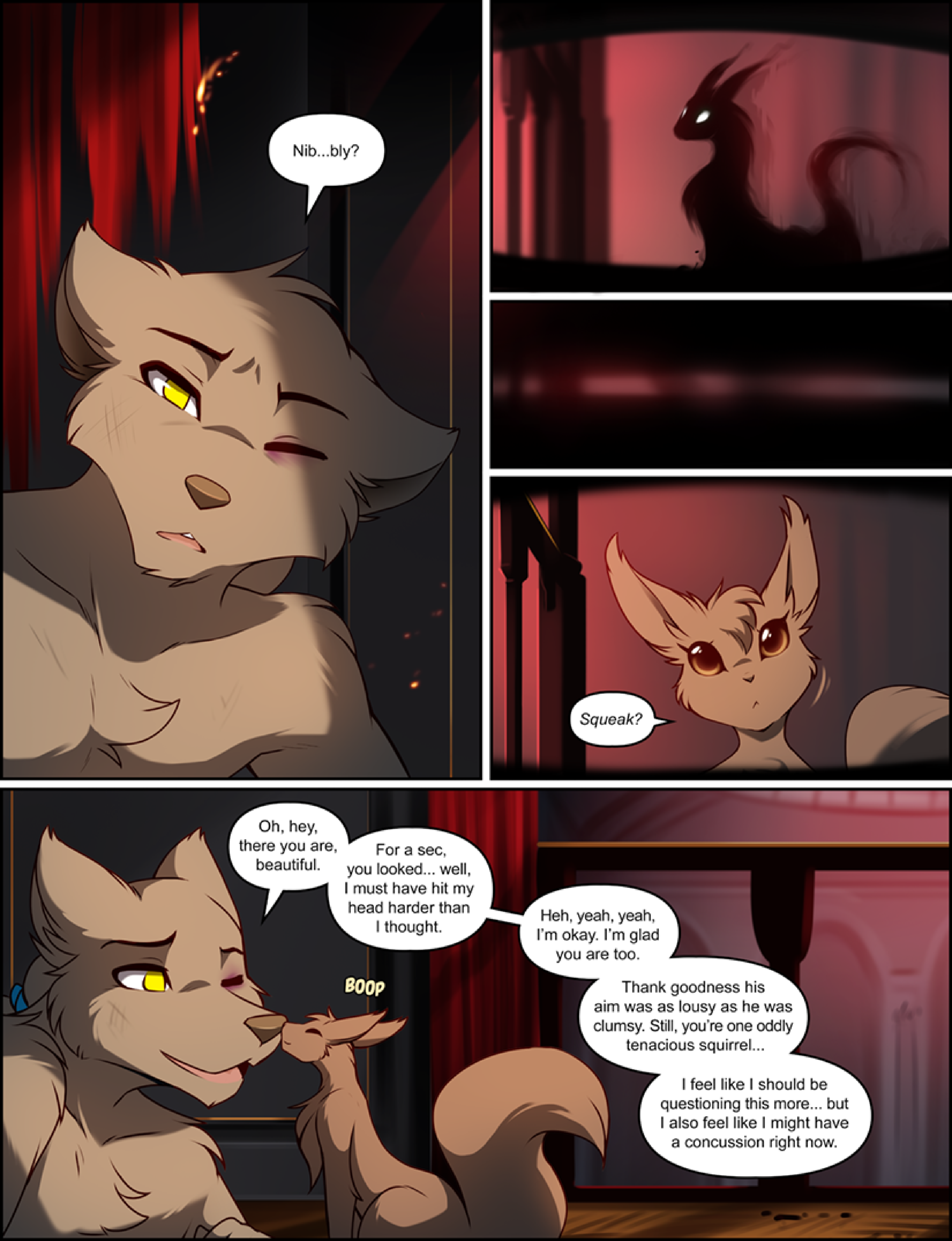

‹Come out!
I can smell you behind that curtain. You're injured.
Show yourself and I'll make it quick.›
‹If you run, I will catch you, and I will make it hurt.
Don't force me to—›
GRRRRRRRRRR!
Huh?
GRRRRR-RRRRRRRR
Wha–?
Nibs?!
‹The hell? I've never heard a squirrel growling like *that* before...
Shoo, ya little rat!›

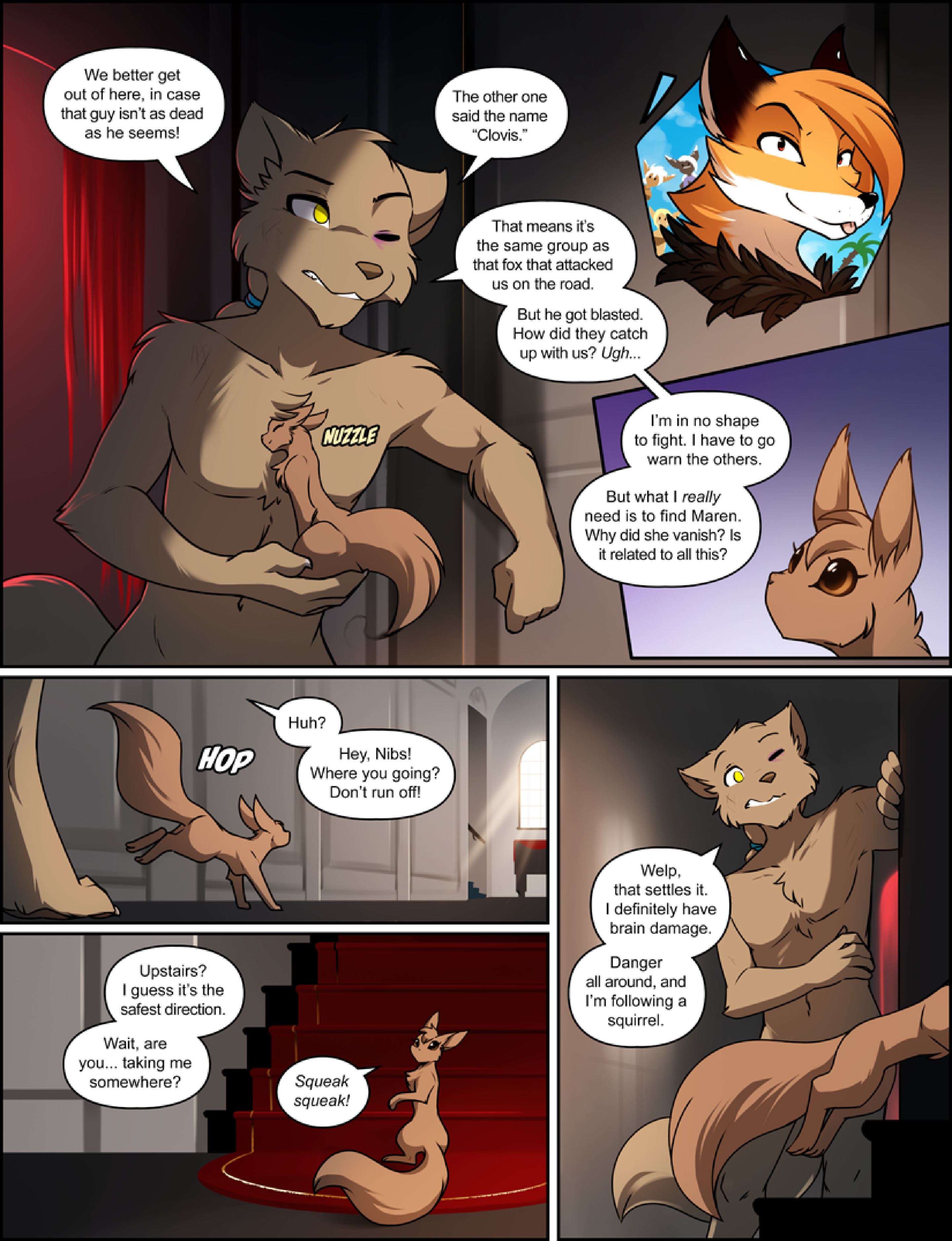

‹This a pet of yours?›
‹I'd blast it, but It'd just be a waste of magic to— *ah!*
Hey!›
‹What's wrong with this thing?!
Doesn't it have any survival instinct at all?›
‹Get off of me! Get—›
CHOMP!
Whimper...

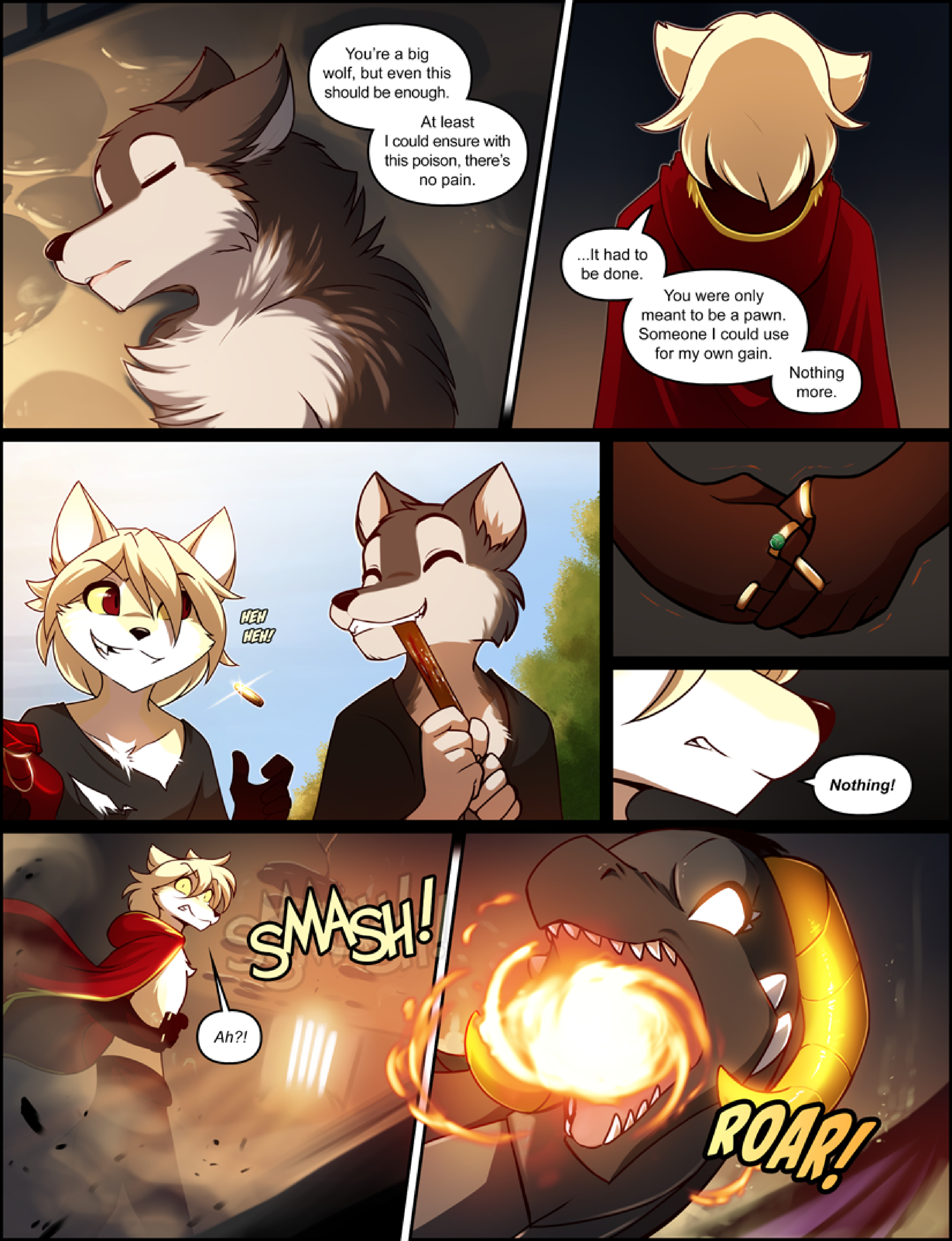

AGH!
Ow! Ow! What the hell get out of— Ah! Argh!
Get...
OFF!
FLUMPH!
You...! *Ngh!*
I'll burn you to ash for this, you little—!
Ah!?
CHITTER
My mana!
How did it know to...?
Urgh...
You're no ordinary squirrel. What are you?
A familiar?
Think you're a clever little shit, don't you!?

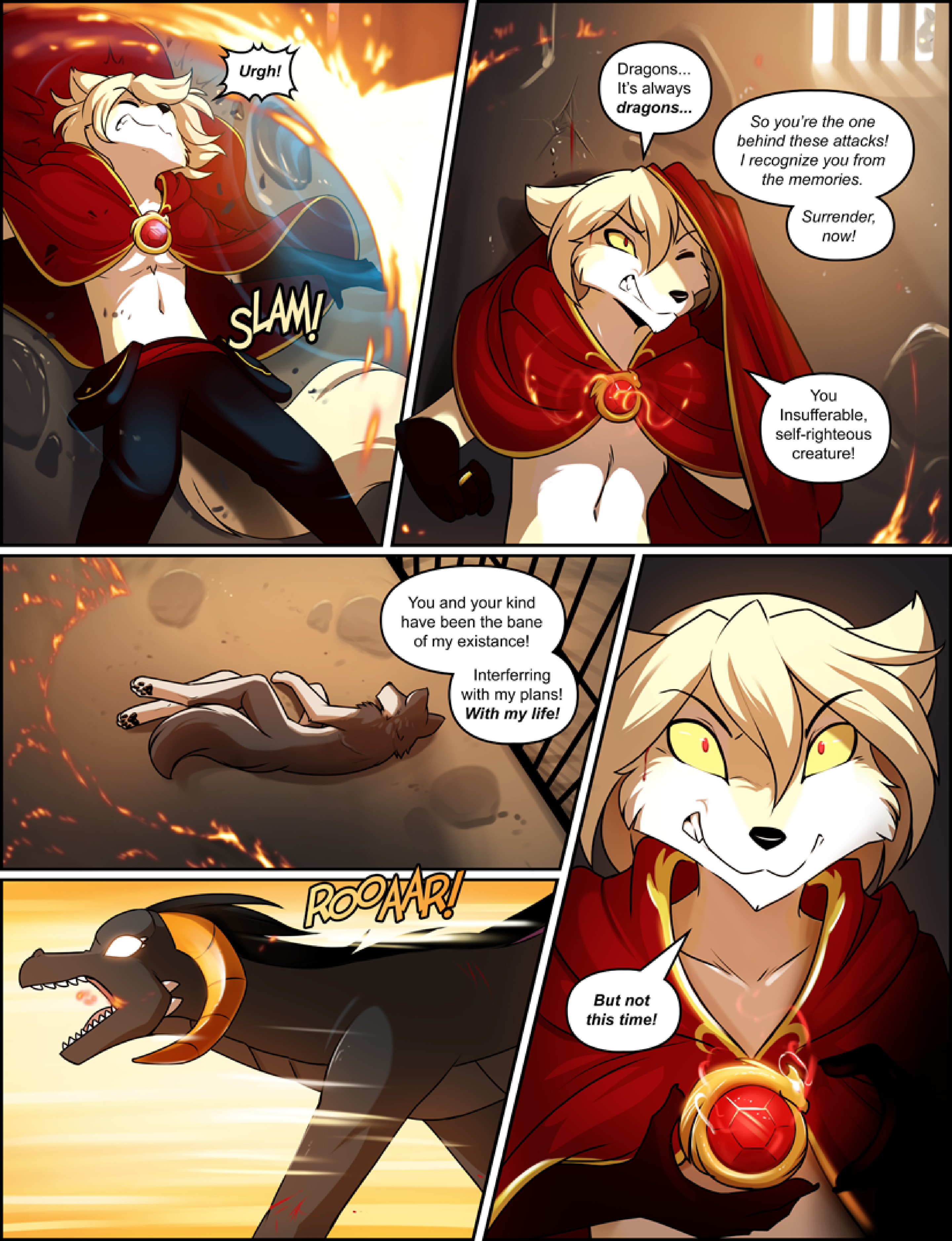

‹Well guess what...?›
‹You're not as clever as you think you are!›
FWOSH!
Nibs!
BOOM!
Argh!
‹What kind of amateur do you take me for?!›
Urgh...
‹You think there's anyone in the guild who doesn't hide mana in case of an emergency?›
Agh!
‹That stupid rat! A quicker death than it deserved...›
‹But *you*... you're going to pay for what it did to me! I'm going to–!›
...?

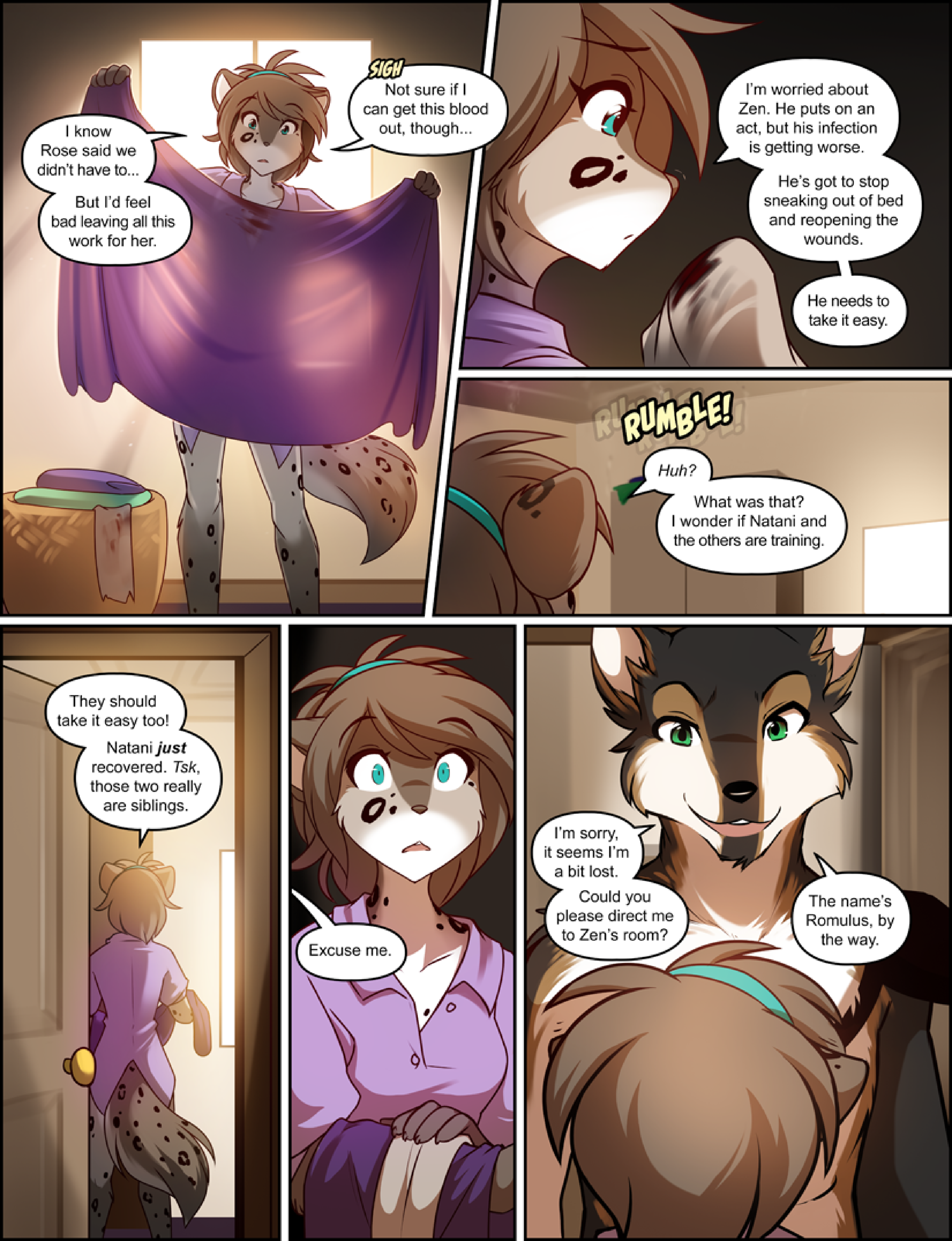

Ah?!
What the hell?! What is tha—!
THUD!
Ergh!
CRACK!
AAAAAAAAAAAH!
Ngh...

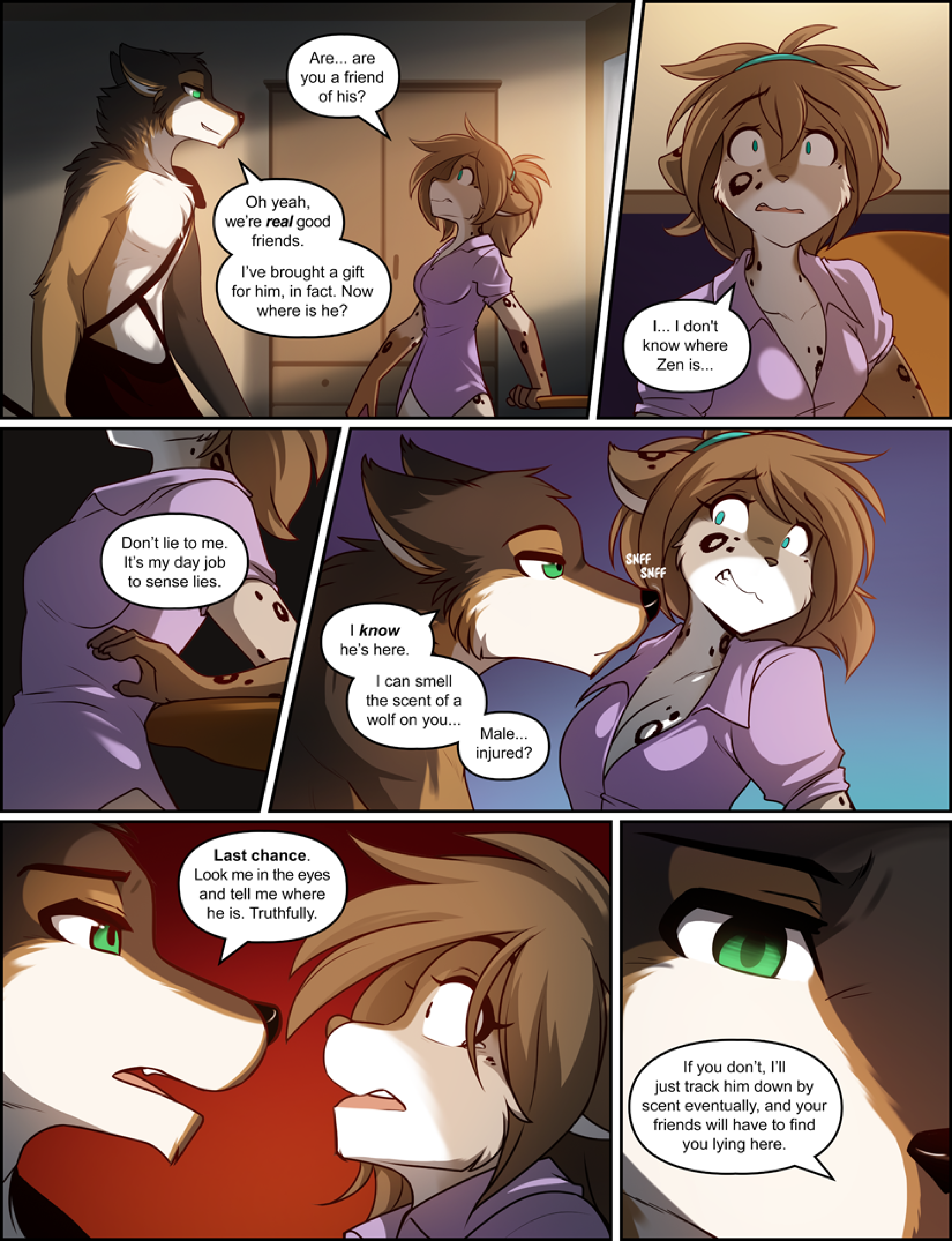

Nib...bly?
Squeak?
Oh, hey, there you are, beautiful.
For a sec, you looked... well, I must have hit my head harder than I thought.
Heh, yeah, yeah, I'm okay. I'm glad you are too.
BOOP
Thank goodness his aim was as lousy as he was clumsy. Still, you're one oddly tenacious squirrel...
I feel like I should be questioning this more... but I also feel like I might have a concussion right now.

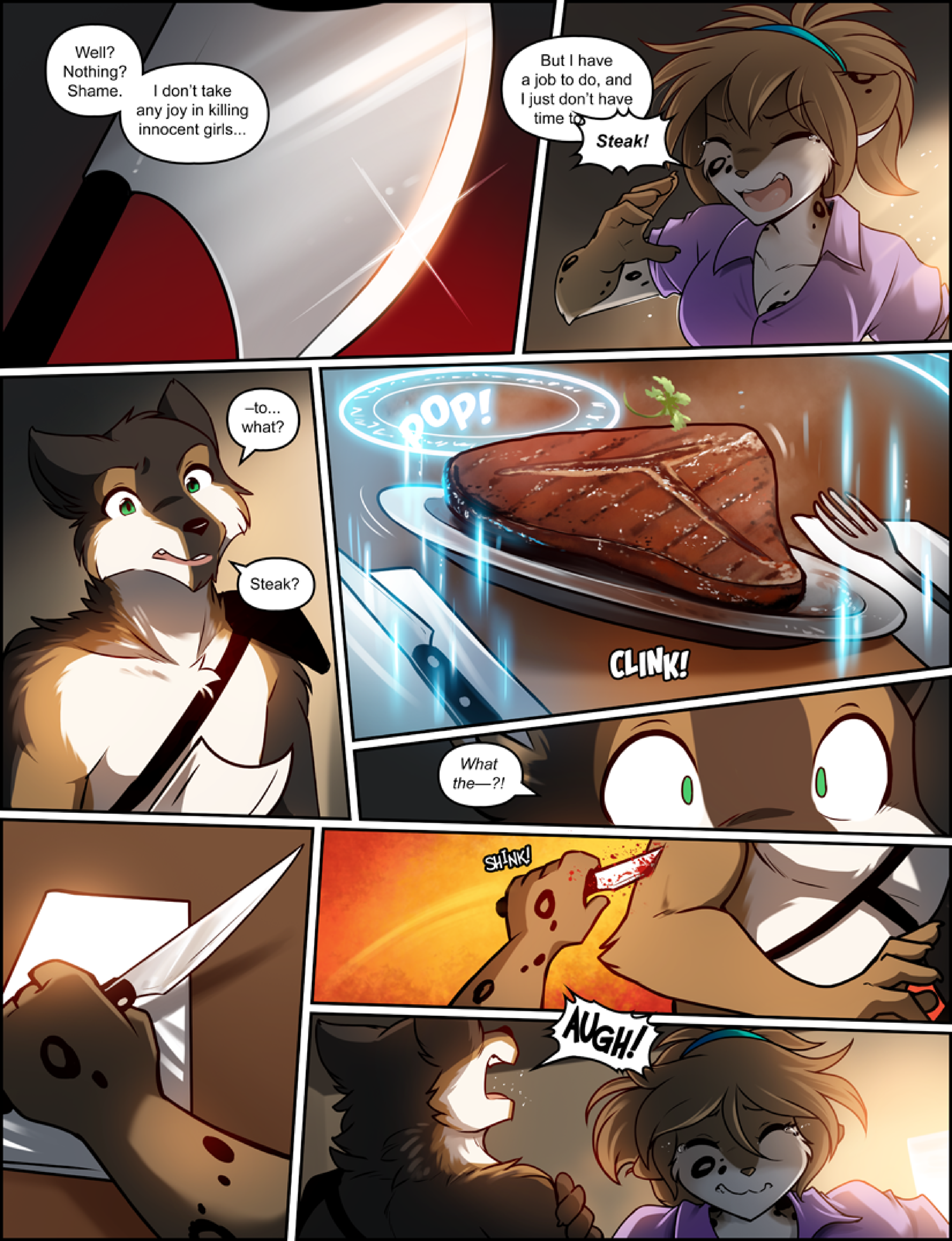

We better get out of here, in case that guy isn't as dead as he seems!
The other one said the name "Clovis."
That means it's the same group as that fox that attacked us on the road.
But he got blasted. How did they catch up with us? *Ugh...*
NUZZLE
I'm in no shape to fight. I have to go warn the others.
But what I *really* need is to find Maren. Why did she vanish? Is it related to all this?
HOP
Huh?
Hey, Nibs! Where you going? Don't run off!
Upstairs? I guess it's the safest direction.
Wait, are you... taking me somewhere?
Squeak squeak!
Welp, that settles it. I definitely have brain damage.
Danger all around, and I'm following a squirrel.

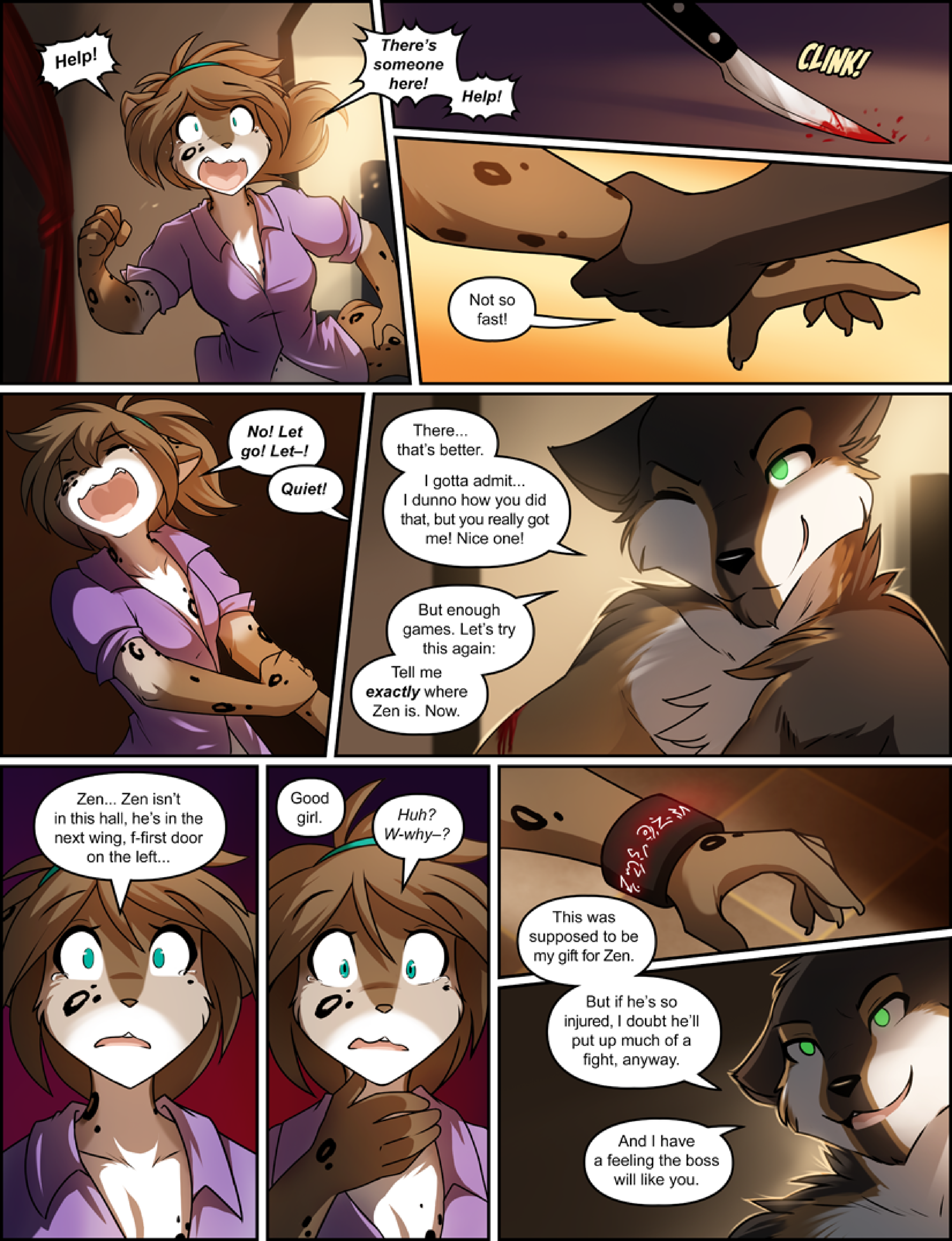

You're a big wolf, but even this should be enough.
At least I could ensure with this poison, there's no pain.
...It had to be done.
You were only meant to be a pawn. Someone I could use for my own gain.
Nothing more.
HEH HEH!
Nothing!
SMASH!
Ah?!
ROAR!

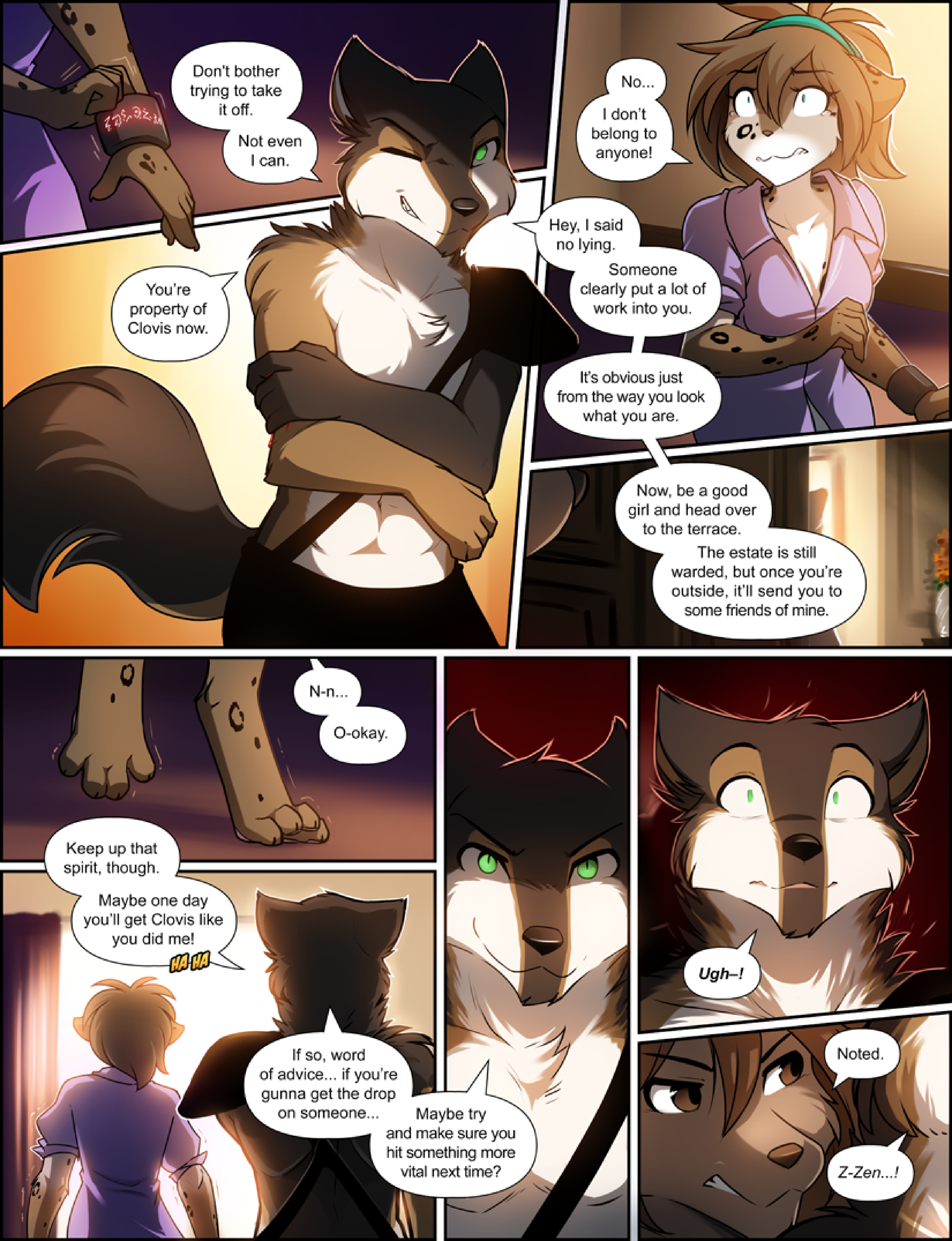

Urgh!
SLAM!
Dragons... It's always **dragons...**
So you're the one behind these attacks! I recognize you from the memories.
Surrender, now!
You Insufferable, self-righteous creature!
You and your kind have been the bane of my existance!
Interferring with my plans! ***With my life!***
ROOAAR!
But not this time!

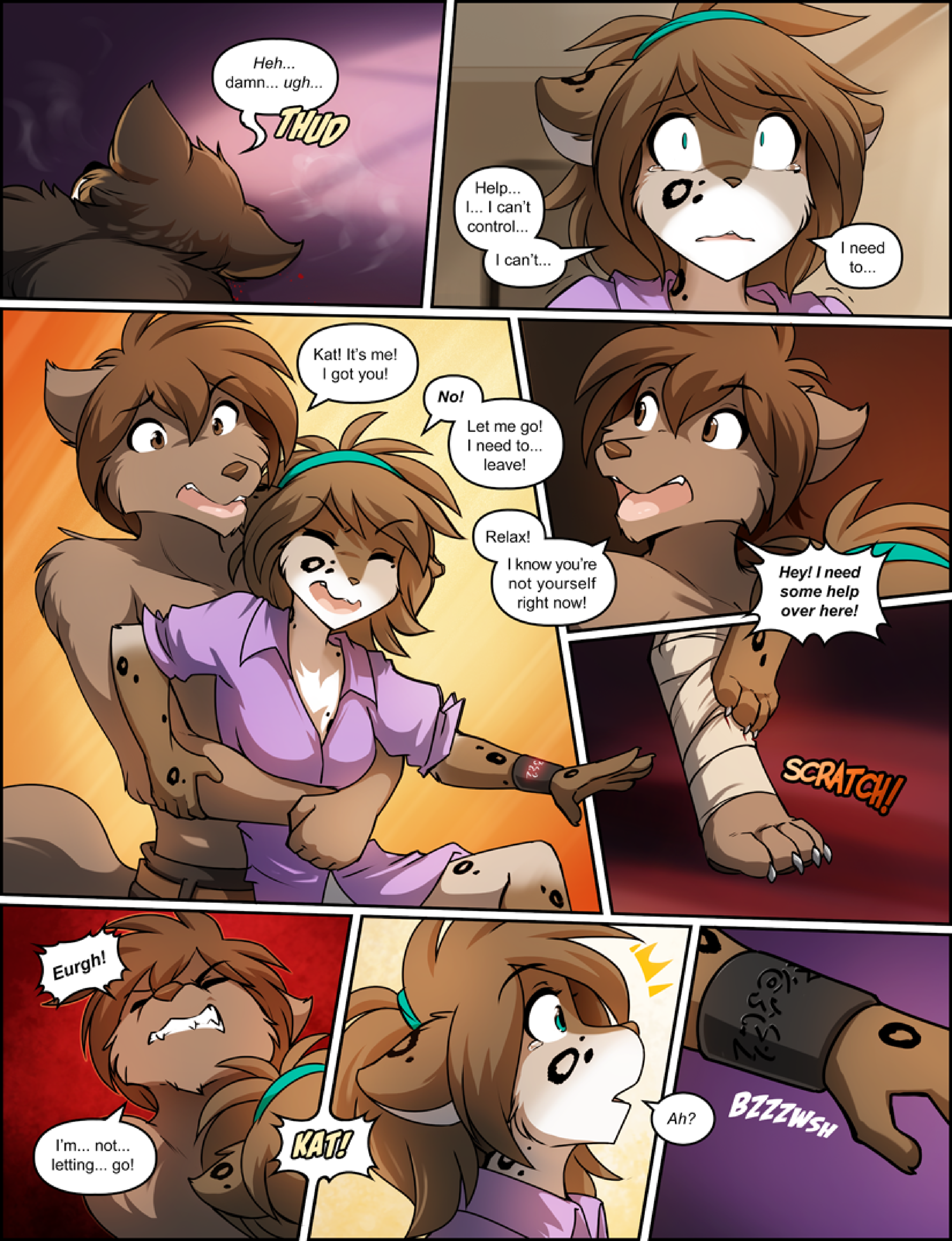

I know Rose said we didn't have to...
But I'd feel bad leaving all this work for her.
SIGH
Not sure if I can get this blood out, though...
I'm worried about Zen. He puts on an act, but his infection is getting worse.
He's got to stop sneaking out of bed and reopening the wounds.
He needs to take it easy.
RUMBLE!
Huh?
What was that? I wonder if Natani and the others are training.
They should take it easy too!
Natani *just* recovered. *Tsk*, those two really are siblings.
Excuse me.
I'm sorry, it seems I'm a bit lost.
Could you please direct me to Zen's room?
The name's Romulus, by the way.

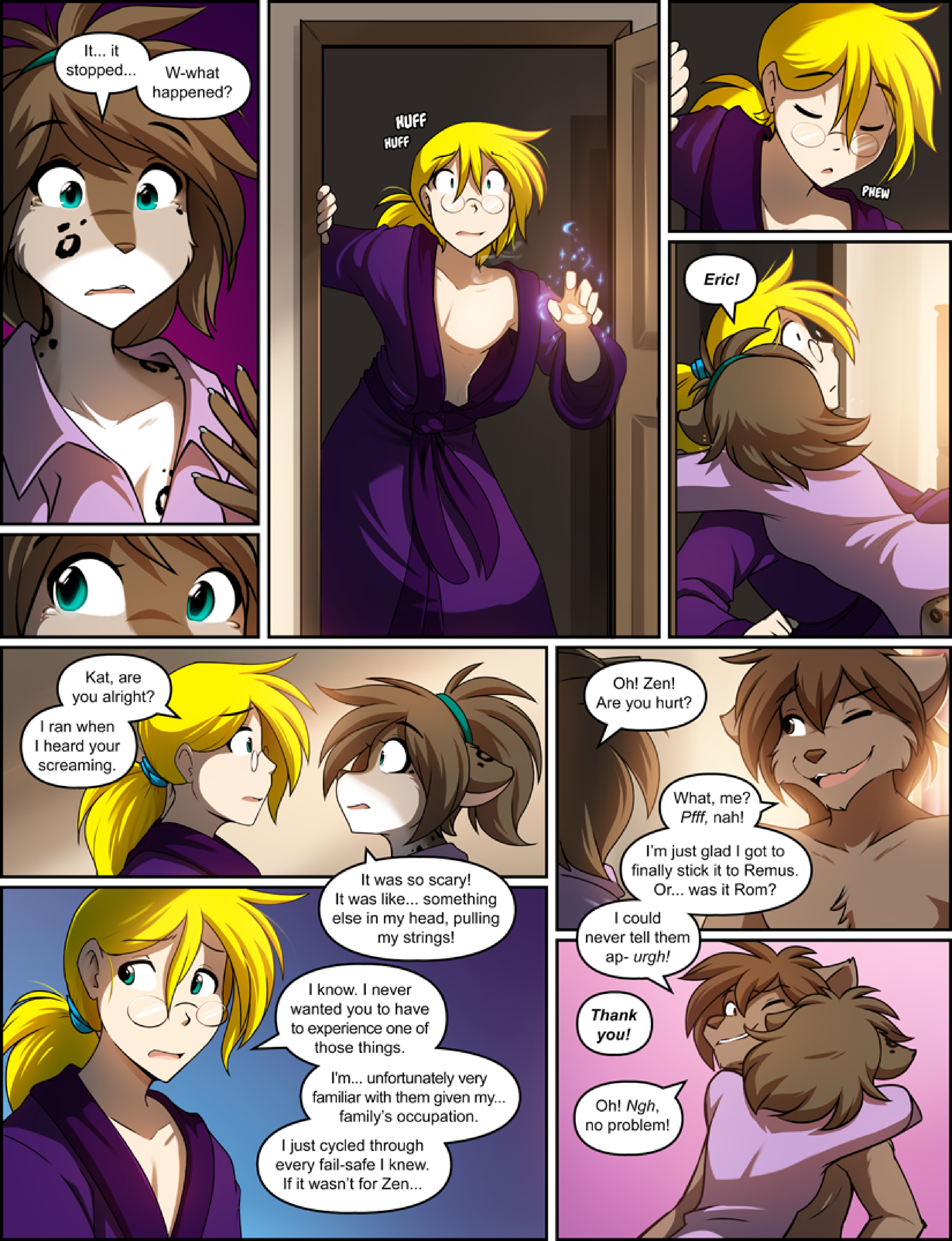

Are... are you a friend of his?
Oh yeah, we're ***real*** good friends.
I've brought a gift for him, in fact. Now where is he?
I... I don't know where Zen is...
Don't lie to me. It's my day job to sense lies.
SNFF SNFF
I ***know*** he's here.
I can smell the scent of a wolf on you...
Male... injured?
Last chance. Look me in the eyes and tell me where he is. Truthfully.
If you don't, I'll just track him down by scent eventually, and your friends will have to find you lying here.

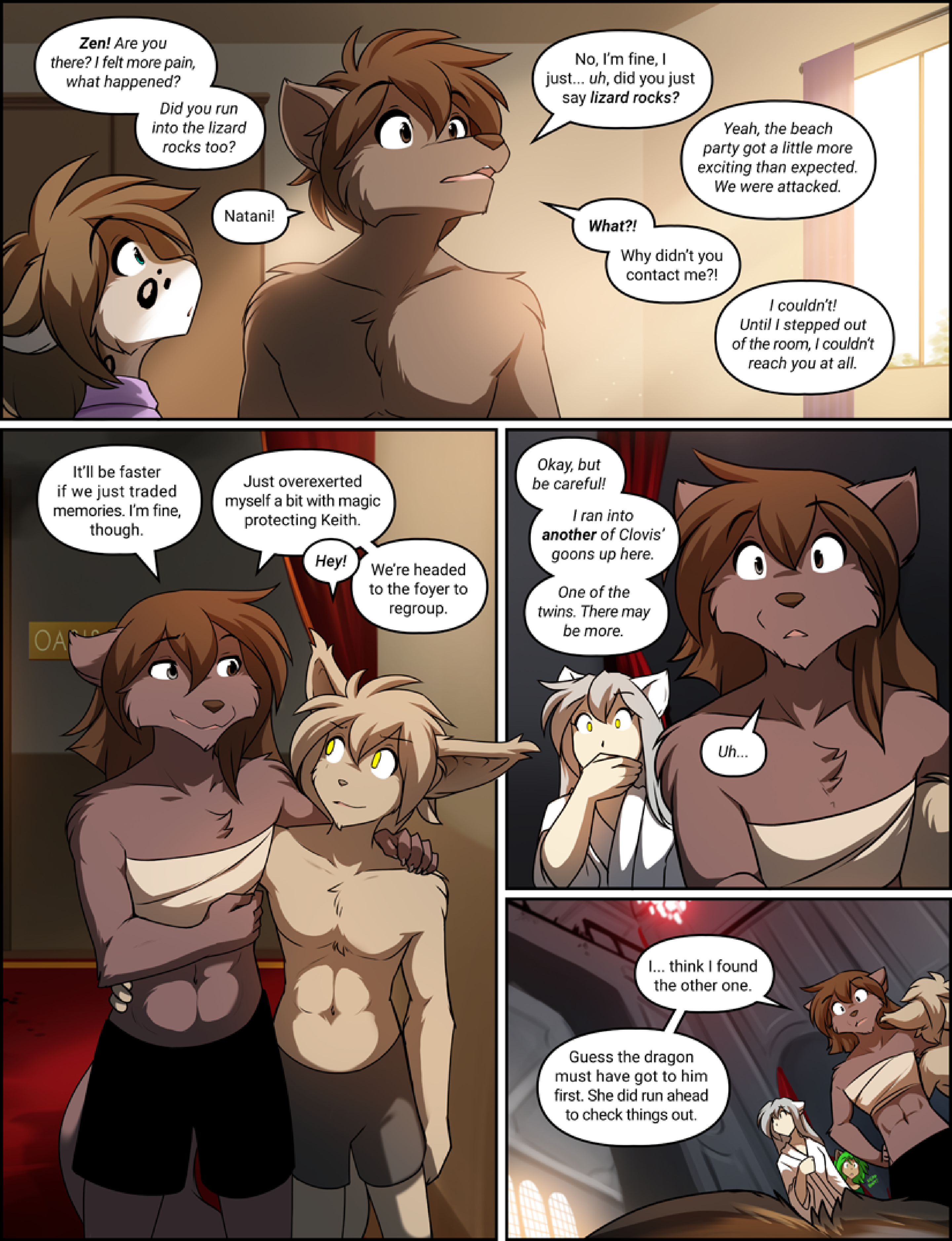

Well? Nothing? Shame.
I don't take any joy in killing innocent girls...
But I have a job to do, and I just don't have time to
Steak!
–to... what?
Steak?
POP!
CLINK!
What the—?!
SHINK!
AUGH!

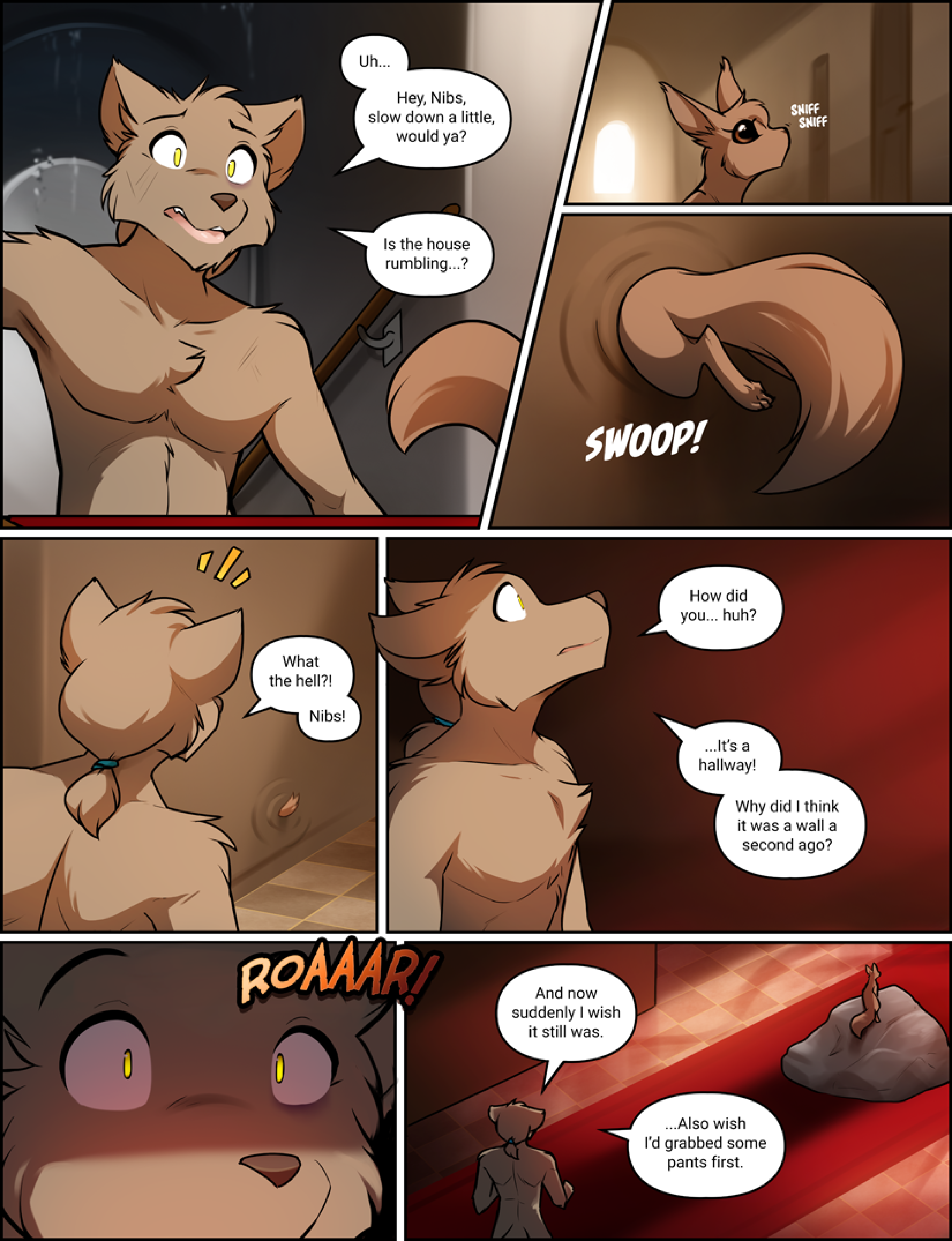

Help!
There's someone here!
Help!
CLINK!
Not so fast!
No! Let go! Let–!
Quiet!
There... that's better.
I gotta admit... I dunno how you did that, but you really got me! Nice one!
But enough games. Let's try this again:
Tell me *exactly* where Zen is. Now.
Zen... Zen isn't in this hall, he's in the next wing, f-first door on the left...
Good girl.
Huh? W-why–?
This was supposed to be my gift for Zen.
But if he's so injured, I doubt he'll put up much of a fight, anyway.
And I have a feeling the boss will like you.

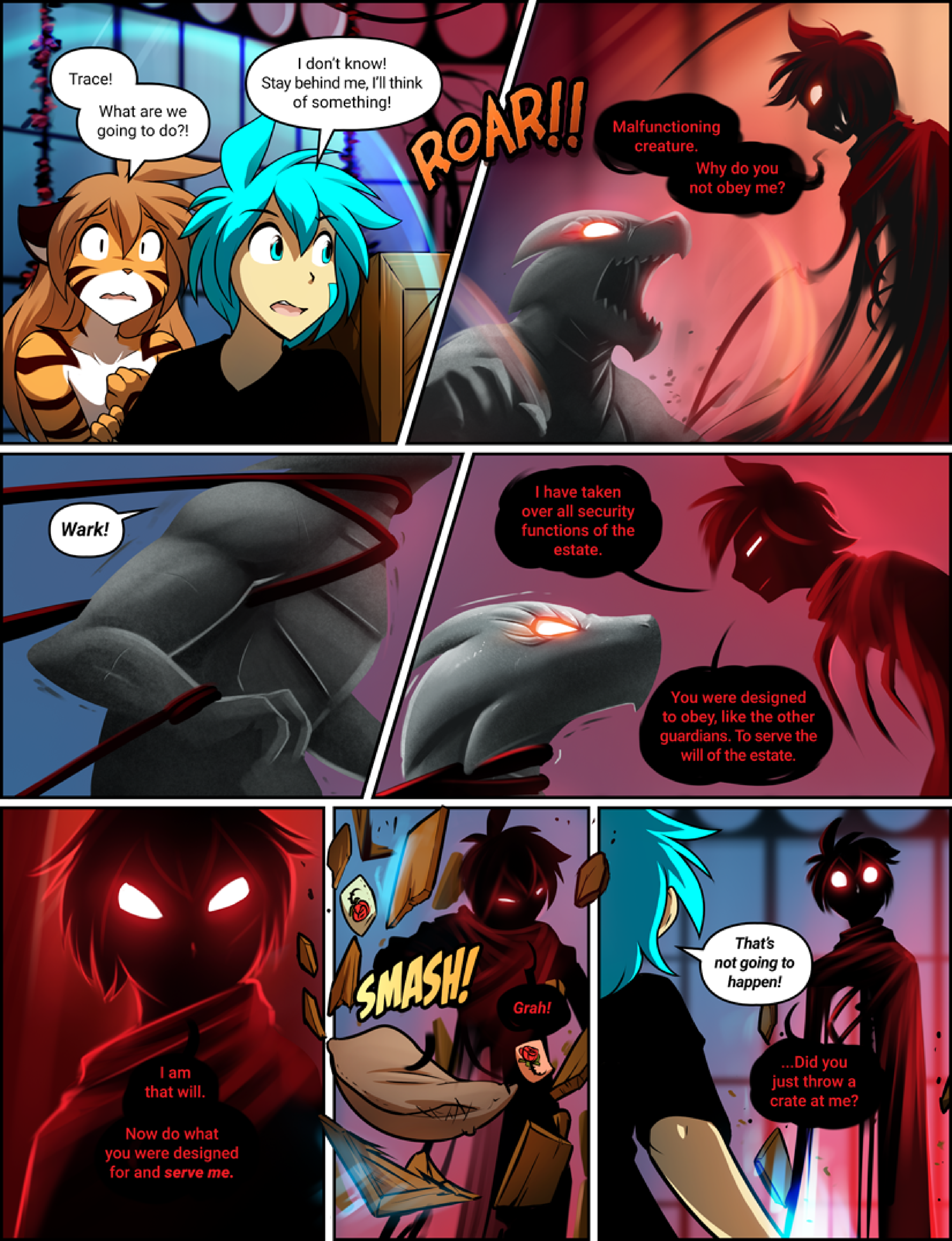

Don't bother trying to take it off.
Not even I can.
You're property of Clovis now.
No... I don't belong to anyone!
Hey, I said no lying.
Someone clearly put a lot of work into you.
It's obvious just from the way you look what you are.
Now, be a good girl and head over to the terrace.
The estate is still warded, but once you're outside, it'll send you to some friends of mine.
N-n...
O-okay.
Keep up that spirit, though.
Maybe one day you'll get Clovis like you did me!
HA HA
If so, word of advice... if you're gunna get the drop on someone...
Maybe try and make sure you hit something more vital next time?
Ugh–!
Noted.
Z-Zen...!

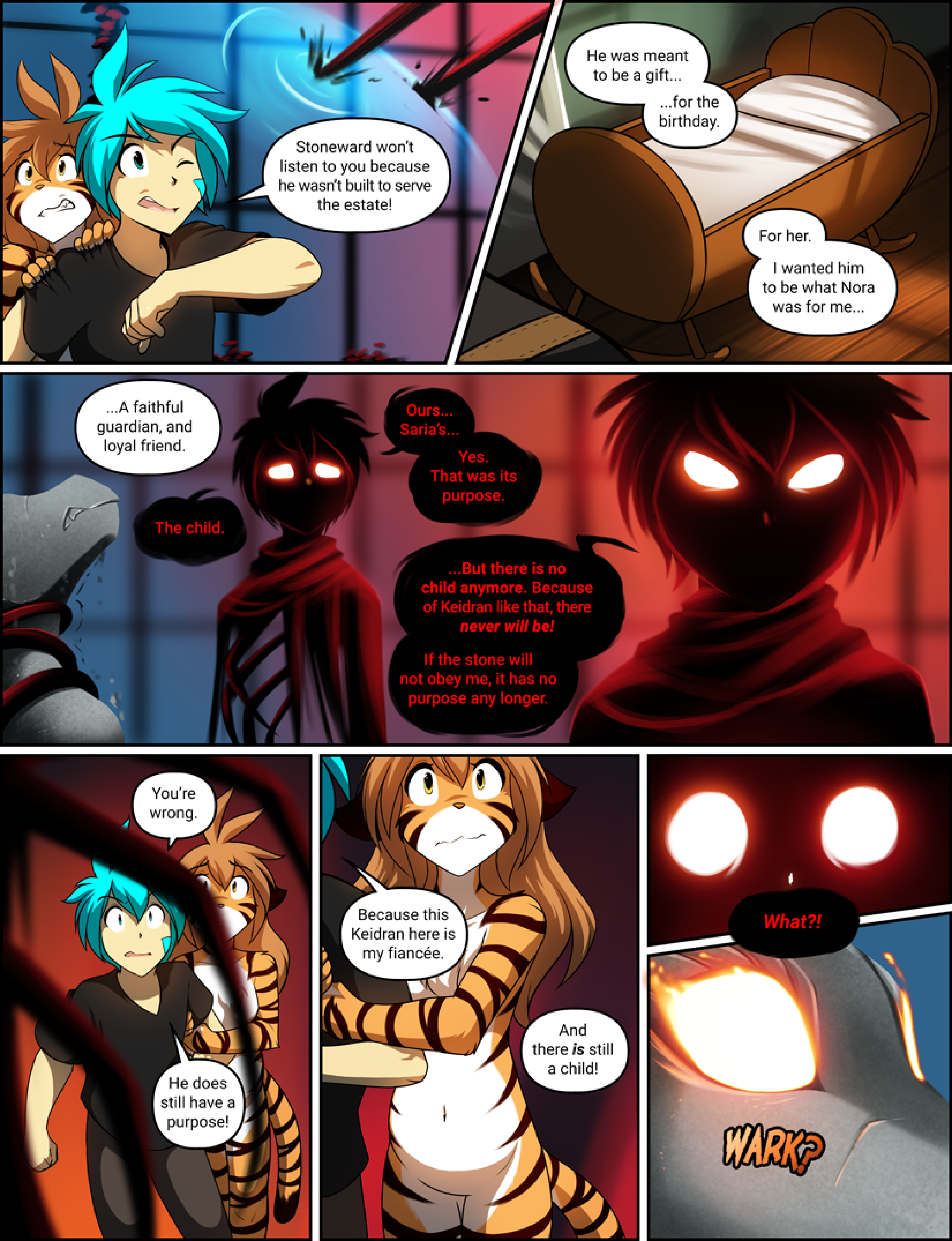

Heh... damn... ugh...
THUD
Help... I... I can't control...
I can't...
I need to...
Kat! It's me! I got you!
No! Let me go! I need to... leave!
Relax! I know you're not yourself right now!
Hey! I need some help over here!
SCRATCH!
Eurgh!
I'm... not... letting... go!
KAT!
Ah?
BZZZWSH

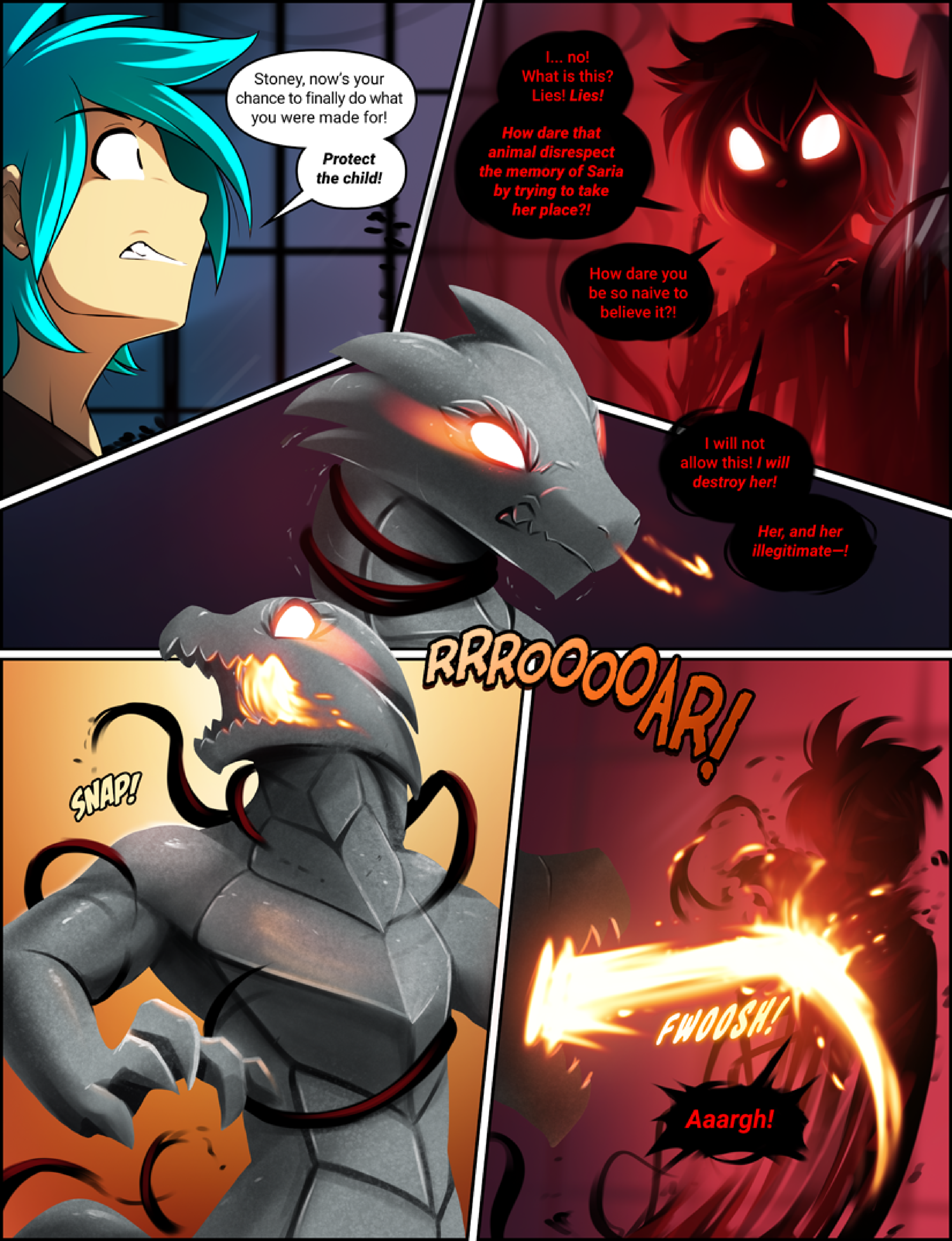

It... it stopped...
W-what happened?
HUFF
HUFF
PHEW
Eric!
Kat, are you alright?
I ran when I heard your screaming.
It was so scary! It was like... something else in my head, pulling my strings!
I know. I never wanted you to have to experience one of those things.
I'm... unfortunately very familiar with them given my... family's occupation.
I just cycled through every fail-safe I knew. If it wasn't for Zen...
Oh! Zen! Are you hurt?
What, me? *Pfff,* nah!
I'm just glad I got to finally stick it to Remus. Or... was it Rom?
I could never tell them ap- *urgh!*
Thank you!
Oh! *Ngh,* no problem!

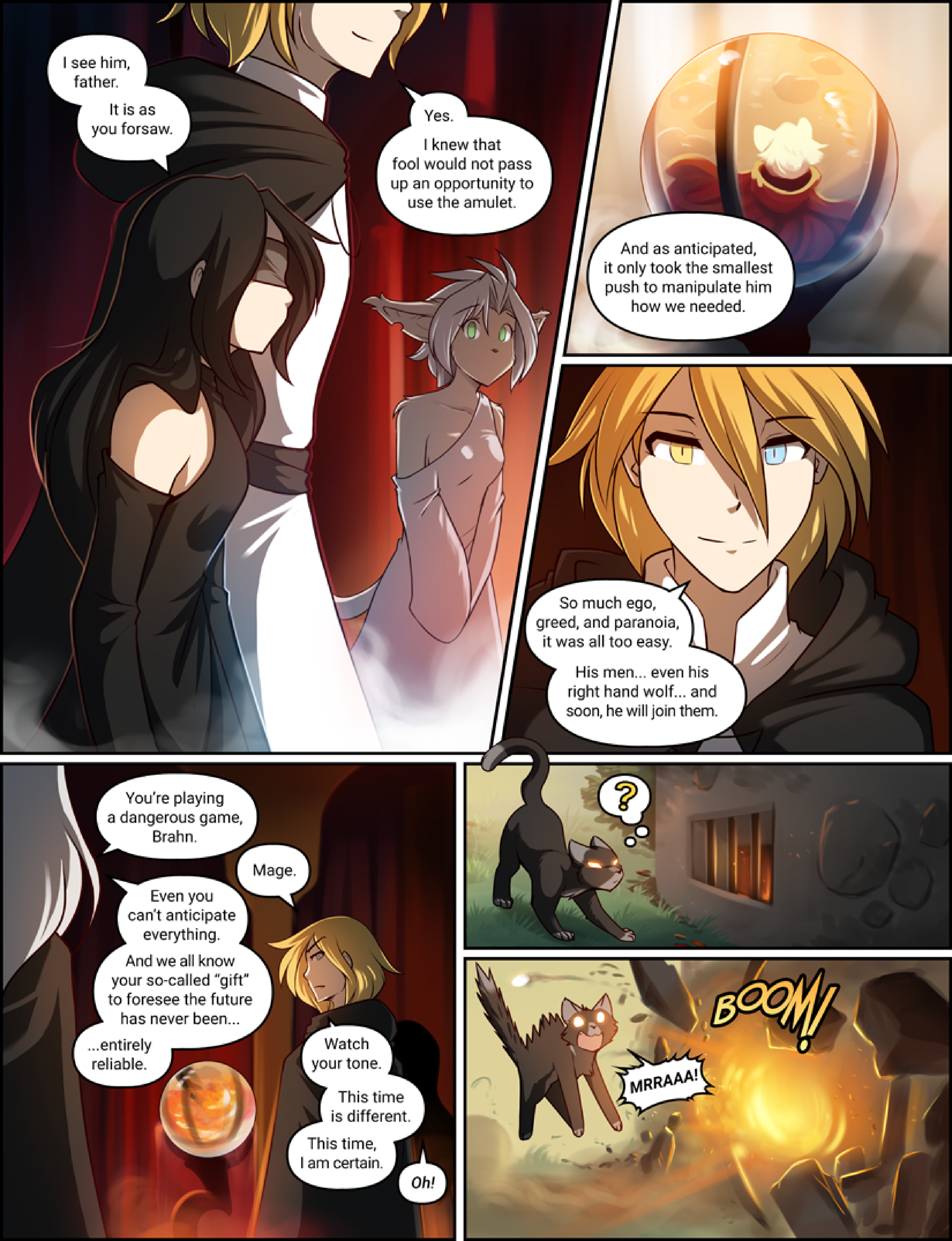

Zen! *Are you there? I felt more pain, what happened?*
Did you run into the lizard rocks too?
Natani!
No, I'm fine, I just... *uh*, did you just say ***lizard rocks?***
Yeah, the beach party got a little more exciting than expected. We were attacked.
What?!
Why didn't you contact me?!
I couldn't! Until I stepped out of the room, I couldn't reach you at all.
It'll be faster if we just traded memories. I'm fine, though.
Just overexerted myself a bit with magic protecting Keith.
Hey!
We're headed to the foyer to regroup.
Okay, but be careful!
I ran into ***another*** *of Clovis' goons up here.*
One of the twins. There may be more.
Uh...
I... think I found the other one.
Guess the dragon must have got to him first. She did run ahead to check things out.

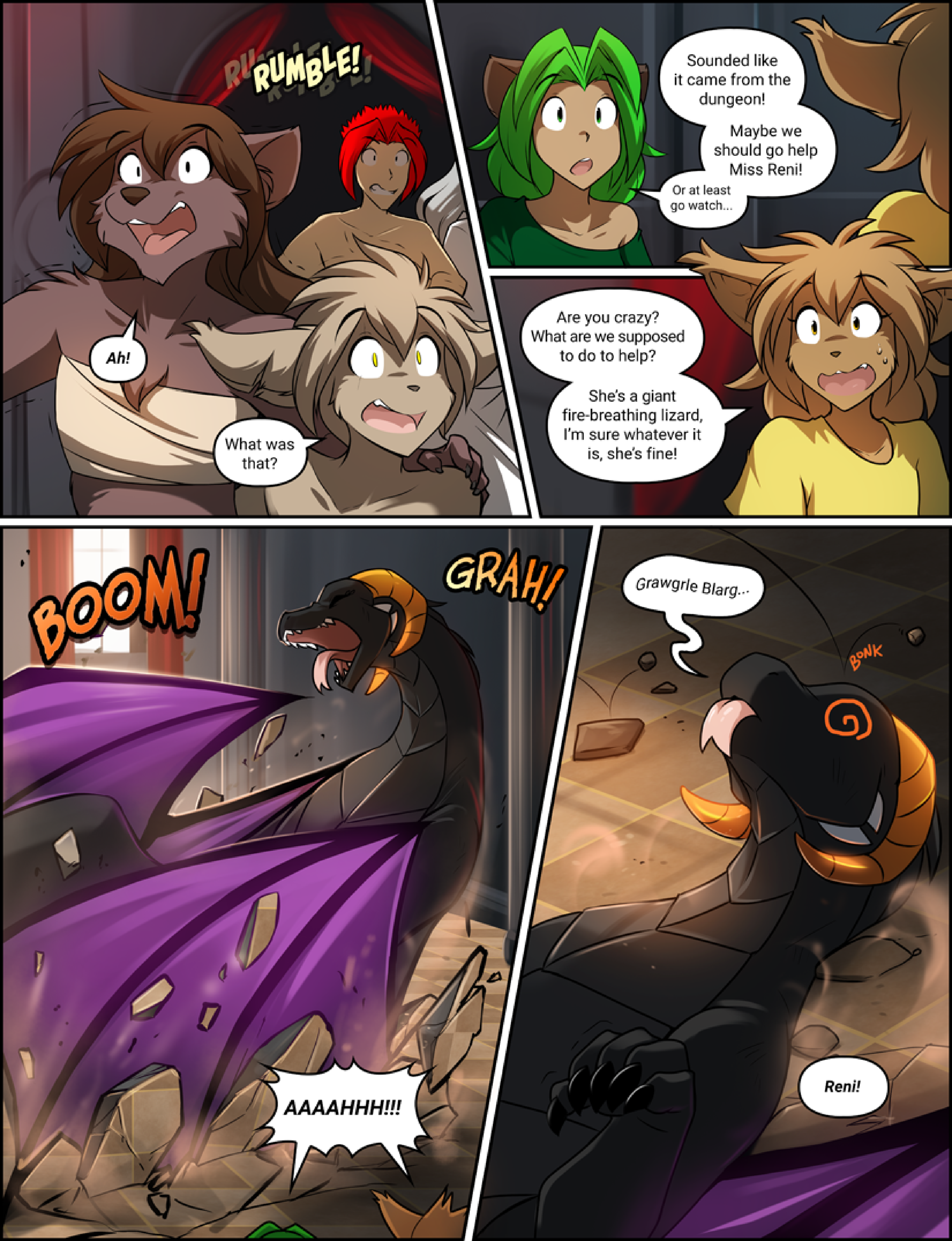

Uh...
Hey, Nibs, slow down a little, would ya?
Is the house rumbling...?
SNIFF SNIFF
SWOOP!
What the hell?!
Nibs!
How did you... huh?
...It's a hallway!
Why did I think it was a wall a second ago?
ROAAAR!
And now suddenly I wish it still was.
...Also wish I'd grabbed some pants first.


Trace!
What are we going to do?!
I don't know! Stay behind me, I'll think of something!
ROAR!!
Malfunctioning creature.
Why do you not obey me?
Wark!
I have taken over all security functions of the estate.
You were designed to obey, like the other guardians. To serve the will of the estate.
I am that will.
Now do what you were designed for and *serve me.*
SMASH!
Grah!
That's not going to happen!
...Did you just throw a crate at me?


Stoneward won't listen to you because he wasn't built to serve the estate!
He was meant to be a gift...
...for the birthday.
For her.
I wanted him to be what Nora was for me...
...A faithful guardian, and loyal friend.
The child.
Ours... Saria's...
Yes. That was its purpose.
...But there is no child anymore. Because of Keidran like that, there *never will be!*
If the stone will not obey me, it has no purpose any longer.
You're wrong.
He does still have a purpose!
Because this Keidran here is my fiancée.
And there *is* still a child!
What?!
WARK?


Stoney, now's your chance to finally do what you were made for!
Protect the child!
I... no! What is this? Lies! *Lies!*
How dare that animal disrespect the memory of Saria by trying to take her place?!
How dare you be so naive to believe it?!
I will not allow this! *I will destroy her!*
Her, and her illegitimate—!
RRROOOOOAR!
SNAP!
FWOOSH!
Aaargh!


I see him, father.
It is as you forsaw.
Yes.
I knew that fool would not pass up an opportunity to use the amulet.
And as anticipated, it only took the smallest push to manipulate him how we needed.
So much ego, greed, and paranoia, it was all too easy.
His men... even his right hand wolf... and soon, he will join them.
You're playing a dangerous game, Brahn.
Mage.
Even you can't anticipate everything.
And we all know your so-called "gift" to foresee the future has never been...
...entirely reliable.
Watch your tone.
This time is different.
This time, I am certain.
Oh!
?
BOOM!
MRRAAA!


RUMBLE!
Ah!
What was that?
Sounded like it came from the dungeon!
Maybe we should go help Miss Reni!
Or at least go watch...
Are you crazy? What are we supposed to do to help?
She's a giant fire-breathing lizard, I'm sure whatever it is, she's fine!
BOOM!
GRAH!
AAAAHHH!!!
Grawgrle Blarg...
BONK
Reni!

18TH ANNIVERSARY

TWOKINDS: VOLUME 5

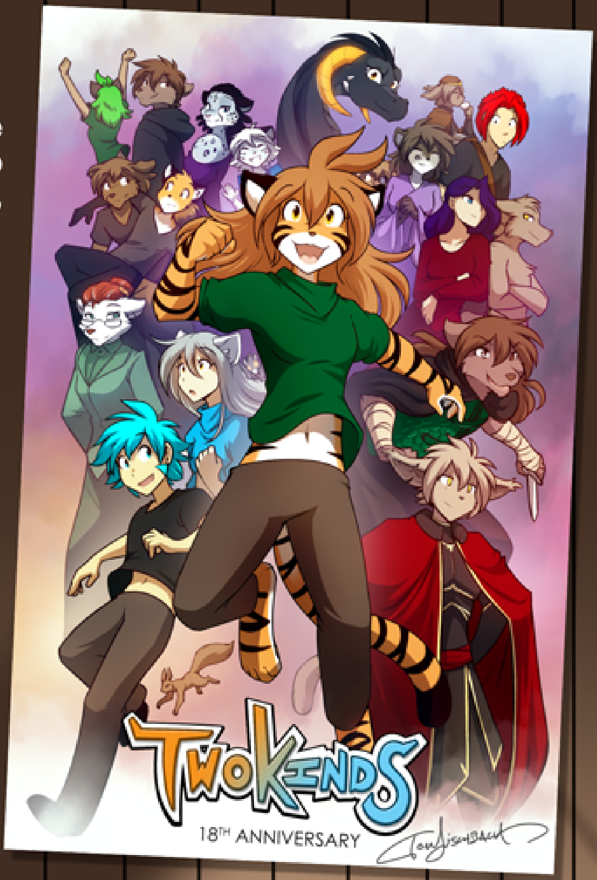
Preorders now available! Shipping Spring 2022

The fifth volume is finally ready to go to print! 168 pages, chronicling the return voyage from the Basitin Isles and Team B's introduction to wolf-form Raine. It's like the comic on the internet, but in a strange, paper-like format you can hold in real life!

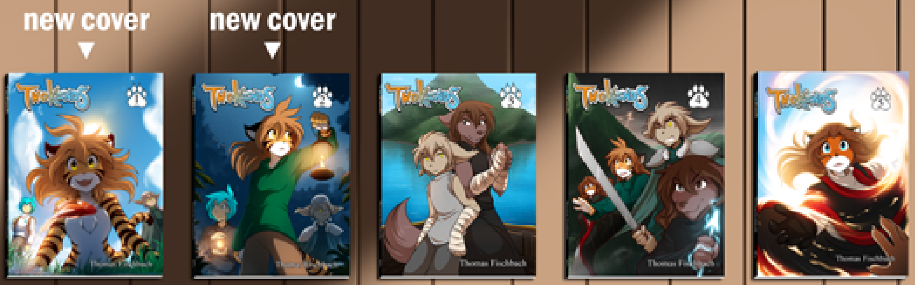
Manga (6 x 8 in) and Hardcover (8 x 10.5 in) variants

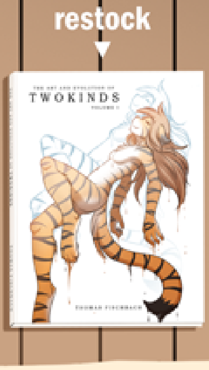
TwoKinds
5
Thomas Fischbach

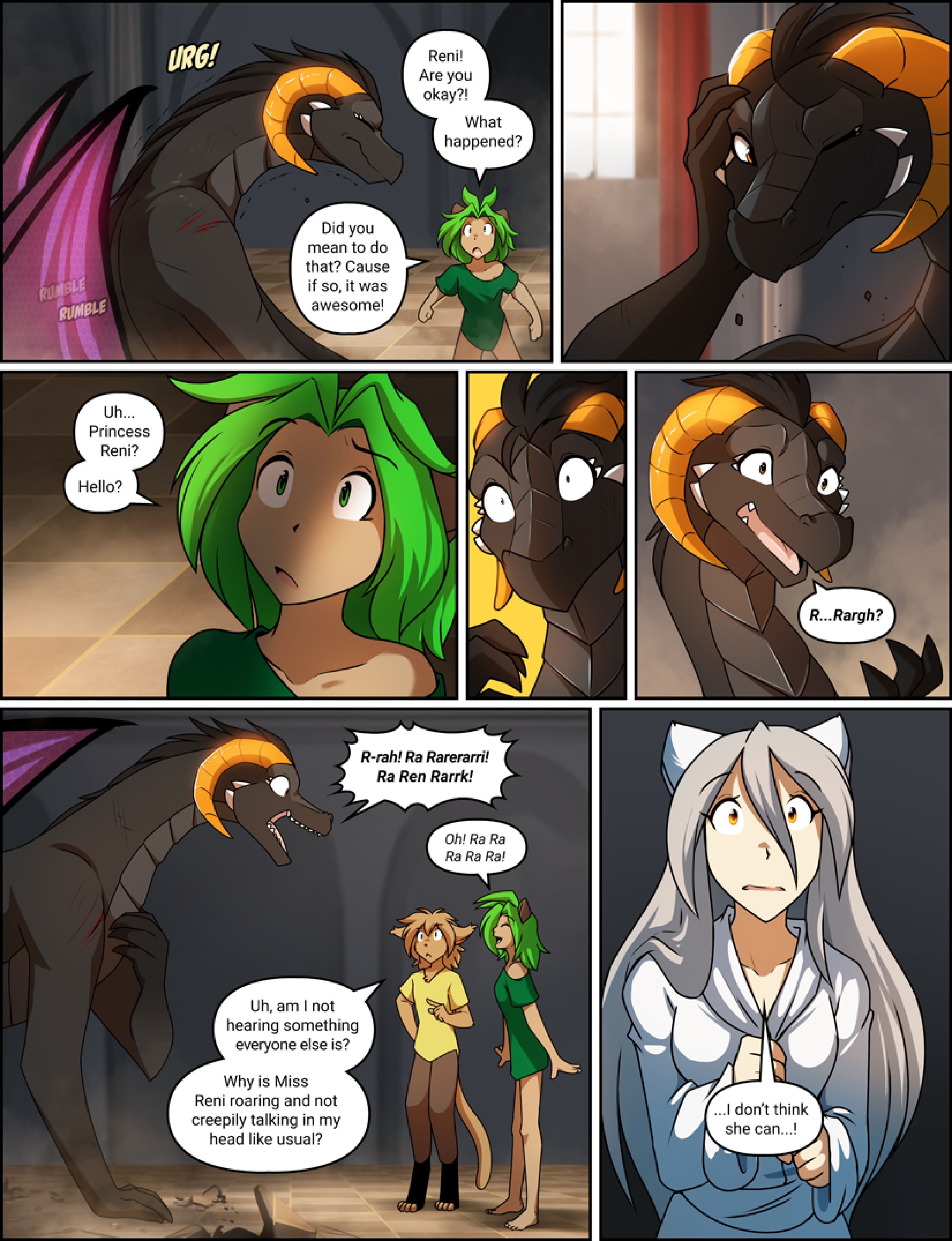
+

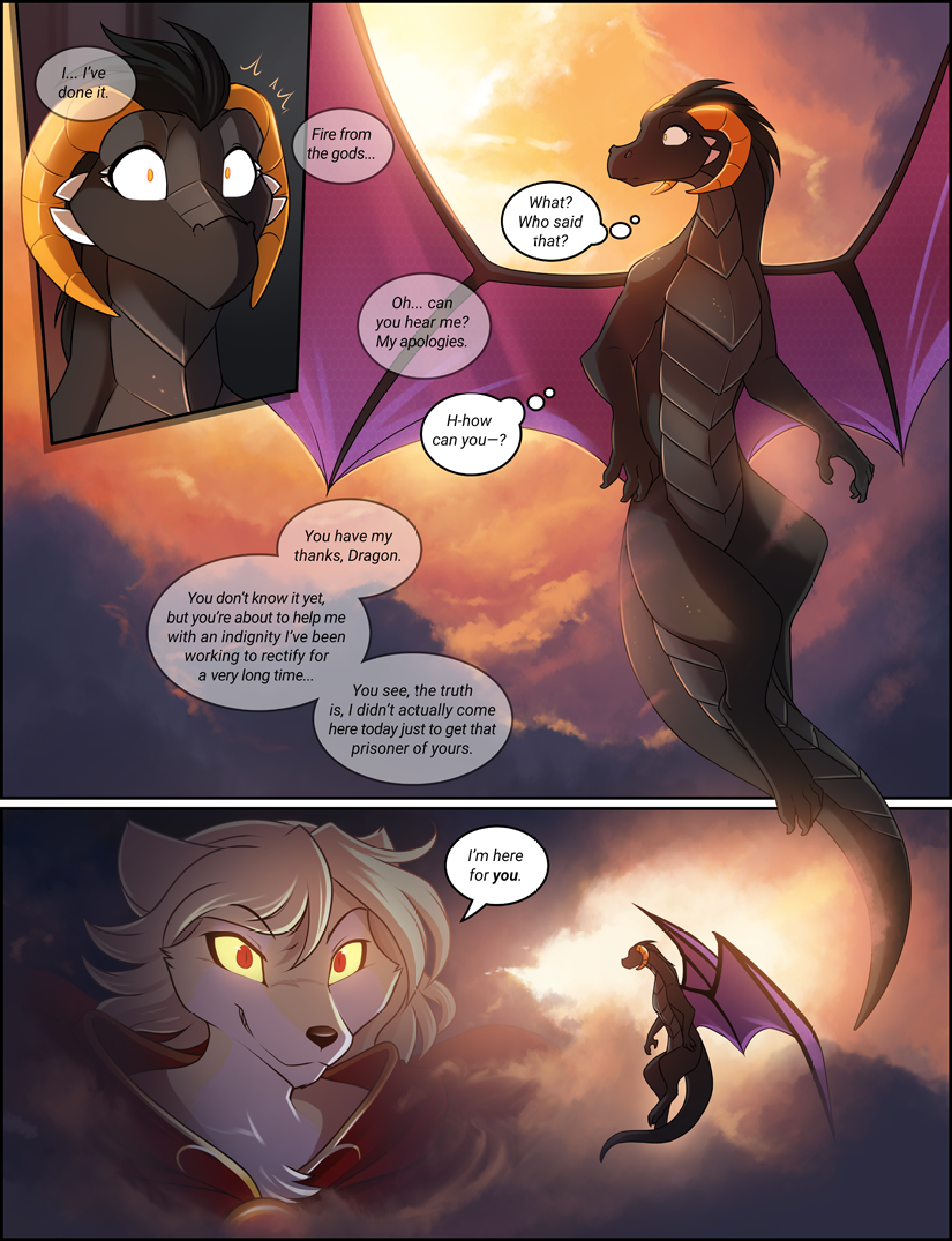

TwoKinds
18TH ANNIVERSARY

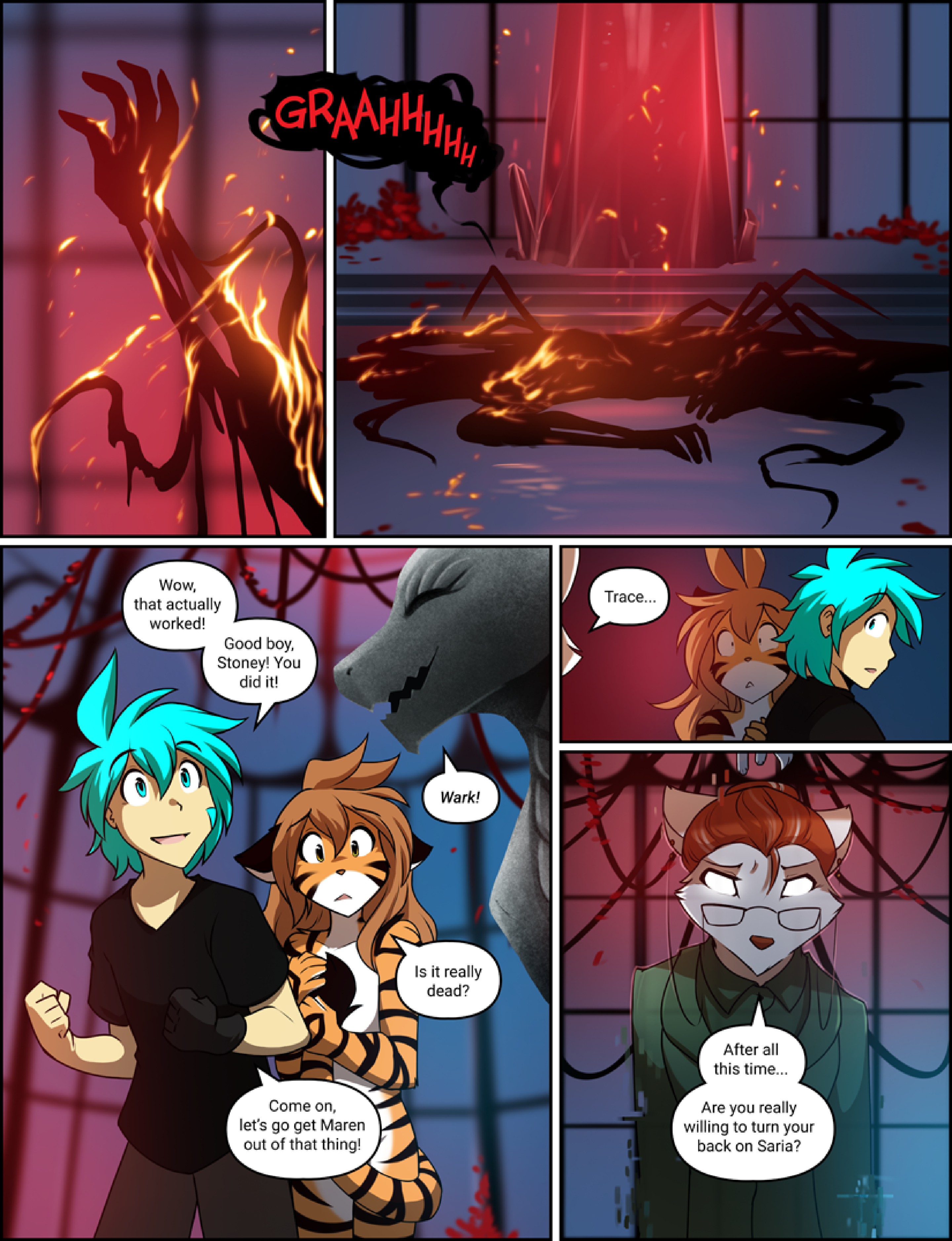
Preorder bonus:
Free signed anniversary poster for any that preorder Vol 5 while supplies last

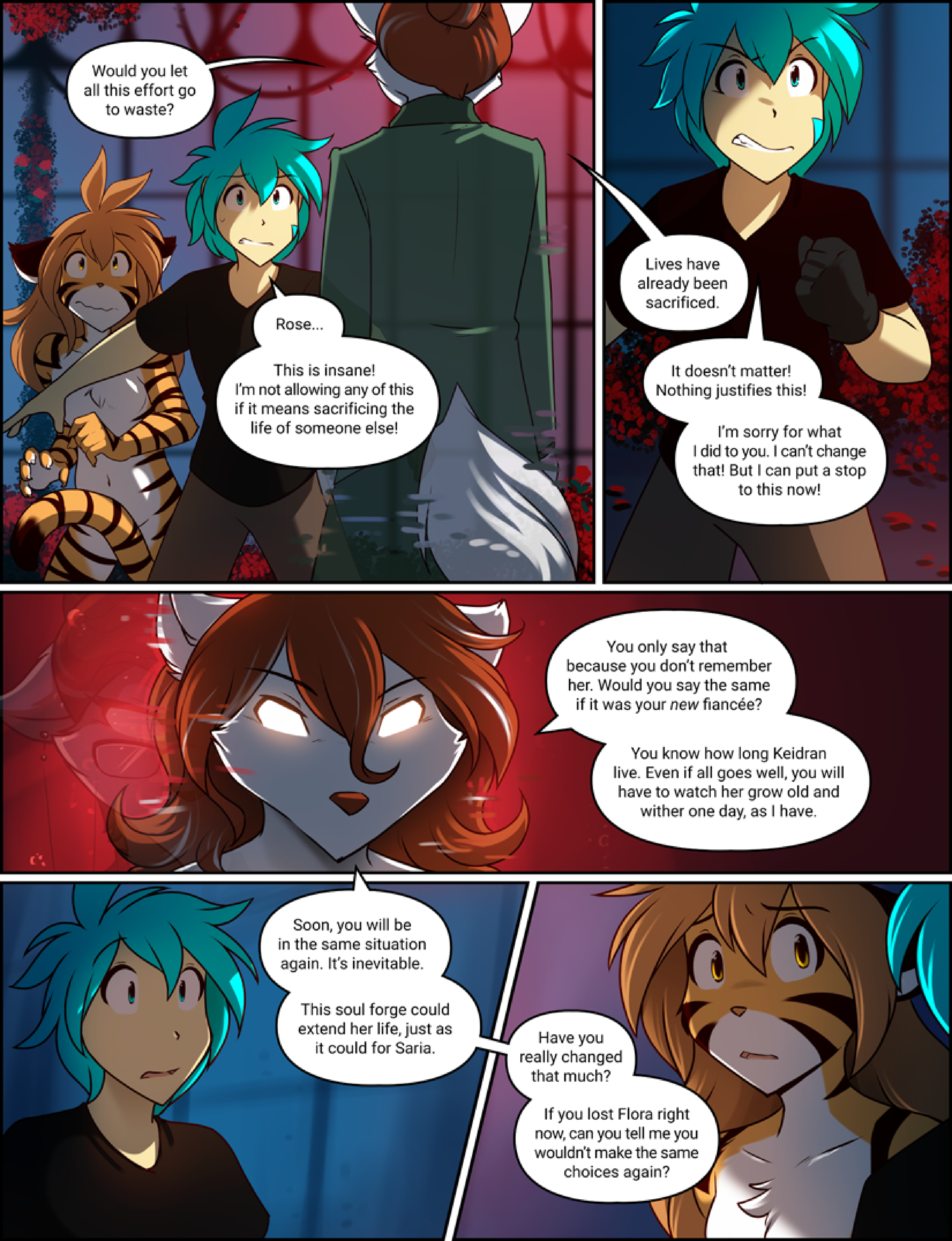

new cover
new cover
TwoKinds
Thomas Fischbach

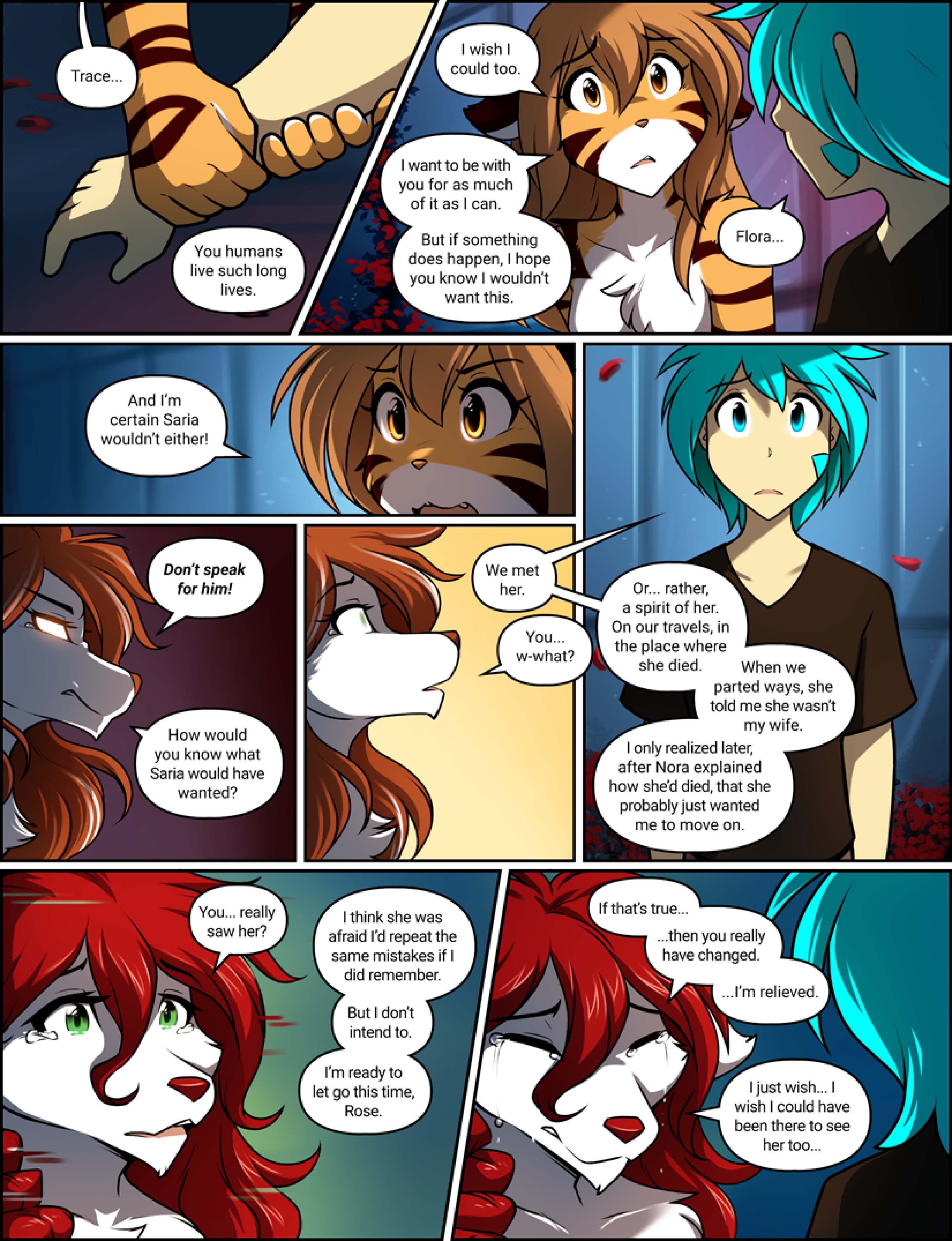

restock
THE ART AND EVOLUTION OF TWOKINDS
THOMAS FISCHBACH

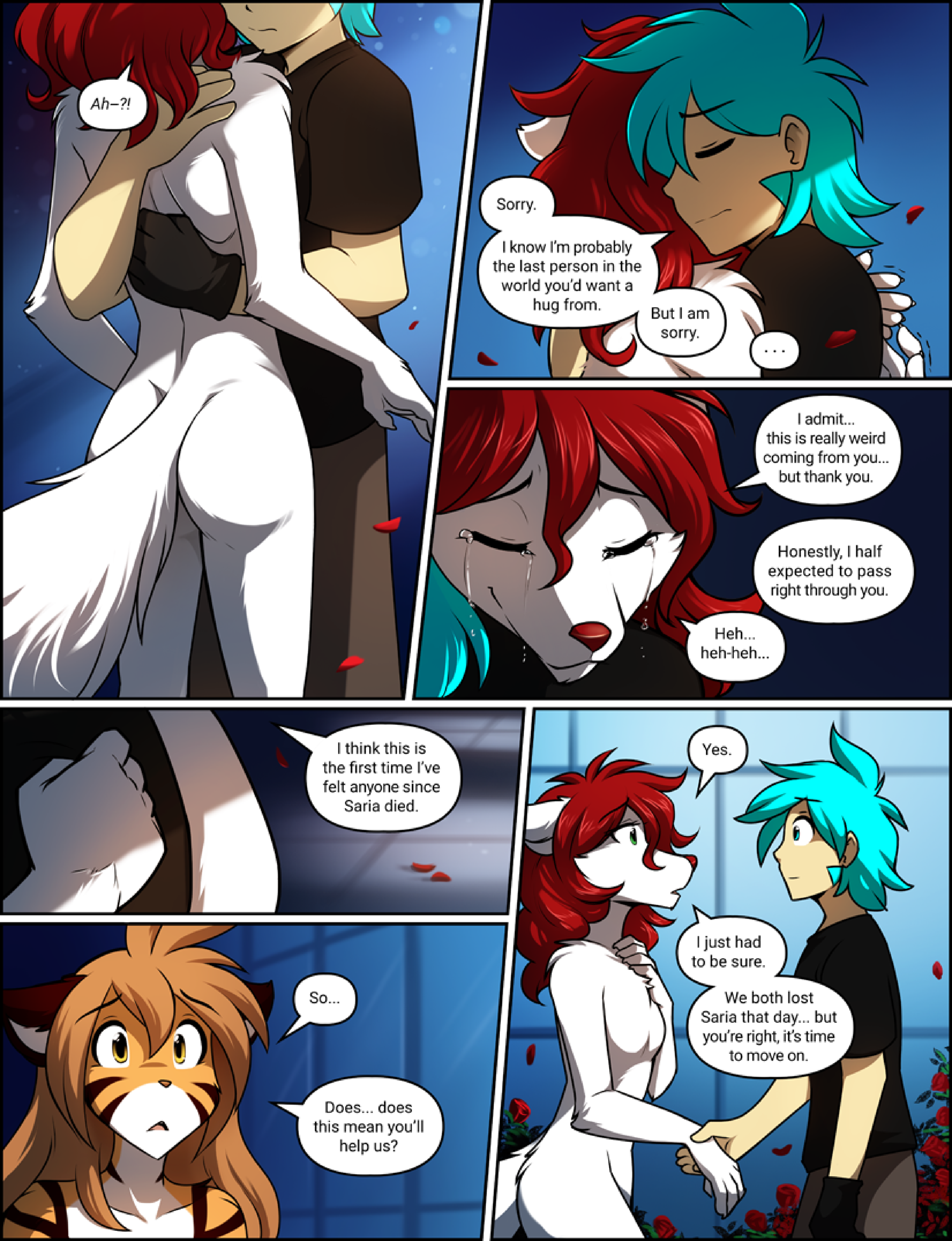

URG!
Reni! Are you okay?!
What happened?
Did you mean to do that? Cause if so, it was awesome!
RUMBLE RUMBLE
Uh... Princess Reni?
Hello?
R...Rargh?
R-rah! Ra Rarerarri! Ra Ren Rarrk!
Oh! Ra Ra Ra Ra Ra!
Uh, am I not hearing something everyone else is?
Why is Miss Reni roaring and not creepily talking in my head like usual?
...I don't think she can...!


I... I've done it.
Fire from the gods...
What? Who said that?
Oh... can you hear me? My apologies.
H-how can you—?
You have my thanks, Dragon.
You don't know it yet, but you're about to help me with an indignity I've been working to rectify for a very long time...
You see, the truth is, I didn't actually come here today just to get that prisoner of yours.
I'm here for **you**.

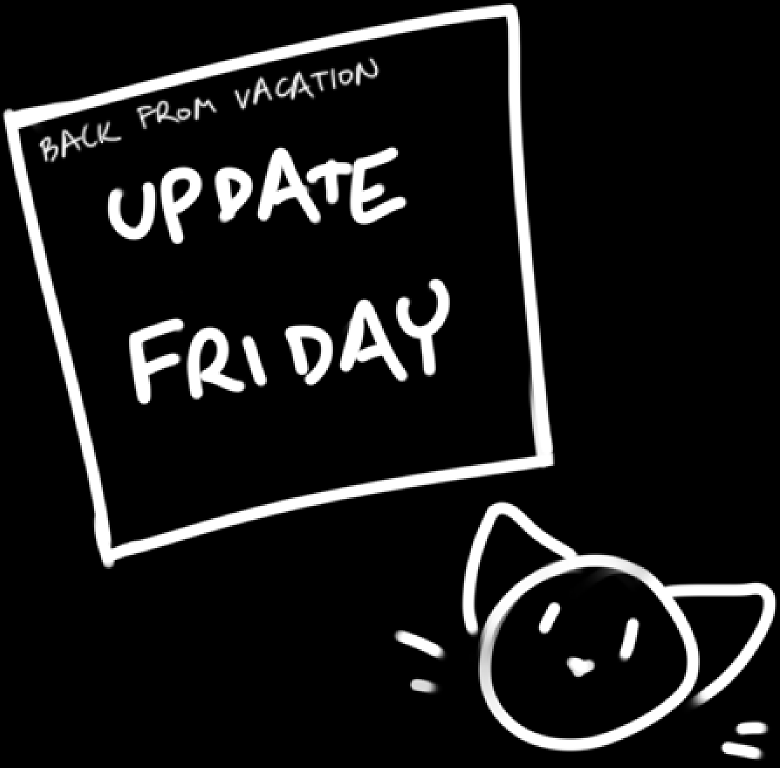

GRAAHHHHHH
Wow, that actually worked!
Good boy, Stoney! You did it!
Wark!
Is it really dead?
Come on, let's go get Maren out of that thing!
Trace...
After all this time...
Are you really willing to turn your back on Saria?

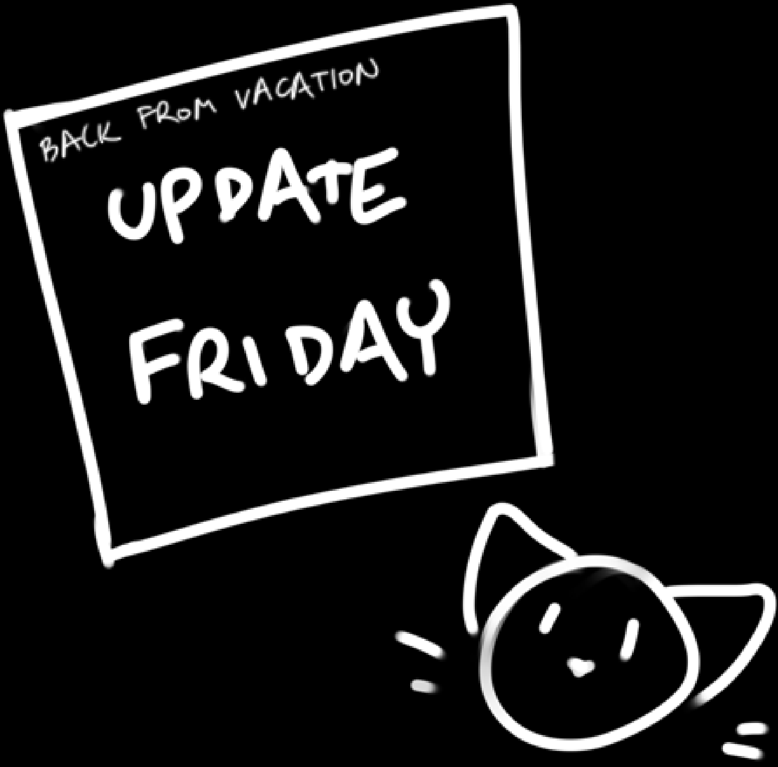

Would you let all this effort go to waste?
Rose...
This is insane! I'm not allowing any of this if it means sacrificing the life of someone else!
Lives have already been sacrificed.
It doesn't matter! Nothing justifies this!
I'm sorry for what I did to you. I can't change that! But I can put a stop to this now!
You only say that because you don't remember her. Would you say the same if it was your *new* fiancée?
You know how long Keidran live. Even if all goes well, you will have to watch her grow old and wither one day, as I have.
Soon, you will be in the same situation again. It's inevitable.
This soul forge could extend her life, just as it could for Saria.
Have you really changed that much?
If you lost Flora right now, can you tell me you wouldn't make the same choices again?


Trace...
You humans live such long lives.
I wish I could too.
I want to be with you for as much of it as I can.
But if something does happen, I hope you know I wouldn't want this.
Flora...
And I'm certain Saria wouldn't either!
Don't speak for him!
How would you know what Saria would have wanted?
We met her.
You... w-what?
Or... rather, a spirit of her. On our travels, in the place where she died.
When we parted ways, she told me she wasn't my wife.
I only realized later, after Nora explained how she'd died, that she probably just wanted me to move on.
You... really saw her?
I think she was afraid I'd repeat the same mistakes if I did remember.
But I don't intend to.
I'm ready to let go this time, Rose.
If that's true...
...then you really have changed.
...I'm relieved.
I just wish... I wish I could have been there to see her too...

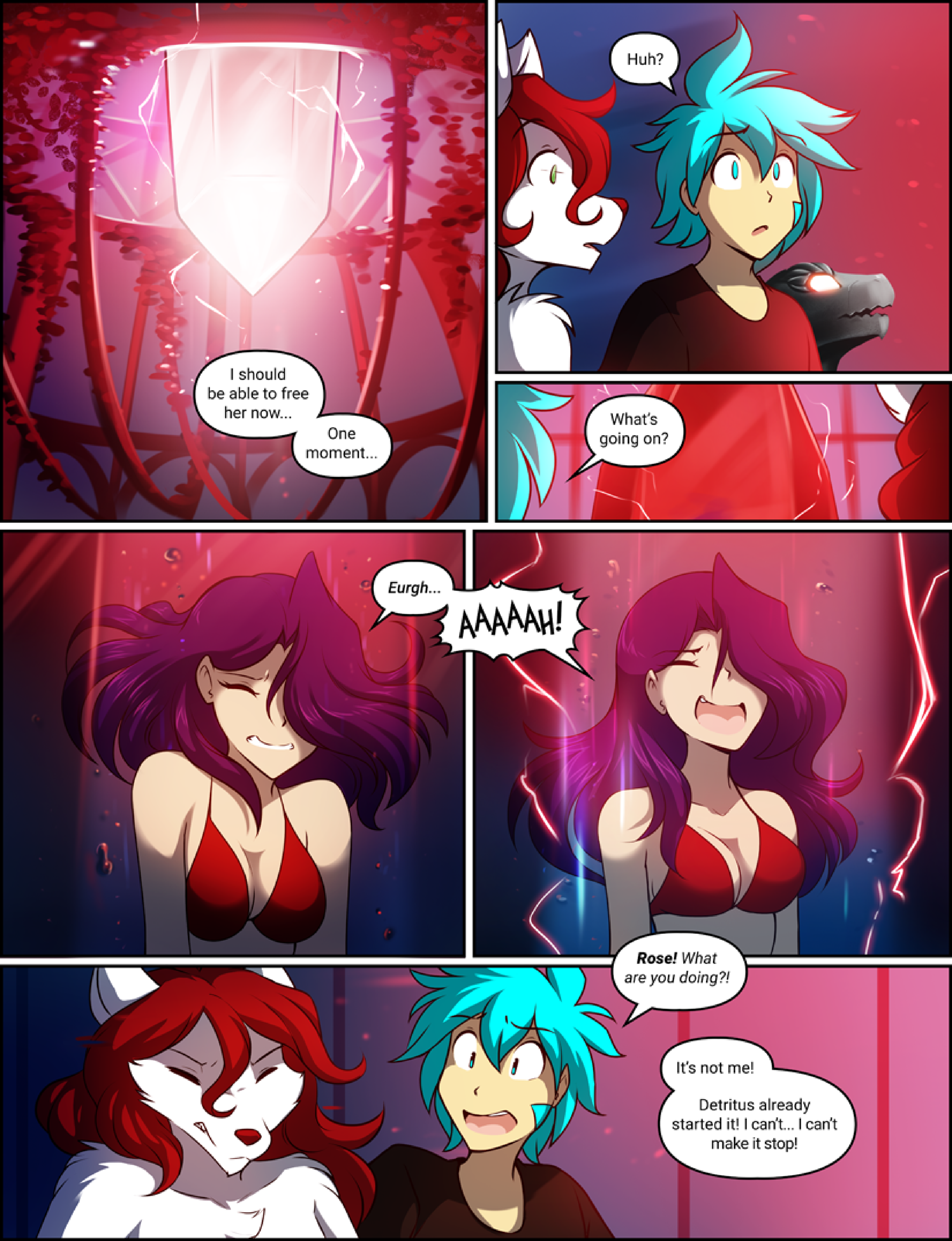

Ah–?!
Sorry.
I know I'm probably the last person in the world you'd want a hug from.
But I am sorry.
. . .
I admit... this is really weird coming from you... but thank you.
Honestly, I half expected to pass right through you.
Heh... heh-heh...
I think this is the first time I've felt anyone since Saria died.
So...
Does... does this mean you'll help us?
Yes.
I just had to be sure.
We both lost Saria that day... but you're right, it's time to move on.

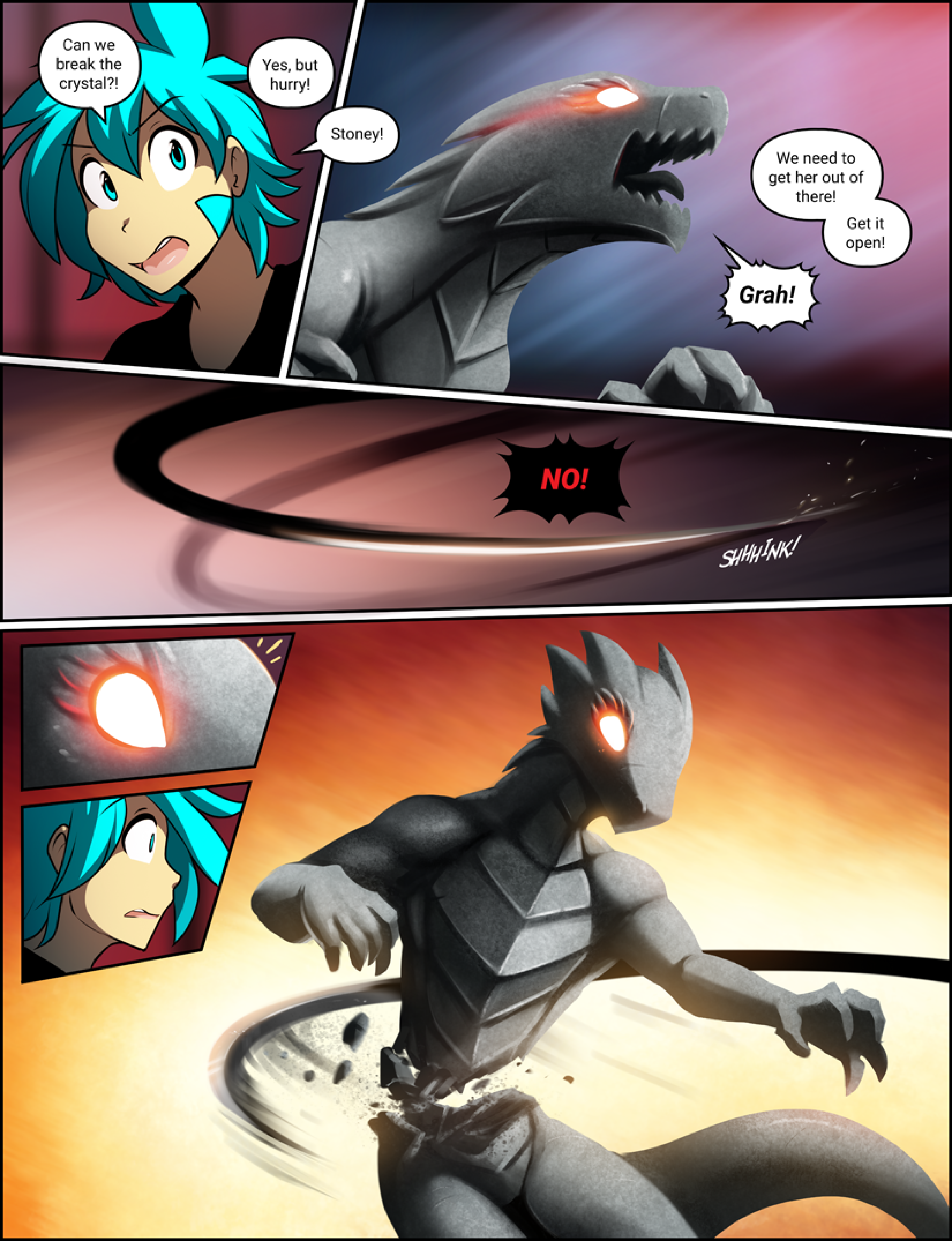
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
2022

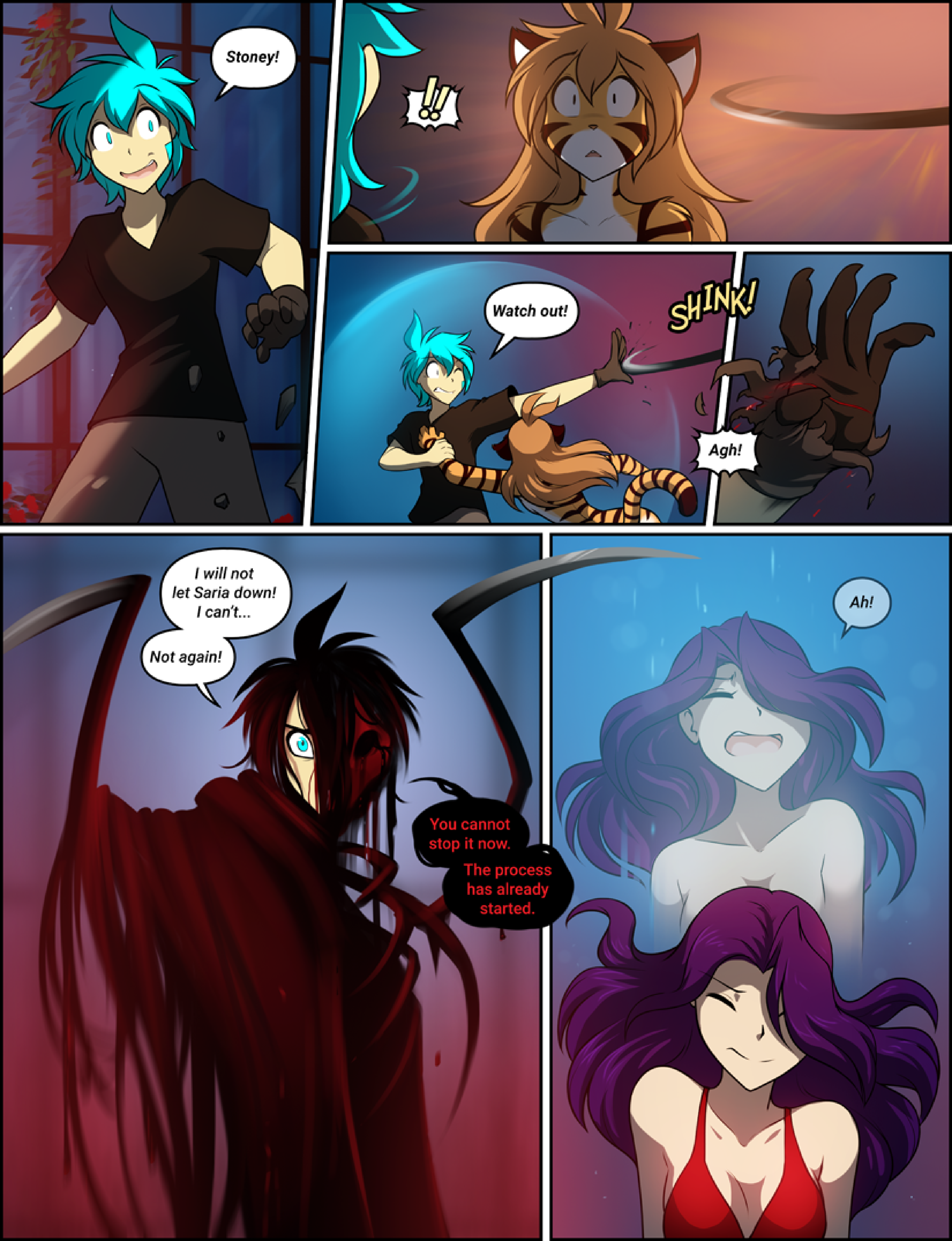

BACK FROM VACATION
UPDATE
FRIDAY

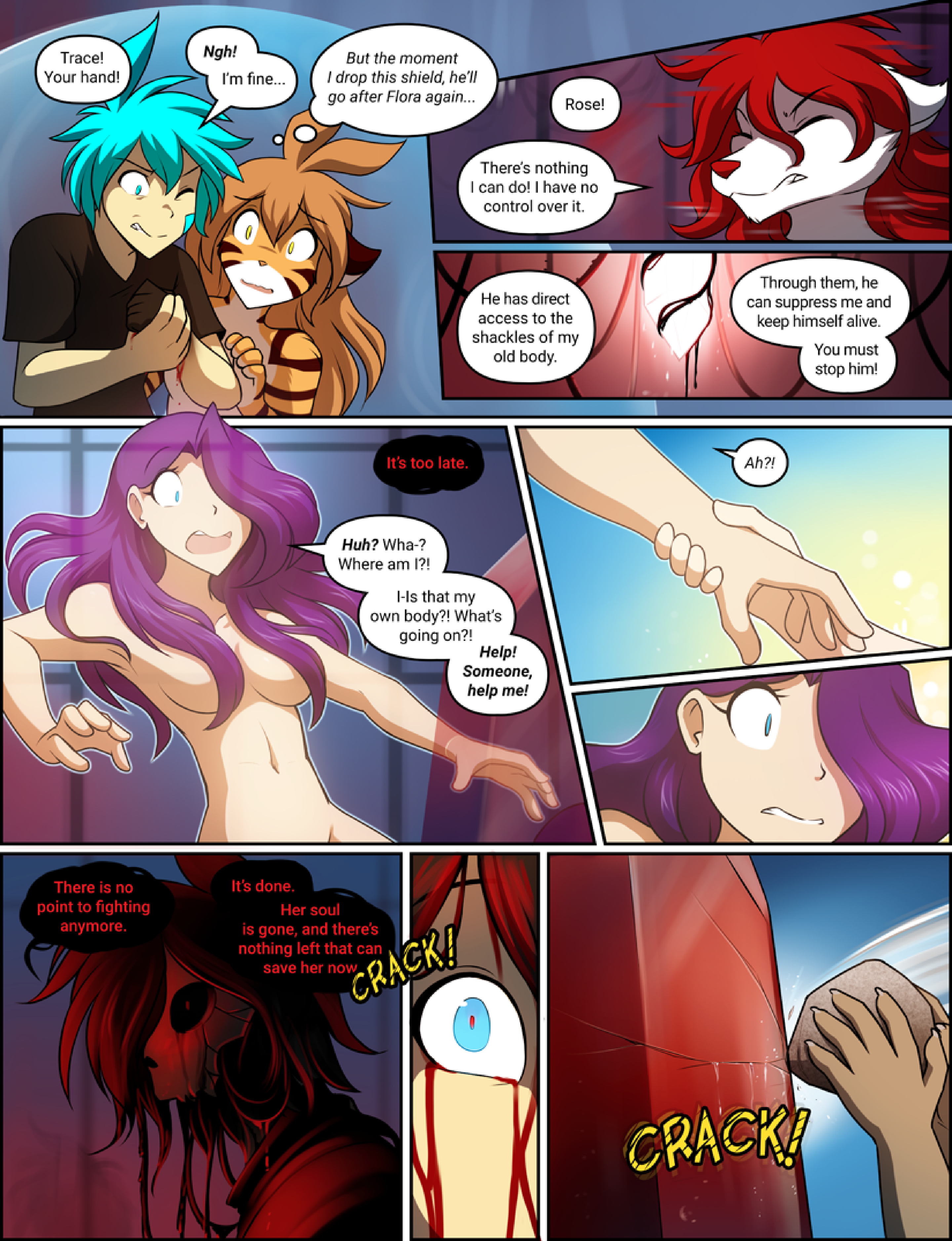

BACK FROM VACATION
UPDATE FRIDAY

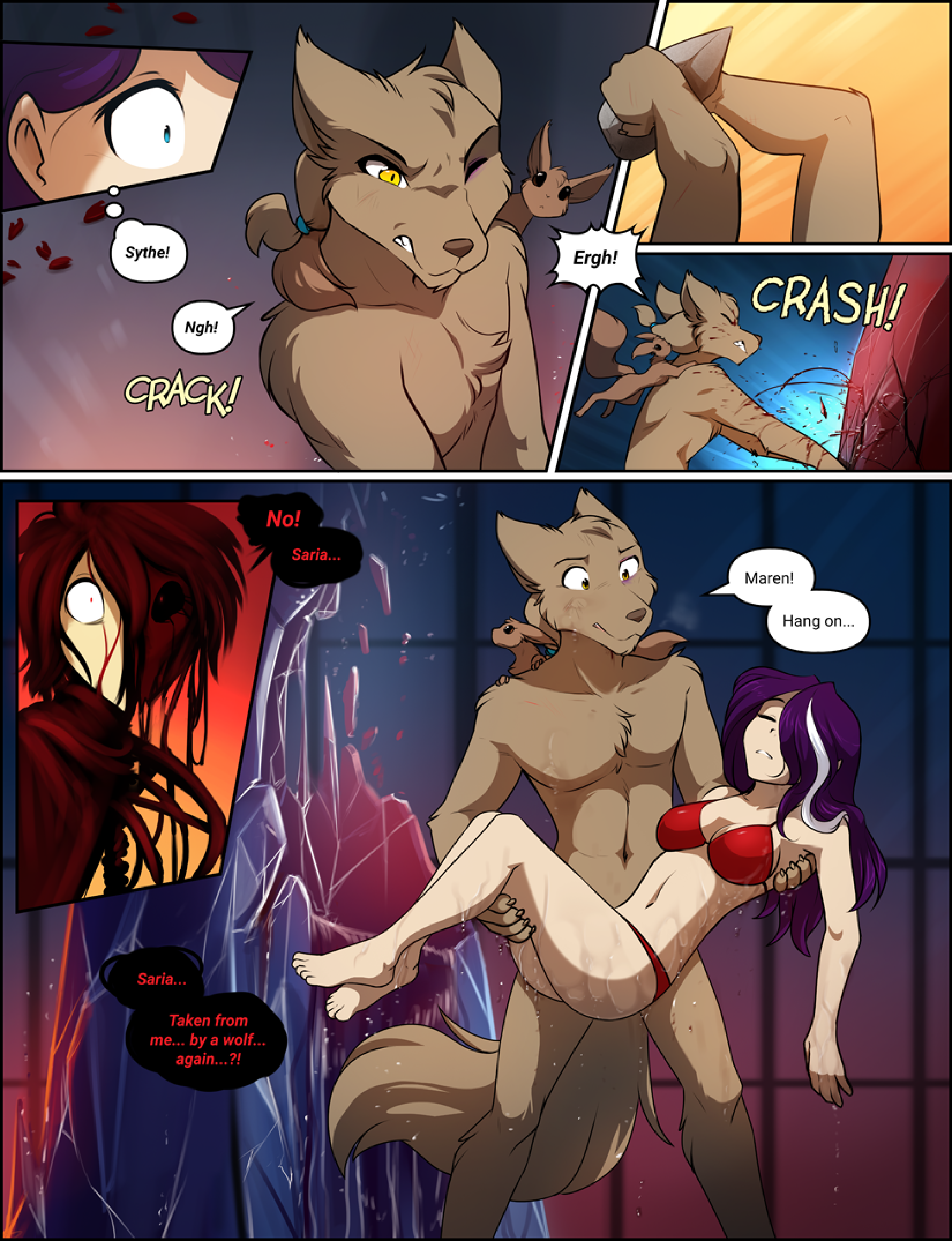
JAN 21: COMIC'S BEING DRAWN UP! MIGHT TAKE A BIT LONGER THAN EXPECTED,
I'LL UPLOAD IT AS SOON AS IT'S DONE.

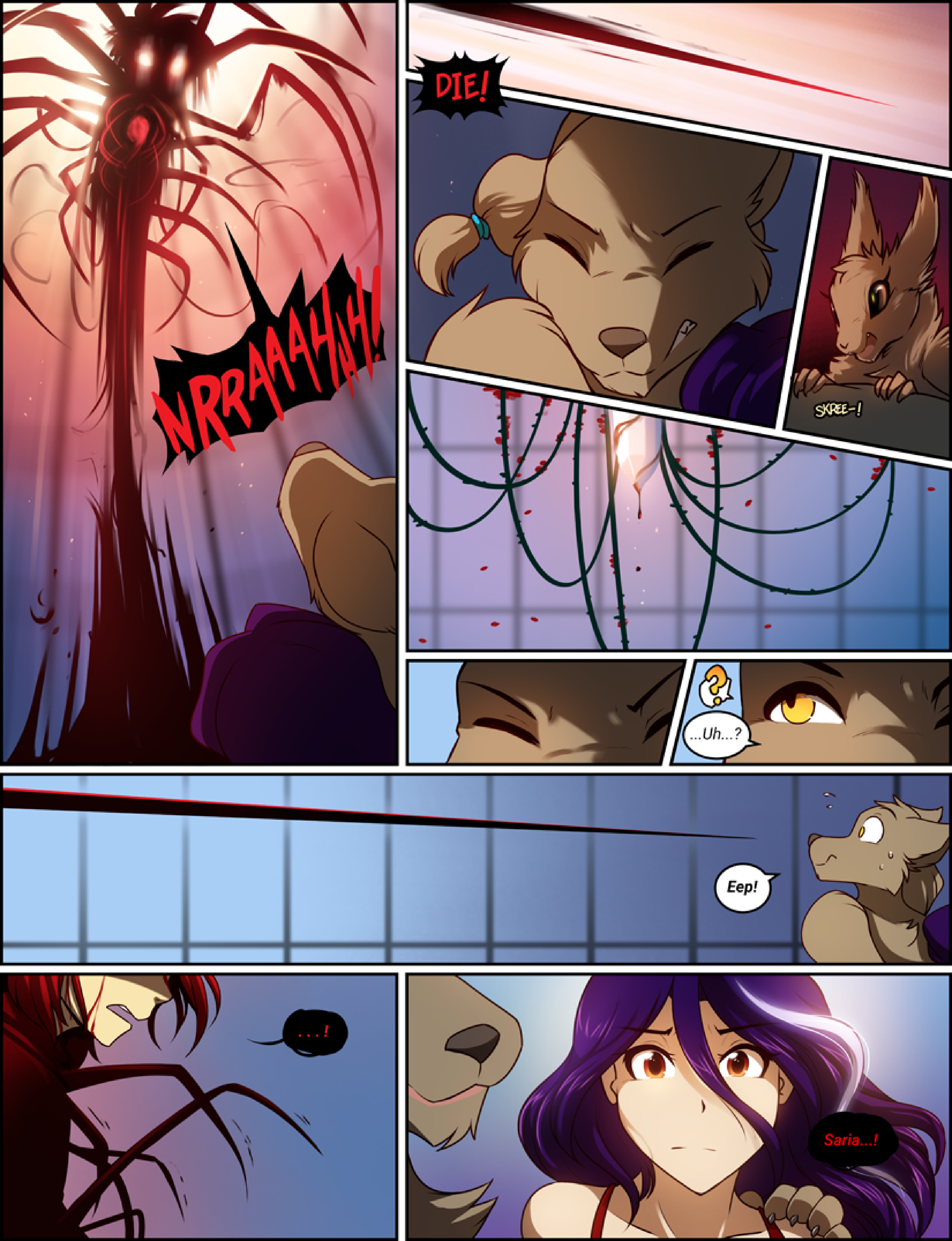

I should be able to free her now...
One moment...
Huh?
What's going on?
Eurgh...
AAAAAH!
***Rose!** What are you doing?!*
It's not me!
Detritus already started it! I can't... I can't make it stop!

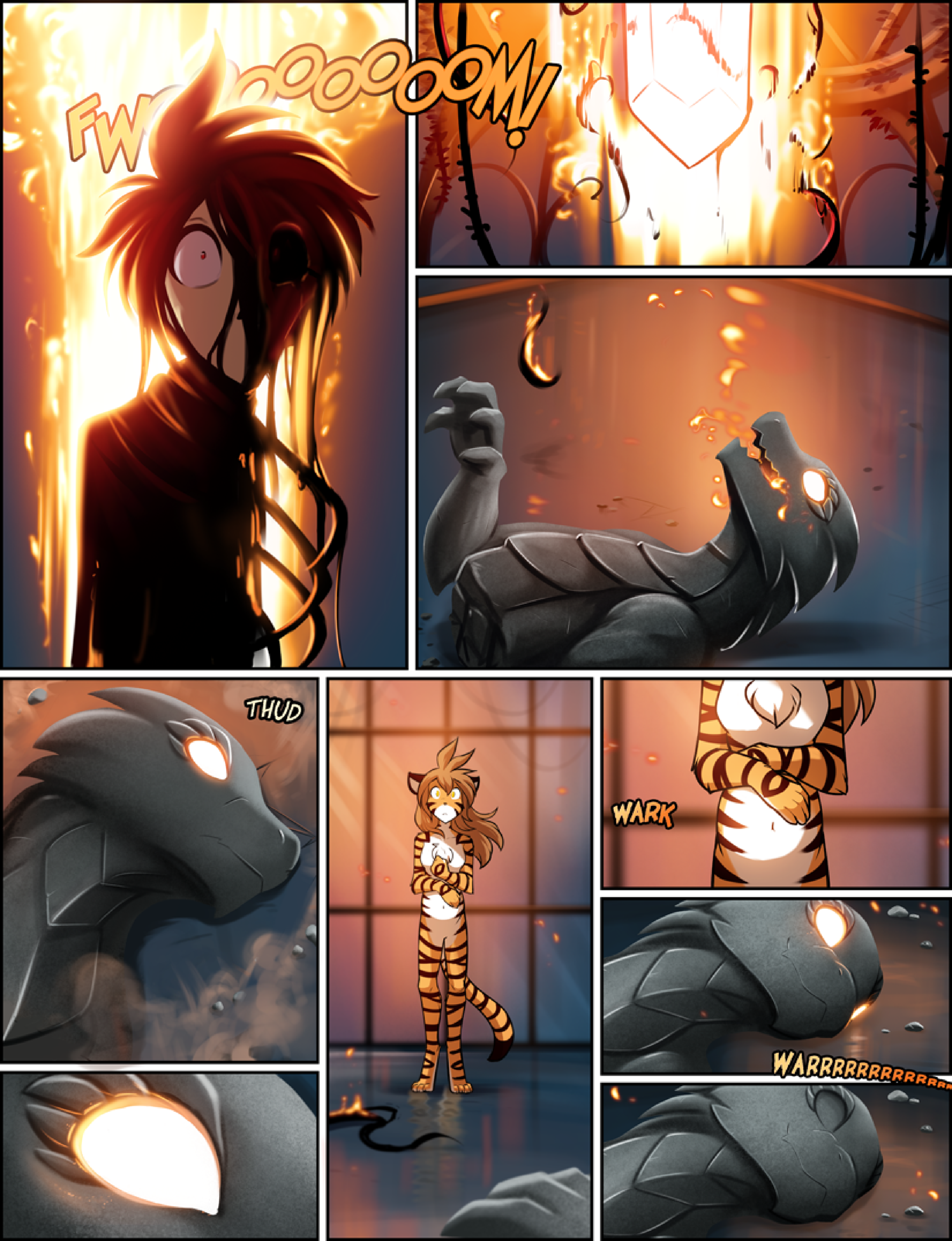

Can we break the crystal?!
Yes, but hurry!
Stoney!
We need to get her out of there!
Get it open!
Grah!
NO!
SHHHINK!

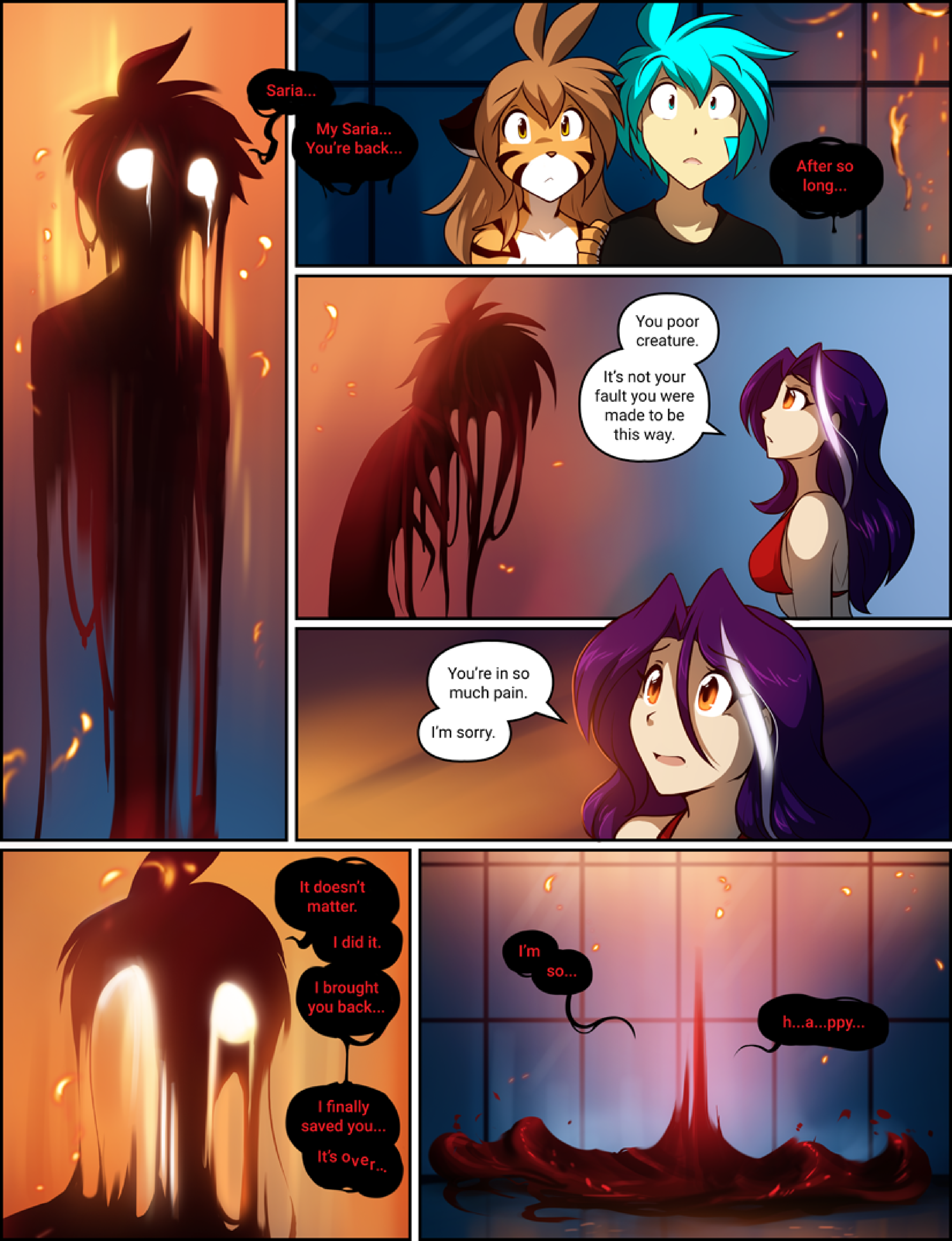

Stoney!
!!
Watch out!
SHINK!
Agh!
I will not let Saria down! I can't...
Not again!
You cannot stop it now.
The process has already started.
Ah!

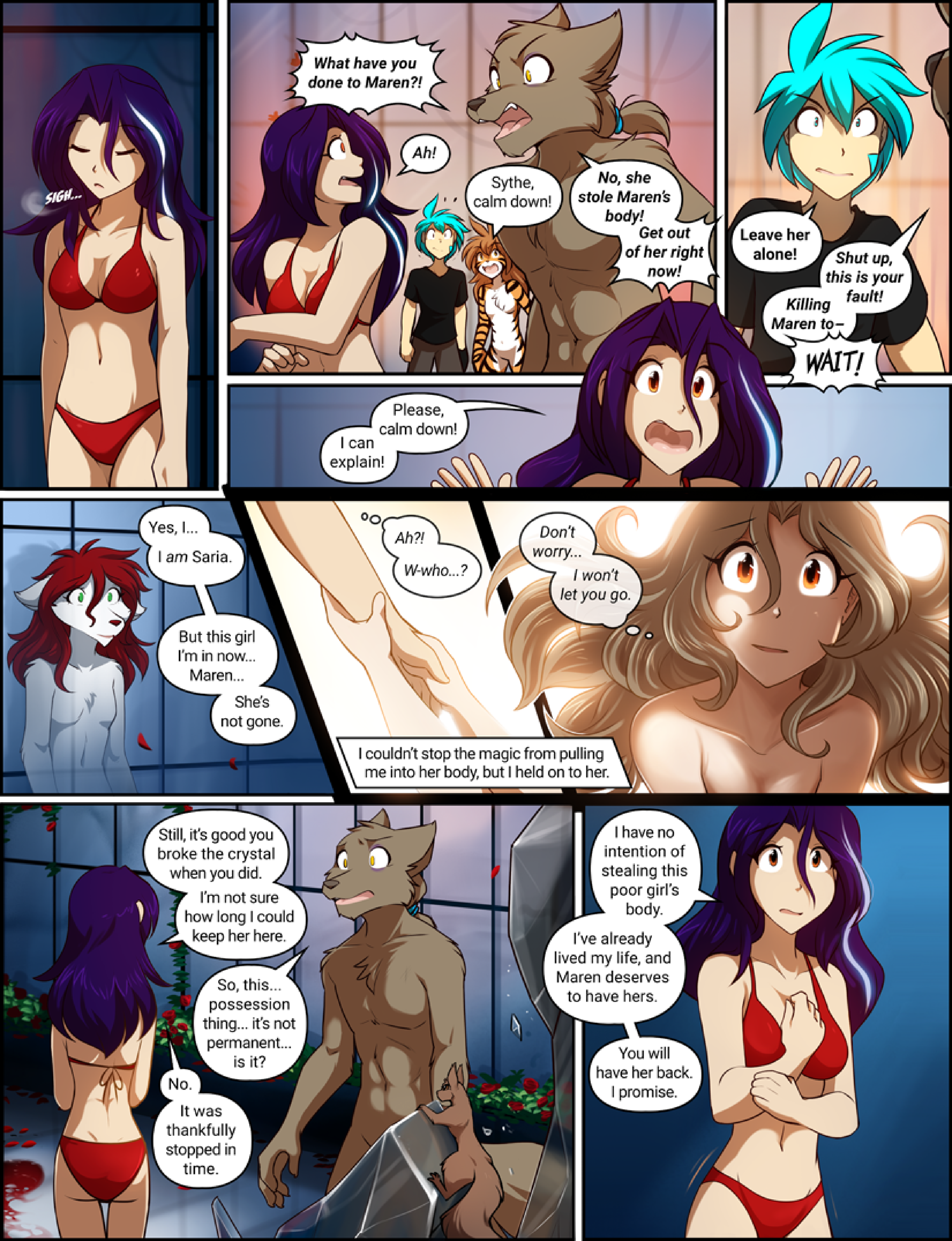

Trace! Your hand!
Ngh! I'm fine...
But the moment I drop this shield, he'll go after Flora again...
Rose!
There's nothing I can do! I have no control over it.
He has direct access to the shackles of my old body.
Through them, he can suppress me and keep himself alive.
You must stop him!
It's too late.
Huh? Wha-? Where am I?!
I-Is that my own body?! What's going on?!
Help! Someone, help me!
Ah?!
There is no point to fighting anymore.
It's done.
Her soul is gone, and there's nothing left that can save her now.
CRACK!
CRACK!

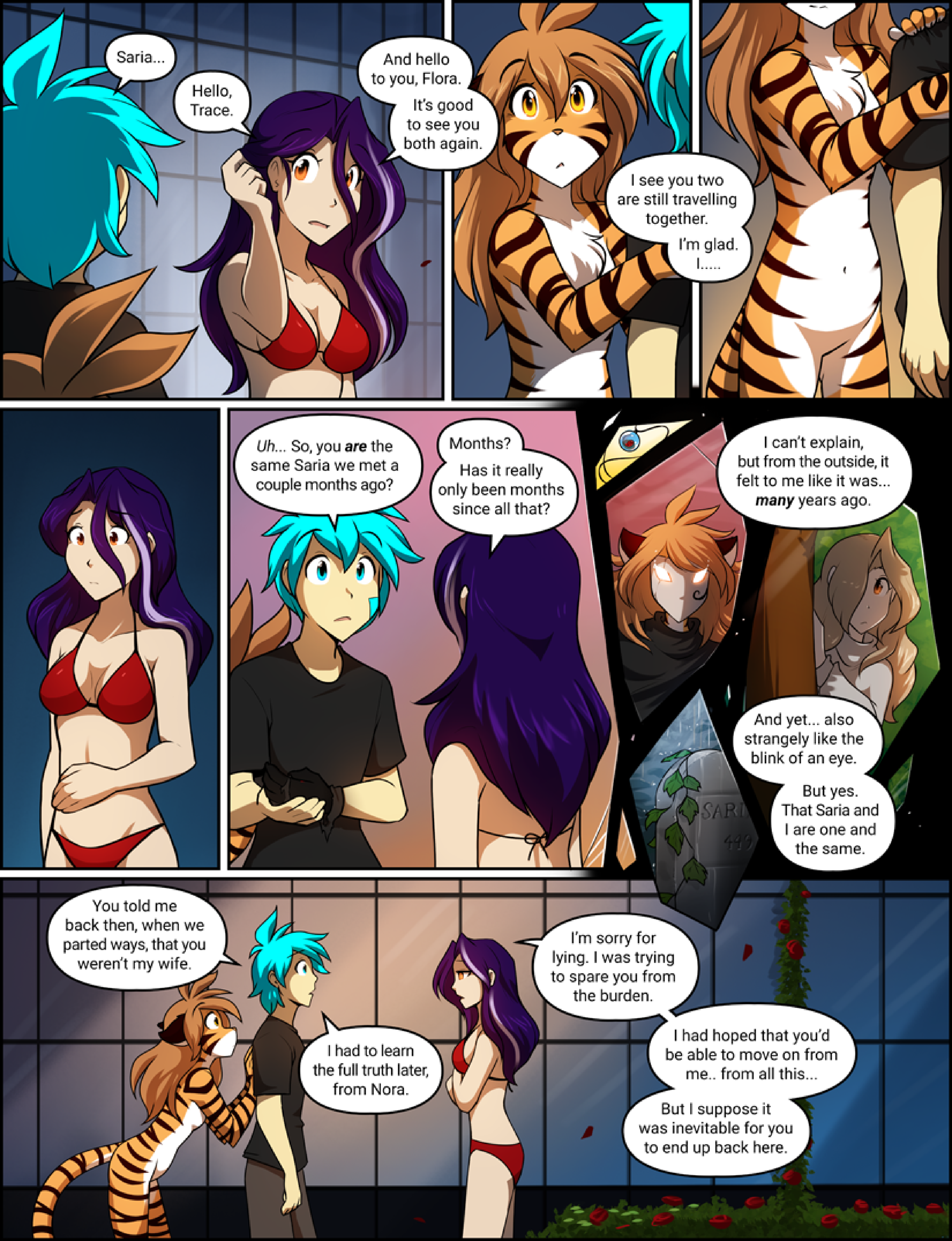

Sythe!
Ngh!
CRACK!
Ergh!
CRASH!
No!
Saria...
Maren!
Hang on...
Saria...
Taken from me... by a wolf... again...?!

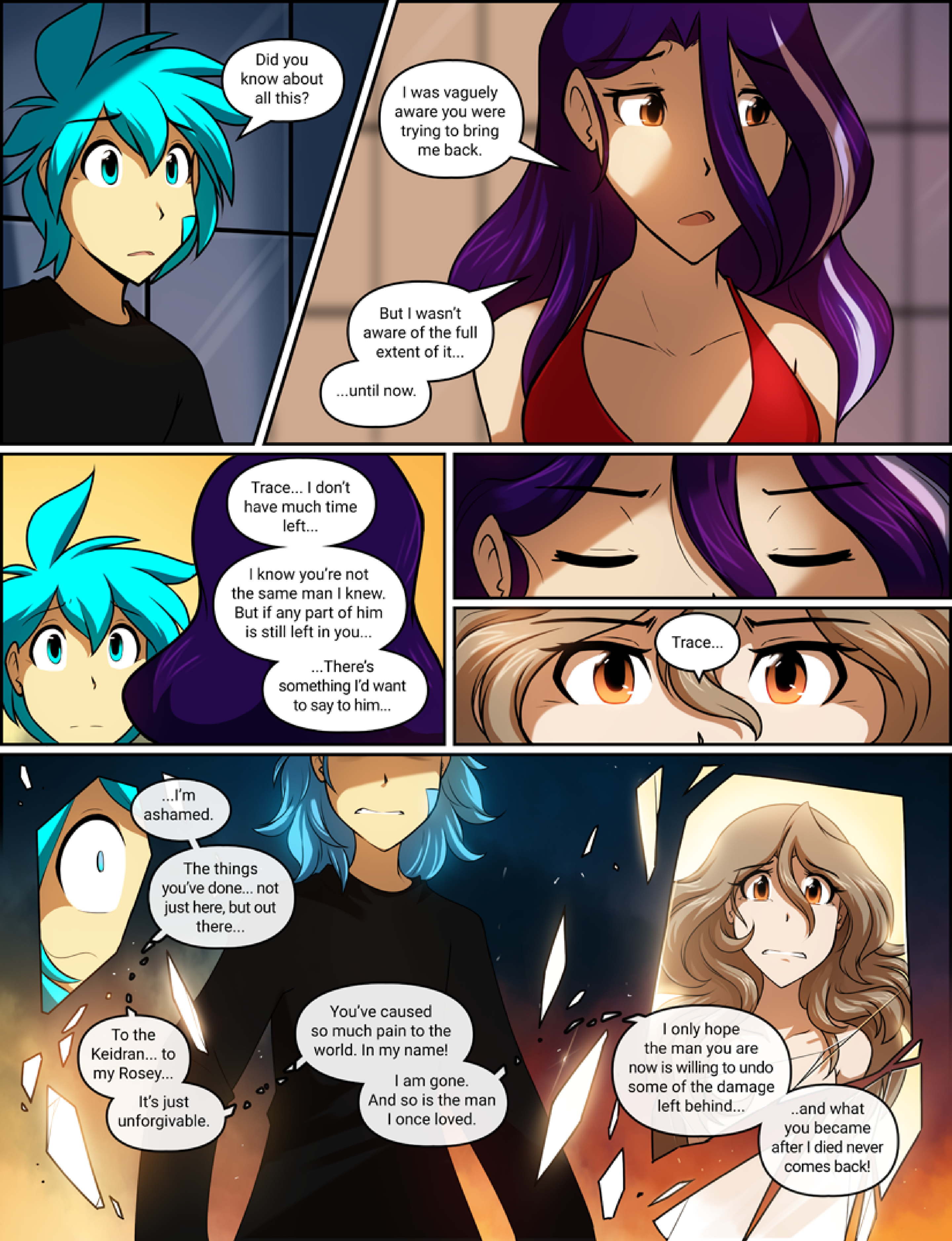

NRRAAAHHH!
DIE!
SKREE-!
...Uh...?
Eep!
...!
Saria...!

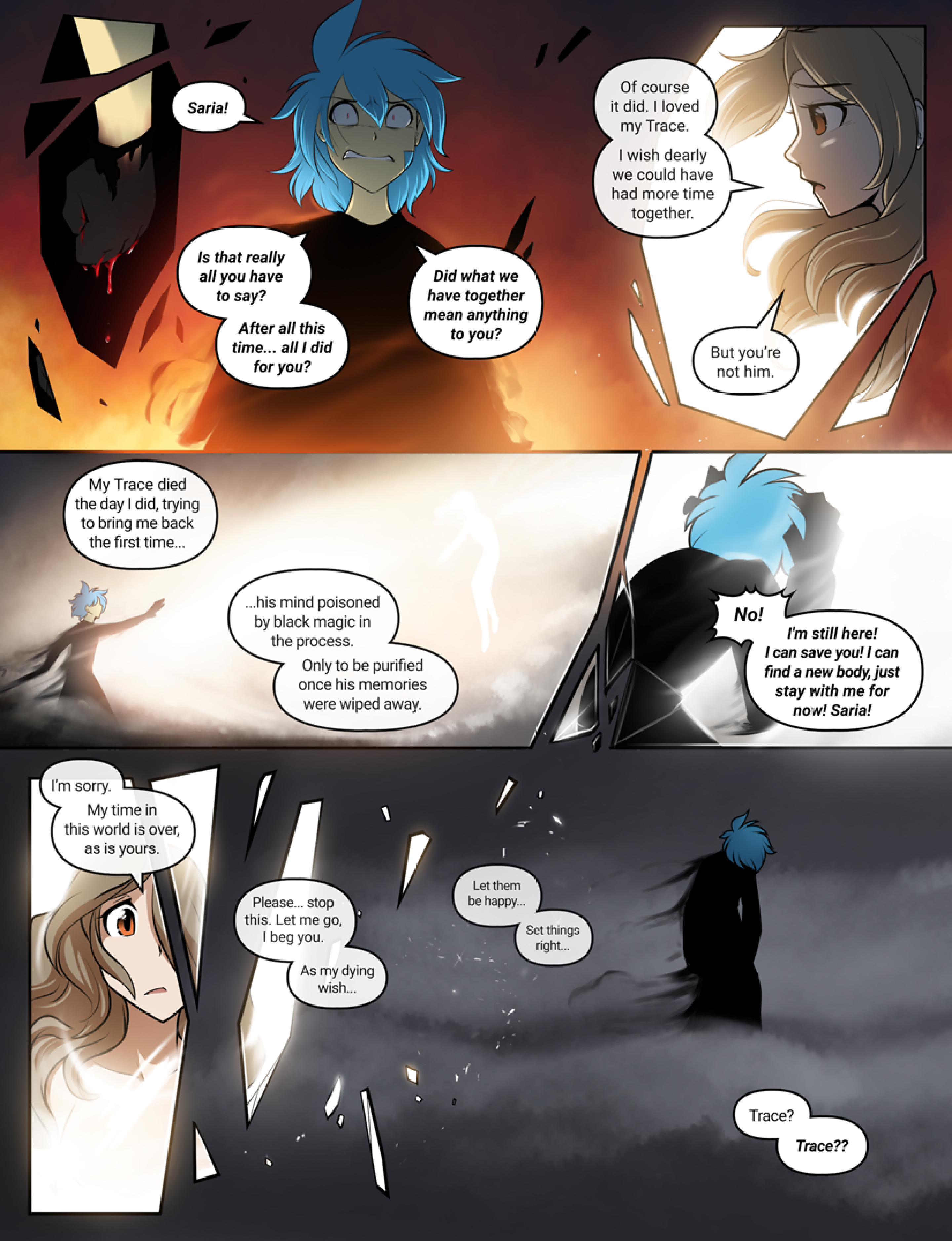

FWOOOOOOOOOM!
THUD
WARK
WARRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

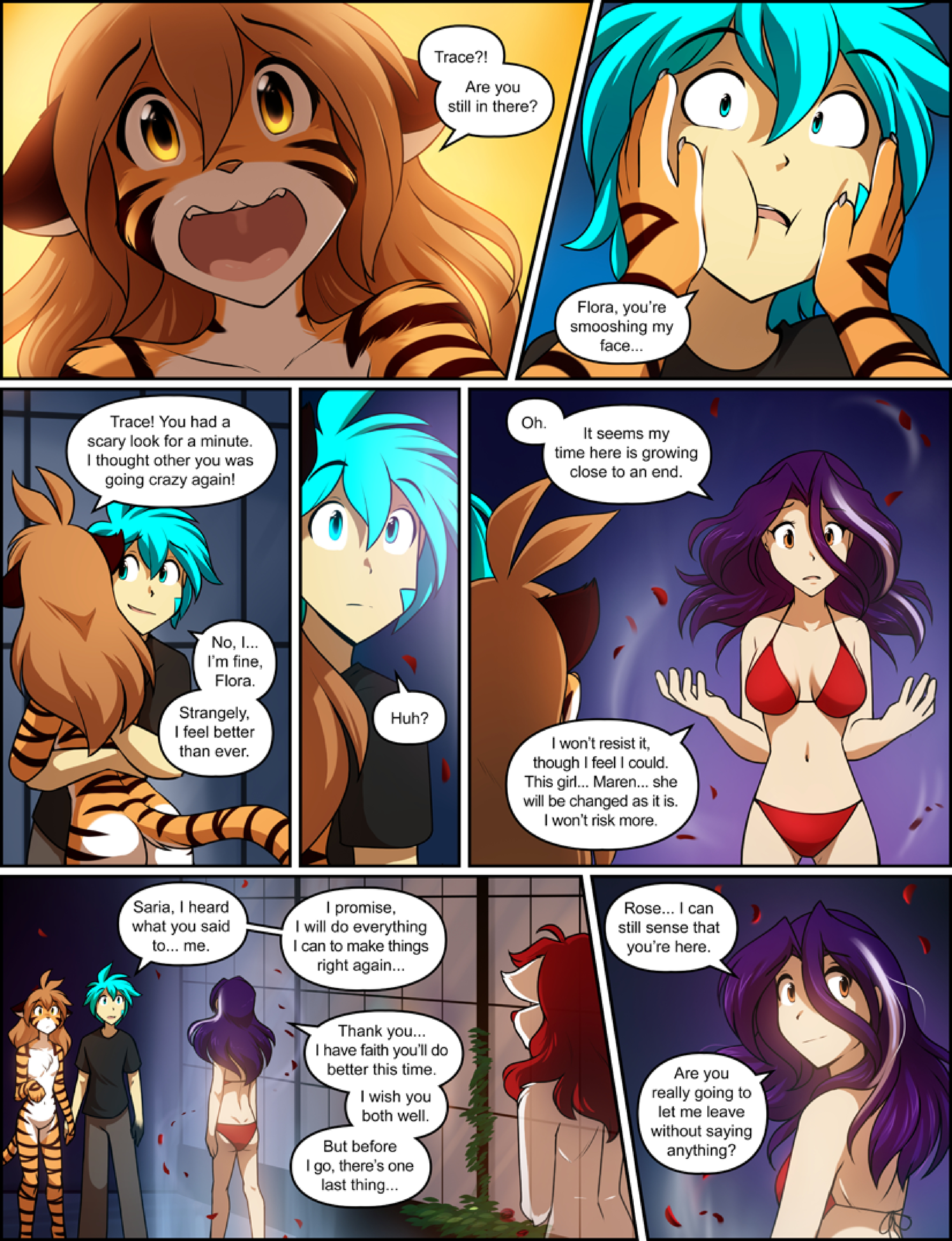

Saria...
My Saria... You're back...
After so long...
You poor creature.
It's not your fault you were made to be this way.
You're in so much pain.
I'm sorry.
It doesn't matter.
I did it.
I brought you back...
I finally saved you...
It's over...
I'm so...
h...a...ppy...

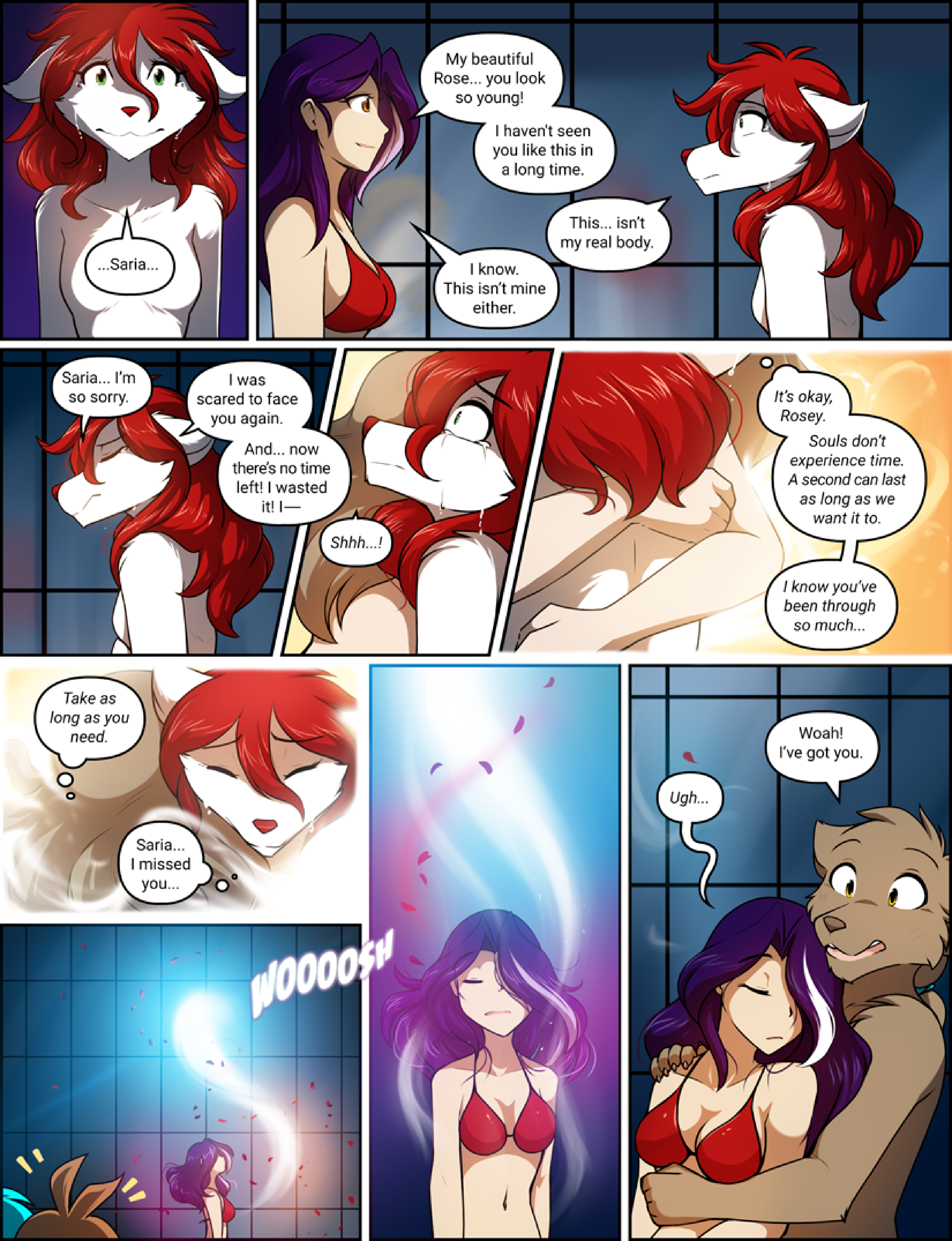

SIGH...
What have you done to Maren?!
Ah!
Sythe, calm down!
No, she stole Maren's body!
Get out of her right now!
Leave her alone!
Shut up, this is your fault!
Killing Maren to–
WAIT!
Please, calm down!
I can explain!
Yes, I...
I *am* Saria.
But this girl I'm in now... Maren...
She's not gone.
Ah?!
W-who...?
Don't worry...
I won't let you go.
I couldn't stop the magic from pulling me into her body, but I held on to her.
Still, it's good you broke the crystal when you did.
I'm not sure how long I could keep her here.
So, this... possession thing... it's not permanent... is it?
No.
It was thankfully stopped in time.
I have no intention of stealing this poor girl's body.
I've already lived my life, and Maren deserves to have hers.
You will have her back. I promise.

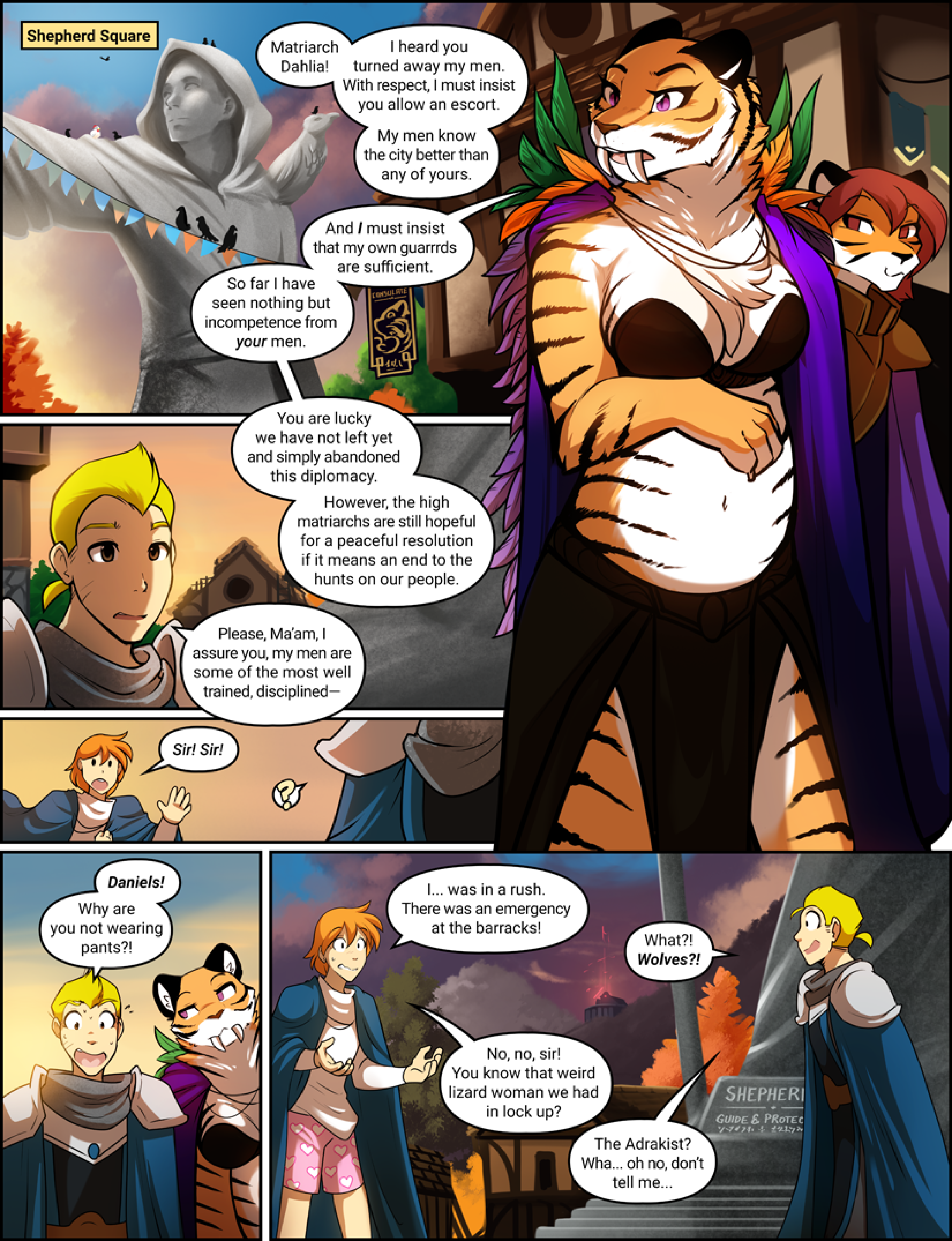

Saria...
Hello, Trace.
And hello to you, Flora.
It's good to see you both again.
I see you two are still travelling together.
I'm glad. I.....
Uh... So, you ***are*** the same Saria we met a couple months ago?
Months?
Has it really only been months since all that?
I can't explain, but from the outside, it felt to me like it was... ***many*** years ago.
SARI
449
And yet... also strangely like the blink of an eye.
But yes. That Saria and I are one and the same.
You told me back then, when we parted ways, that you weren't my wife.
I had to learn the full truth later, from Nora.
I'm sorry for lying. I was trying to spare you from the burden.
I had hoped that you'd be able to move on from me.. from all this...
But I suppose it was inevitable for you to end up back here.

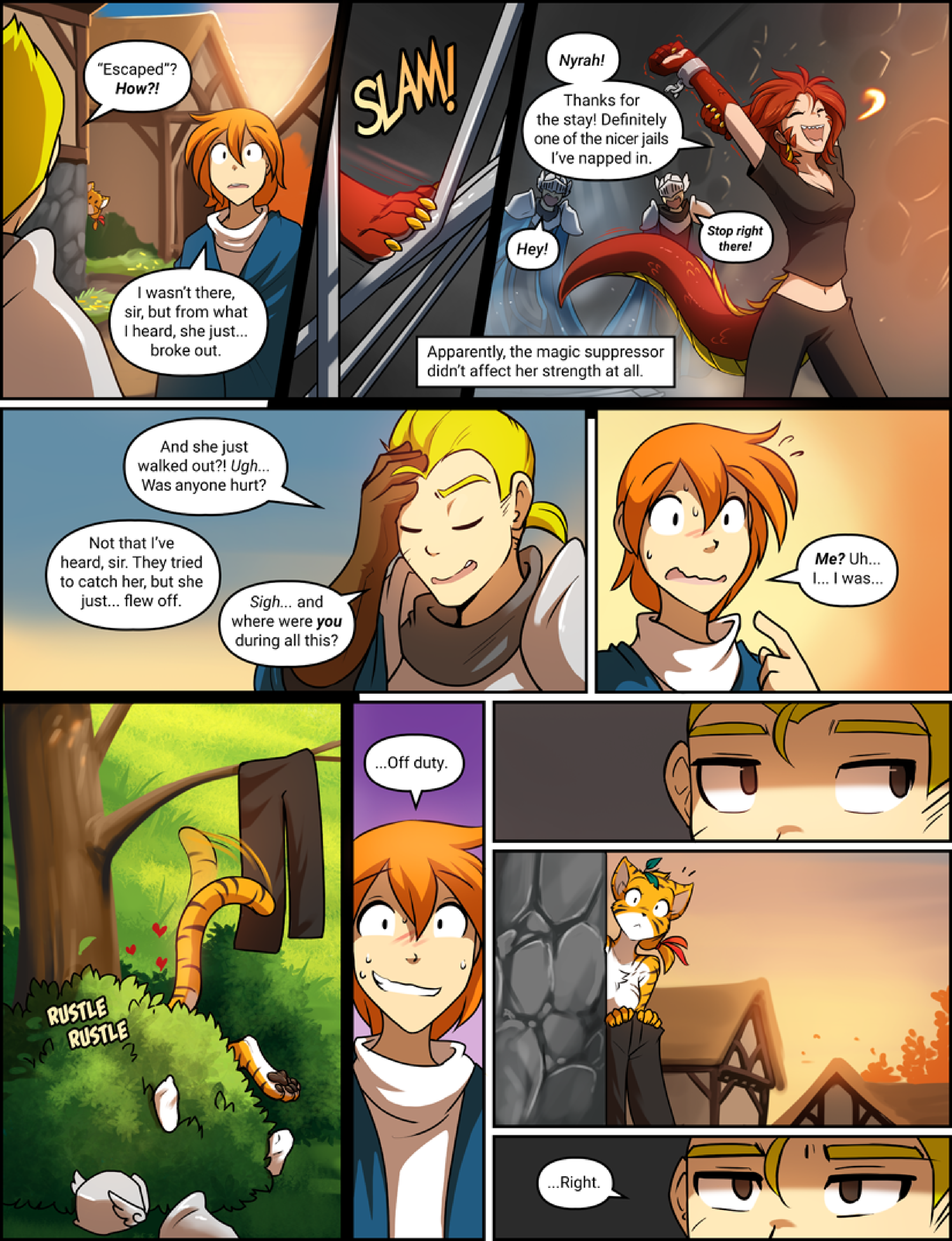

Did you know about all this?
I was vaguely aware you were trying to bring me back.
But I wasn't aware of the full extent of it...
...until now.
Trace... I don't have much time left...
I know you're not the same man I knew. But if any part of him is still left in you...
...There's something I'd want to say to him...
Trace...
...I'm ashamed.
The things you've done... not just here, but out there...
To the Keidran... to my Rosey...
It's just unforgivable.
You've caused so much pain to the world. In my name!
I am gone. And so is the man I once loved.
I only hope the man you are now is willing to undo some of the damage left behind...
..and what you became after I died never comes back!

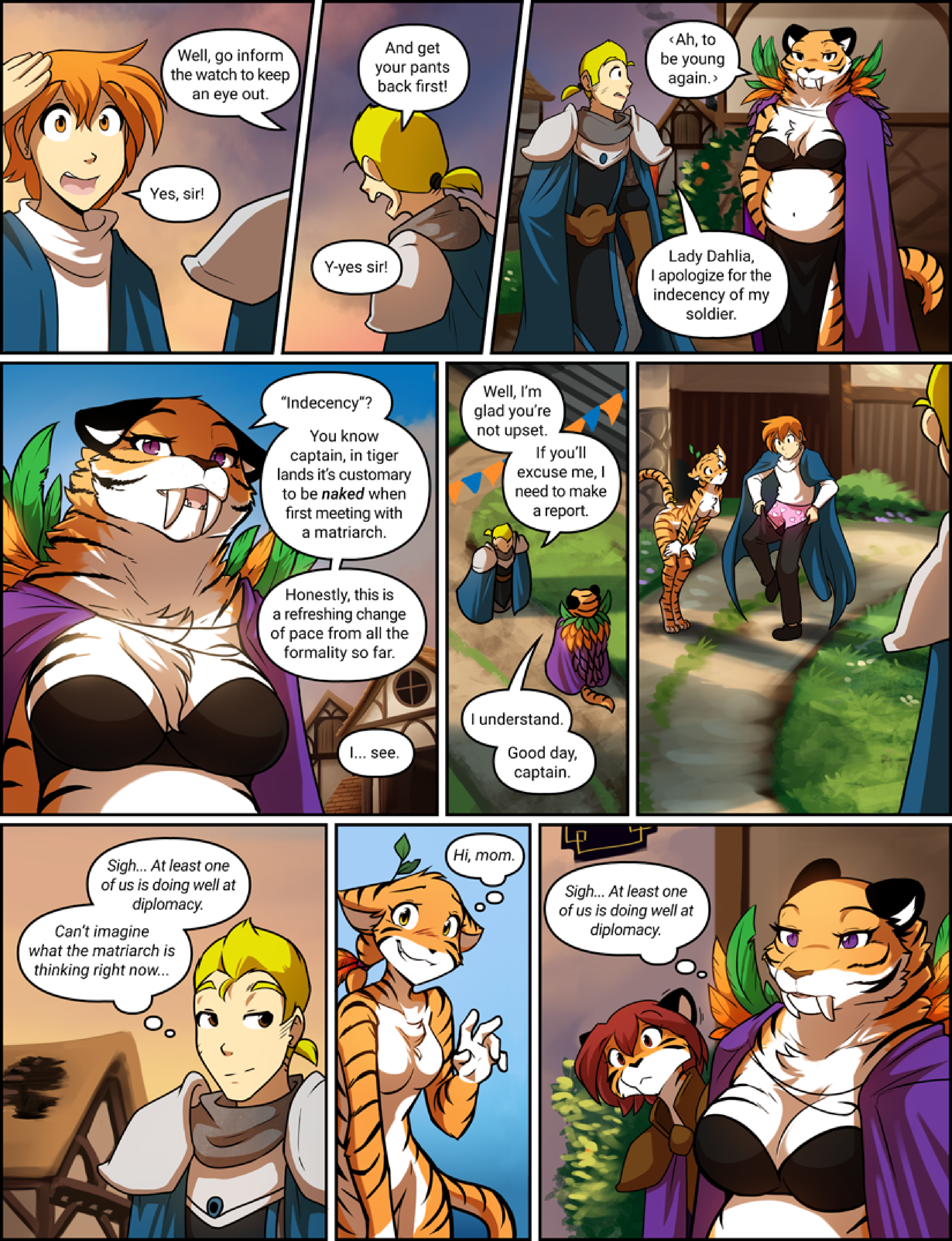

Saria!
Is that really all you have to say?
After all this time... all I did for you?
Did what we have together mean anything to you?
Of course it did. I loved my Trace.
I wish dearly we could have had more time together.
But you're not him.
My Trace died the day I did, trying to bring me back the first time...
...his mind poisoned by black magic in the process.
Only to be purified once his memories were wiped away.
No!
I'm still here! I can save you! I can find a new body, just stay with me for now! Saria!
I'm sorry.
My time in this world is over, as is yours.
Please... stop this. Let me go, I beg you.
As my dying wish...
Let them be happy...
Set things right...
Trace?
Trace??

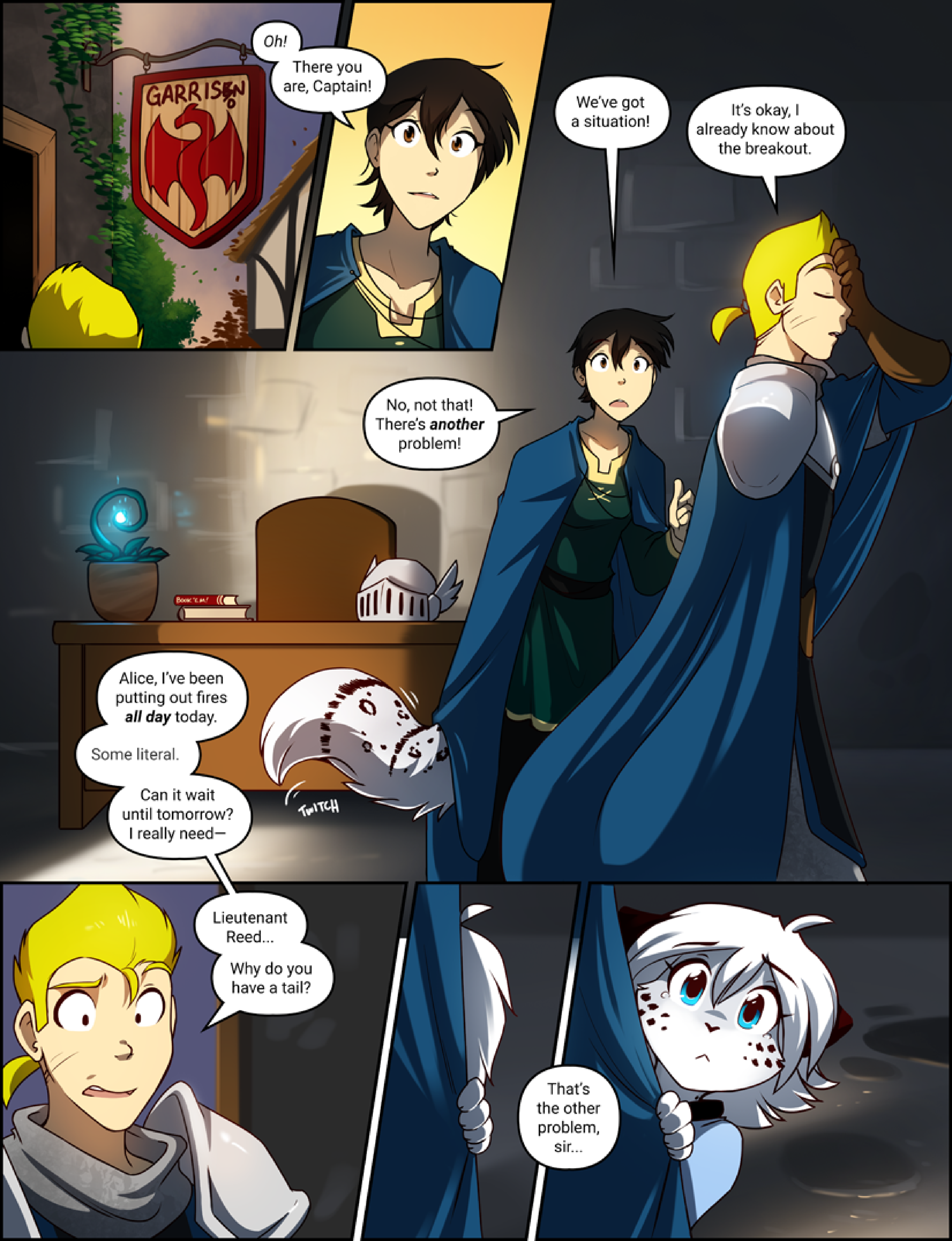

Trace?!
Are you still in there?
Flora, you're smooshing my face...
Trace! You had a scary look for a minute. I thought other you was going crazy again!
No, I... I'm fine, Flora.
Strangely, I feel better than ever.
Huh?
Oh.
It seems my time here is growing close to an end.
I won't resist it, though I feel I could. This girl... Maren... she will be changed as it is. I won't risk more.
Saria, I heard what you said to... me.
I promise, I will do everything I can to make things right again...
Thank you... I have faith you'll do better this time.
I wish you both well.
But before I go, there's one last thing...
Rose... I can still sense that you're here.
Are you really going to let me leave without saying anything?

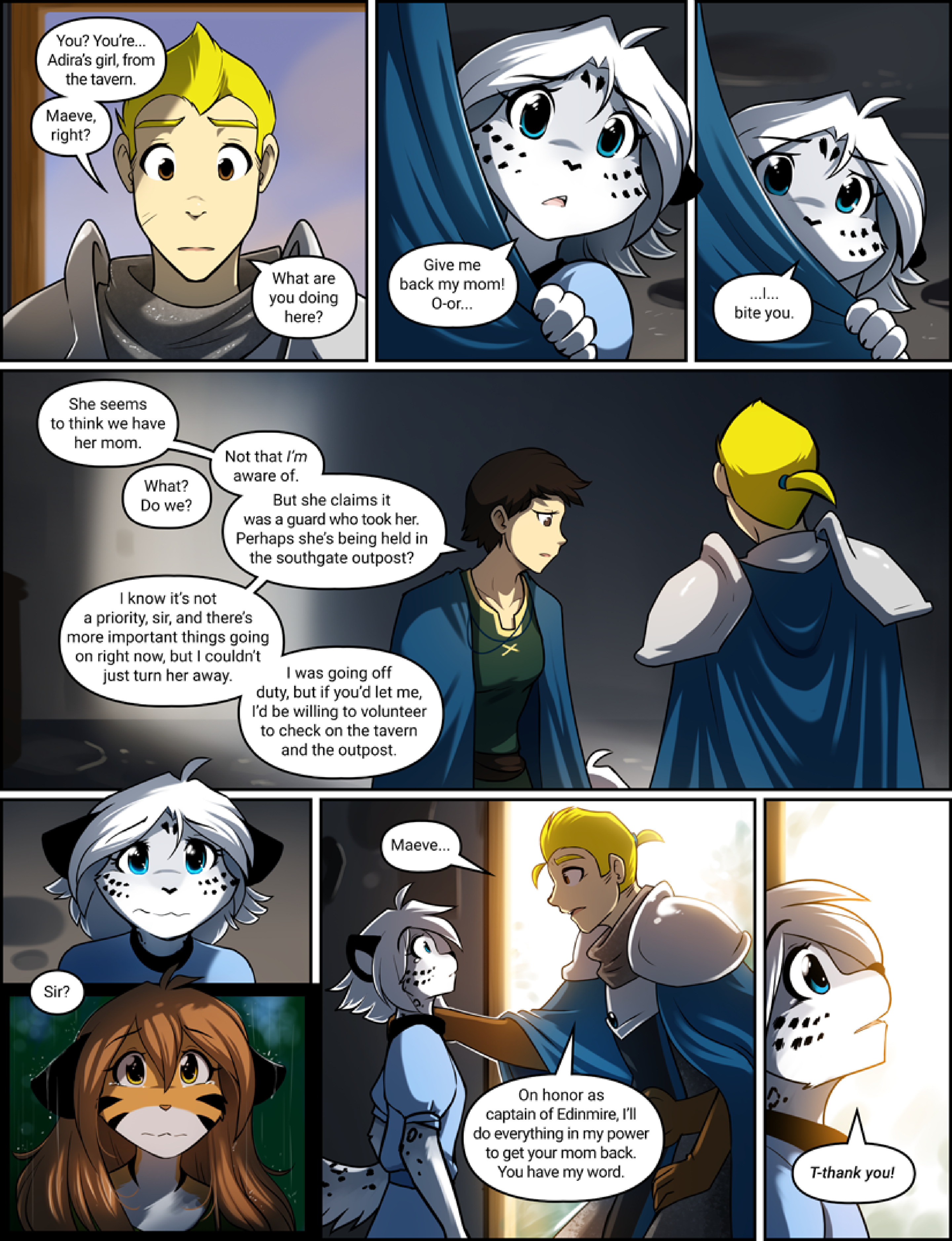

...Saria...
My beautiful Rose... you look so young!
I haven't seen you like this in a long time.
This... isn't my real body.
I know. This isn't mine either.
Saria... I'm so sorry.
I was scared to face you again.
And... now there's no time left! I wasted it! I—
Shhh...!
It's okay, Rosey.
Souls don't experience time. A second can last as long as we want it to.
I know you've been through so much...
Take as long as you need.
Saria... I missed you...
WOOOOSH
Ugh...
Woah! I've got you.

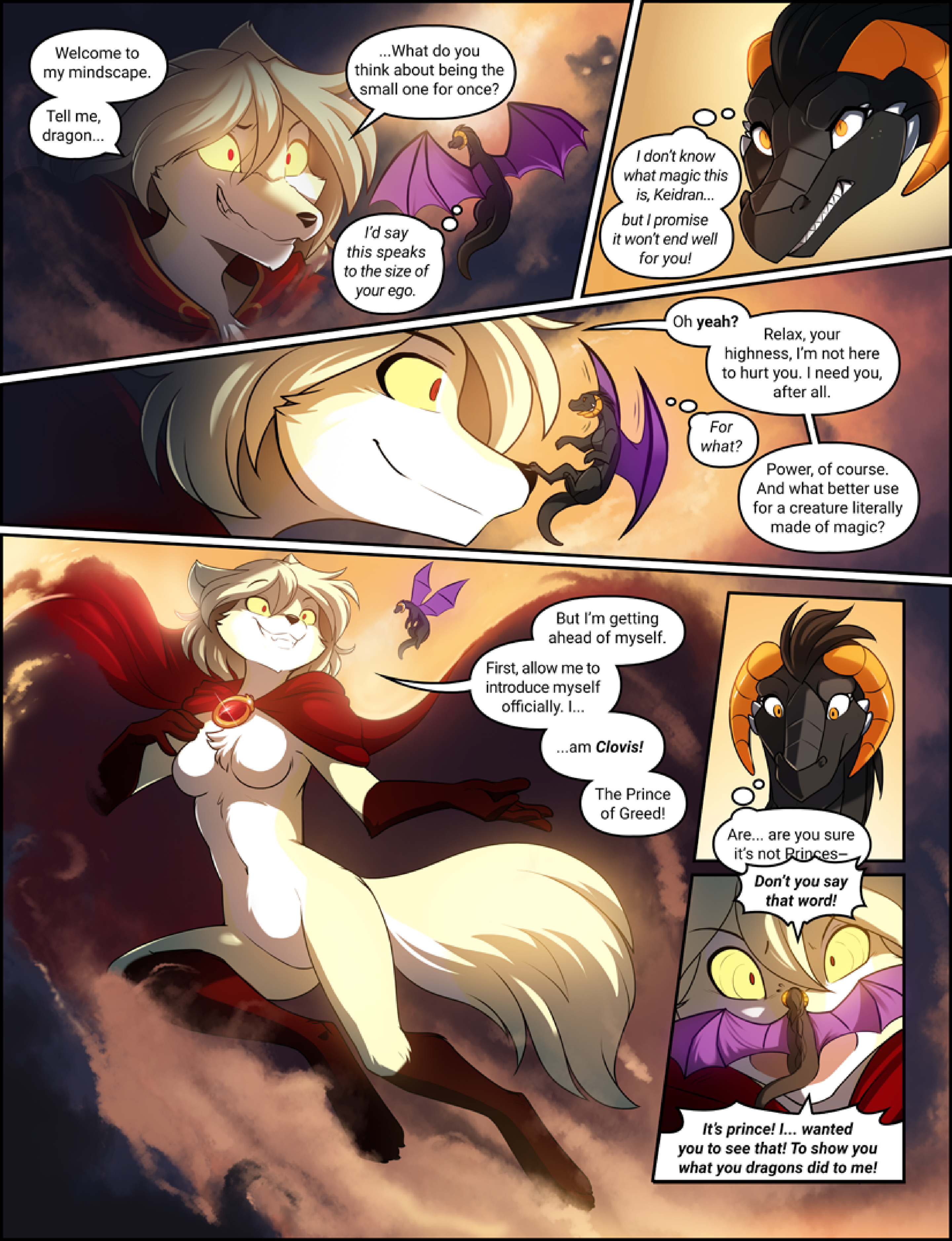

Shepherd Square
Matriarch Dahlia!
I heard you turned away my men. With respect, I must insist you allow an escort.
My men know the city better than any of yours.
And *I* must insist that my own guarrrds are sufficient.
So far I have seen nothing but incompetence from *your* men.
CONSULATE
You are lucky we have not left yet and simply abandoned this diplomacy.
However, the high matriarchs are still hopeful for a peaceful resolution if it means an end to the hunts on our people.
Please, Ma'am, I assure you, my men are some of the most well trained, disciplined—
Sir! Sir!
?
Daniels!
Why are you not wearing pants?!
I... was in a rush. There was an emergency at the barracks!
What?! ***Wolves?!***
No, no, sir! You know that weird lizard woman we had in lock up?
The Adrakist? Wha... oh no, don't tell me...
SHEPHER
GUIDE & PROTEC

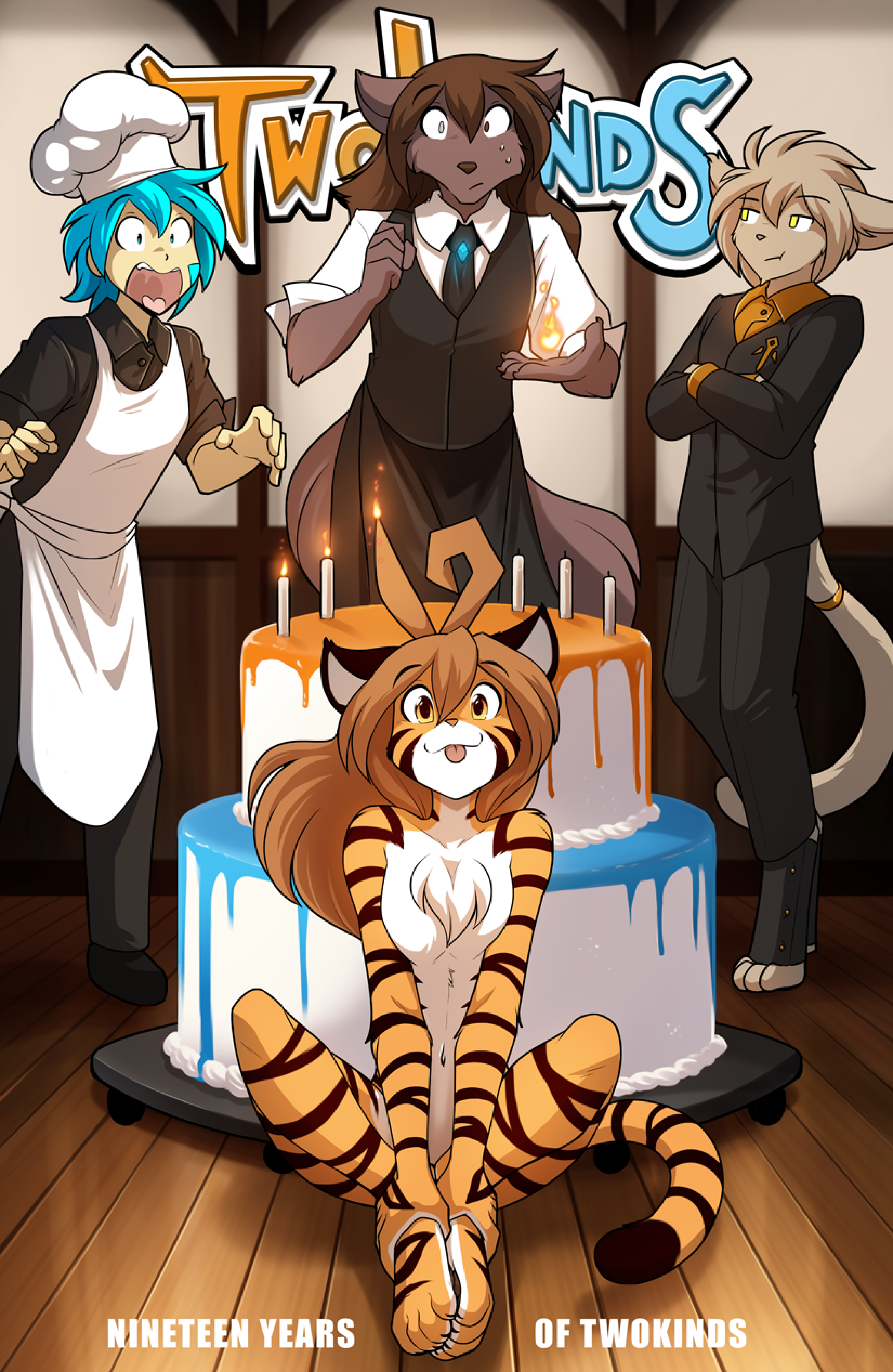

"Escaped"? *How?!*
I wasn't there, sir, but from what I heard, she just... broke out.
SLAM!
Nyrah!
Thanks for the stay! Definitely one of the nicer jails I've napped in.
Hey!
Stop right there!
Apparently, the magic suppressor didn't affect her strength at all.
And she just walked out?! *Ugh*... Was anyone hurt?
Not that I've heard, sir. They tried to catch her, but she just... flew off.
Sigh... and where were ***you*** during all this?
Me? Uh... I... I was...
RUSTLE RUSTLE
...Off duty.
...Right.


Well, go inform the watch to keep an eye out.
Yes, sir!
And get your pants back first!
Y-yes sir!
‹Ah, to be young again.›
Lady Dahlia, I apologize for the indecency of my soldier.
"Indecency"?
You know captain, in tiger lands it's customary to be ***naked*** when first meeting with a matriarch.
Honestly, this is a refreshing change of pace from all the formality so far.
I... see.
Well, I'm glad you're not upset.
If you'll excuse me, I need to make a report.
I understand.
Good day, captain.
Sigh... At least one of us is doing well at diplomacy.
Can't imagine what the matriarch is thinking right now...
Hi, mom.
Sigh... At least one of us is doing well at diplomacy.

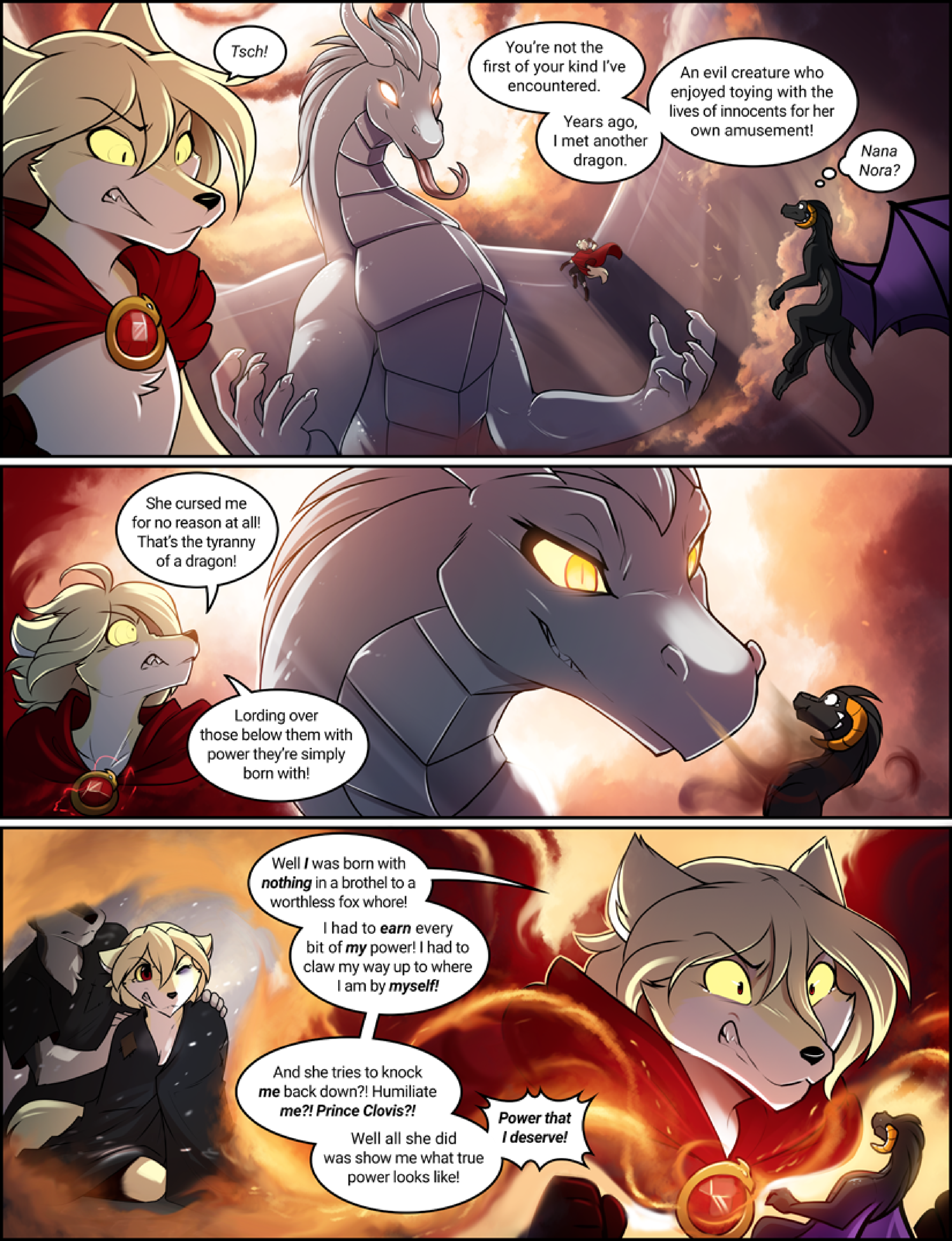

GARRISON
Oh!
There you are, Captain!
We've got a situation!
It's okay, I already know about the breakout.
No, not that! There's *another* problem!
BOOK 'EM!
Alice, I've been putting out fires *all day* today.
Some literal.
Can it wait until tomorrow? I really need—
TWITCH
Lieutenant Reed...
Why do you have a tail?
That's the other problem, sir...

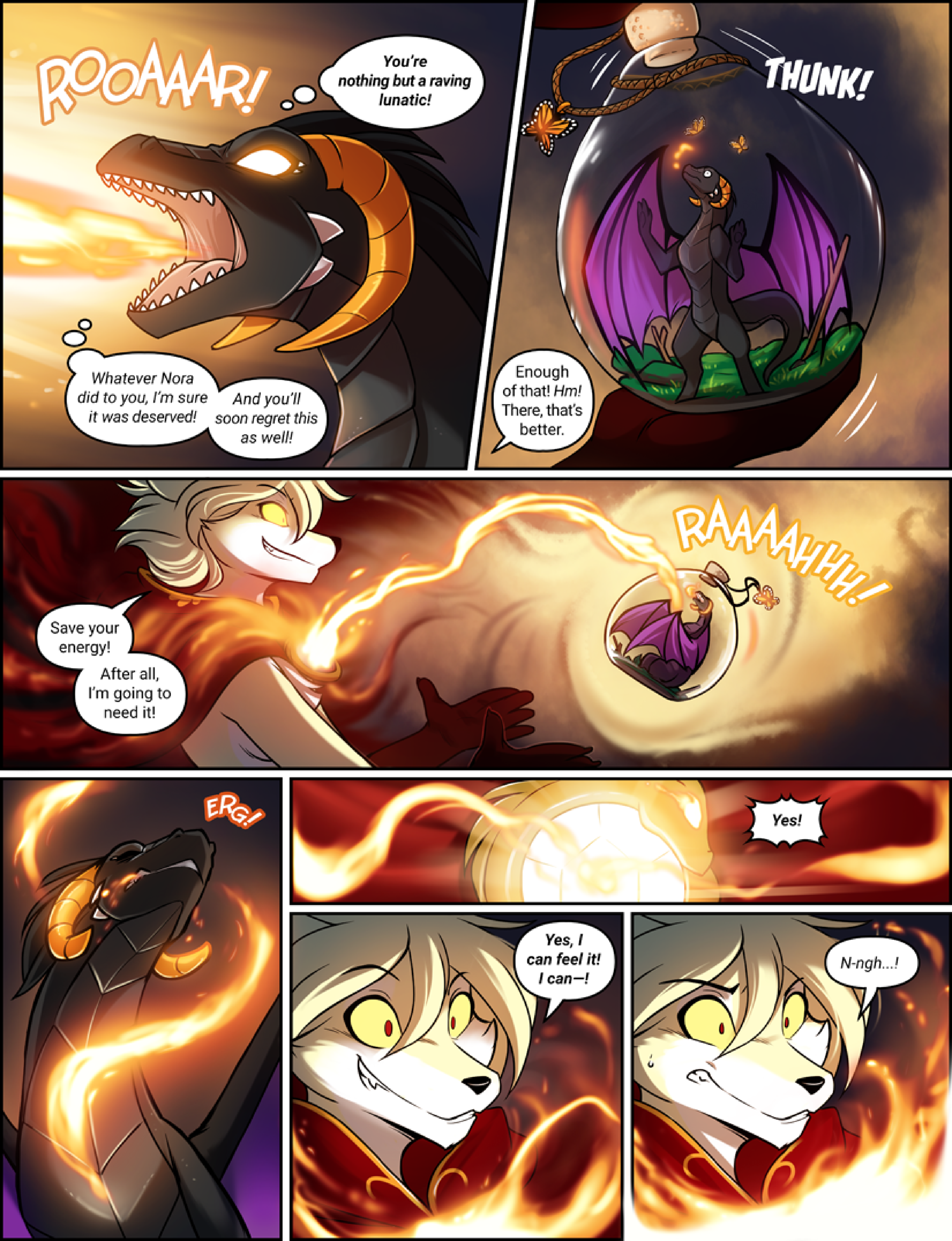

You? You're... Adira's girl, from the tavern.
Maeve, right?
What are you doing here?
Give me back my mom! O-or...
...I... bite you.
She seems to think we have her mom.
Not that *I'm* aware of.
What? Do we?
But she claims it was a guard who took her. Perhaps she's being held in the southgate outpost?
I know it's not a priority, sir, and there's more important things going on right now, but I couldn't just turn her away.
I was going off duty, but if you'd let me, I'd be willing to volunteer to check on the tavern and the outpost.
Sir?
Maeve...
On honor as captain of Edinmire, I'll do everything in my power to get your mom back. You have my word.
T-thank you!

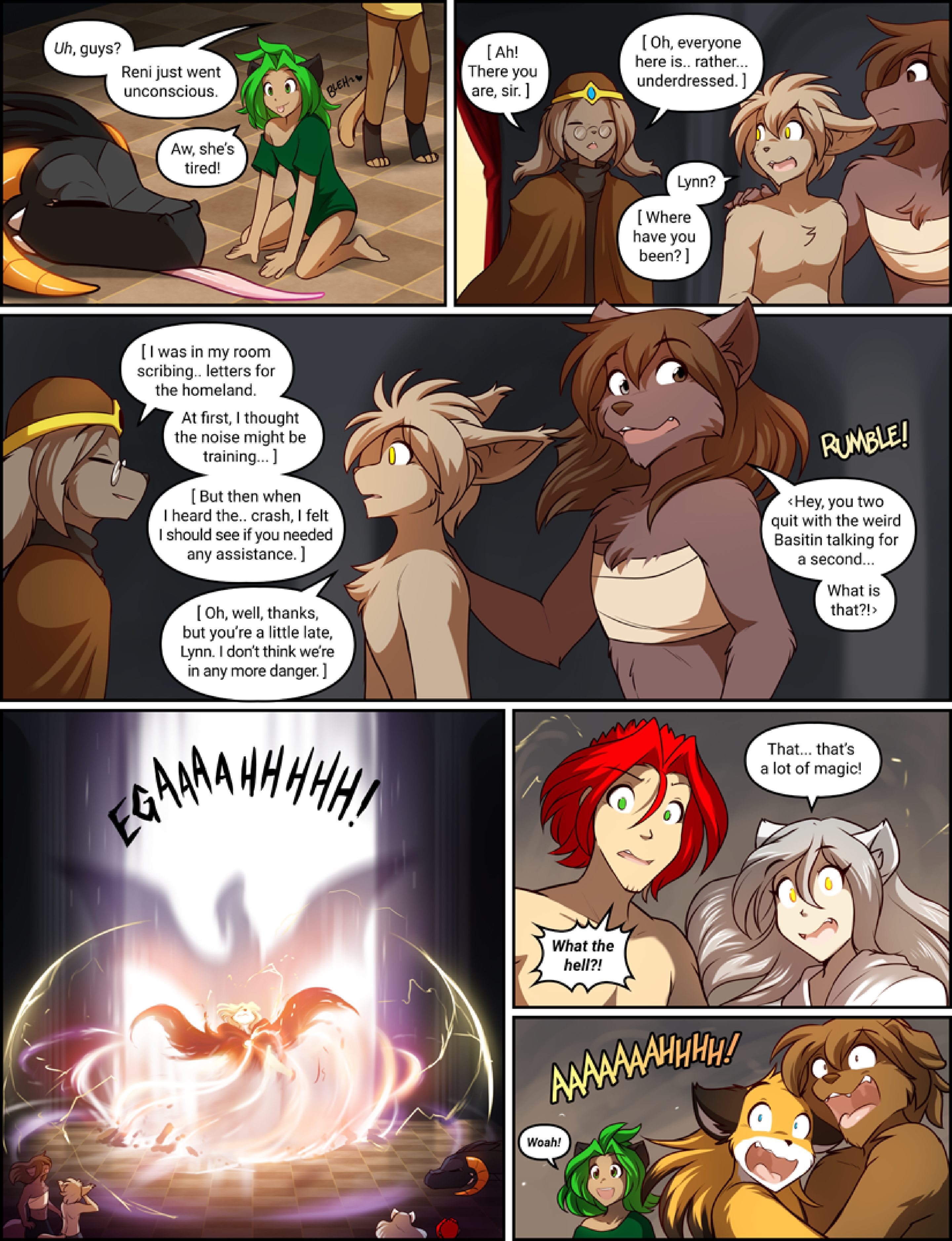

Welcome to my mindscape.
Tell me, dragon...
...What do you think about being the small one for once?
I'd say this speaks to the size of your ego.
I don't know what magic this is, Keidran...
but I promise it won't end well for you!
Oh **yeah?**
Relax, your highness, I'm not here to hurt you. I need you, after all.
For what?
Power, of course. And what better use for a creature literally made of magic?
But I'm getting ahead of myself.
First, allow me to introduce myself officially. I...
...am ***Clovis!***
The Prince of Greed!
Are... are you sure it's not Princes–
Don't you say that word!
It's prince! I... wanted you to see that! To show you what you dragons did to me!

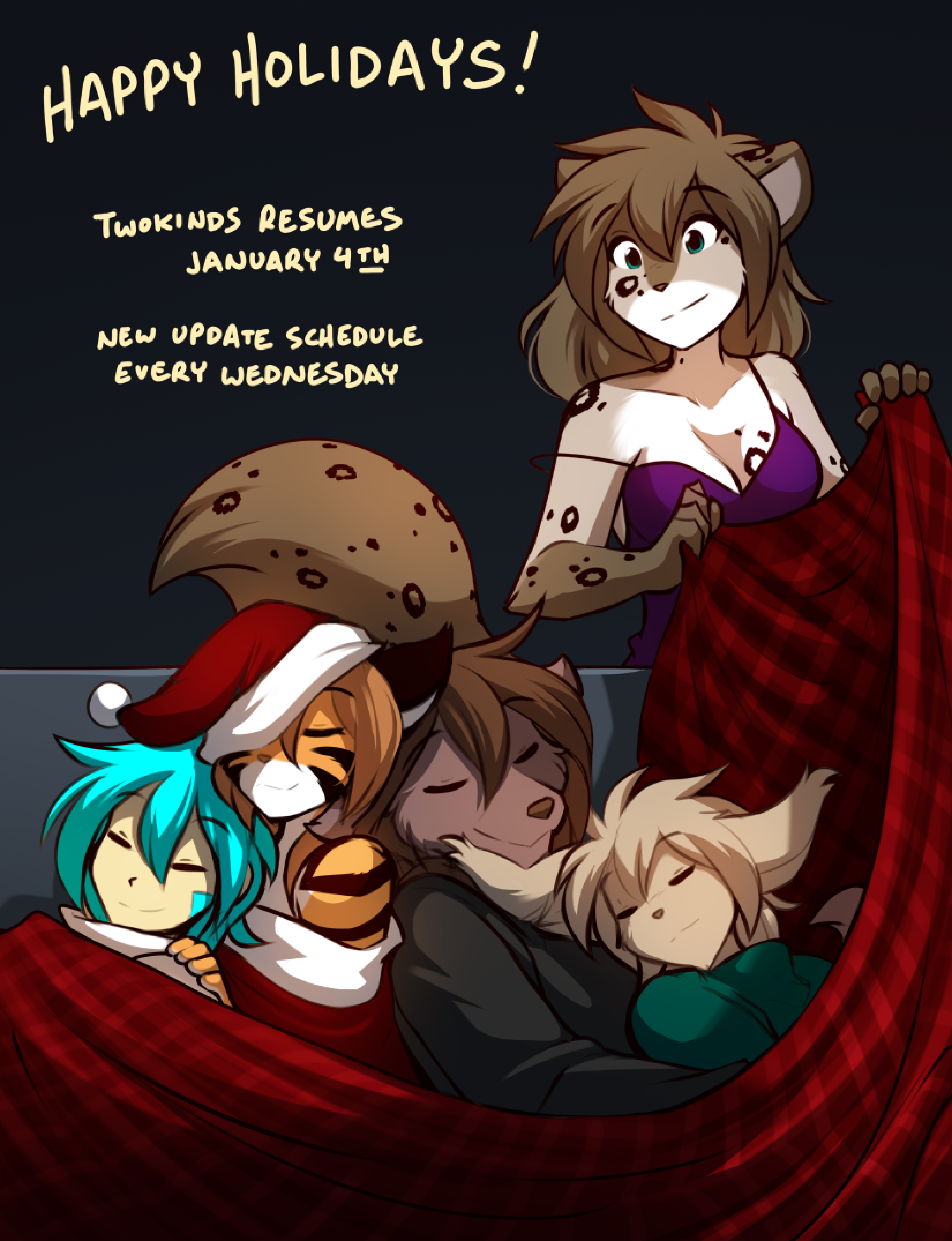


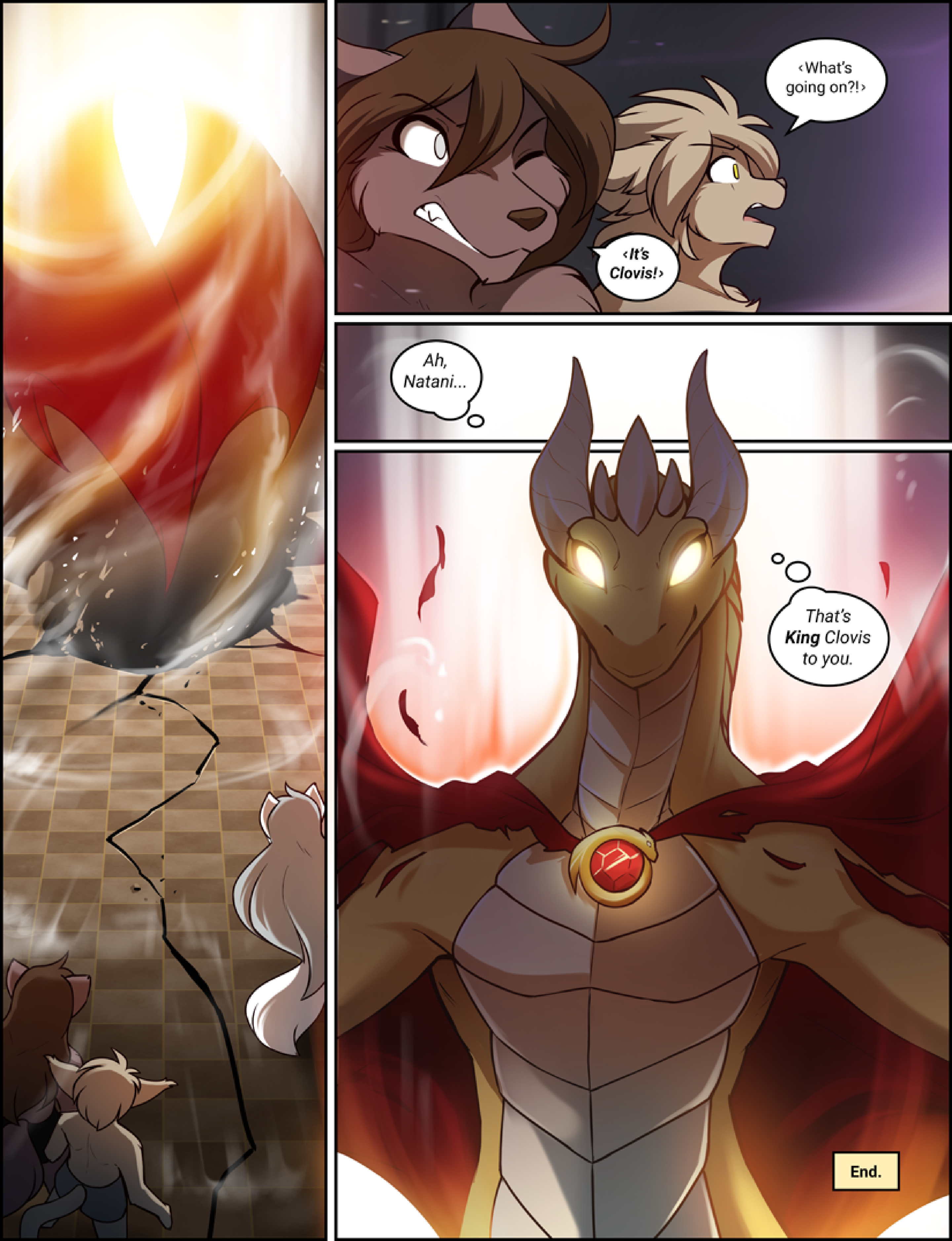
NINETEEN YEARS OF TWOKINDS

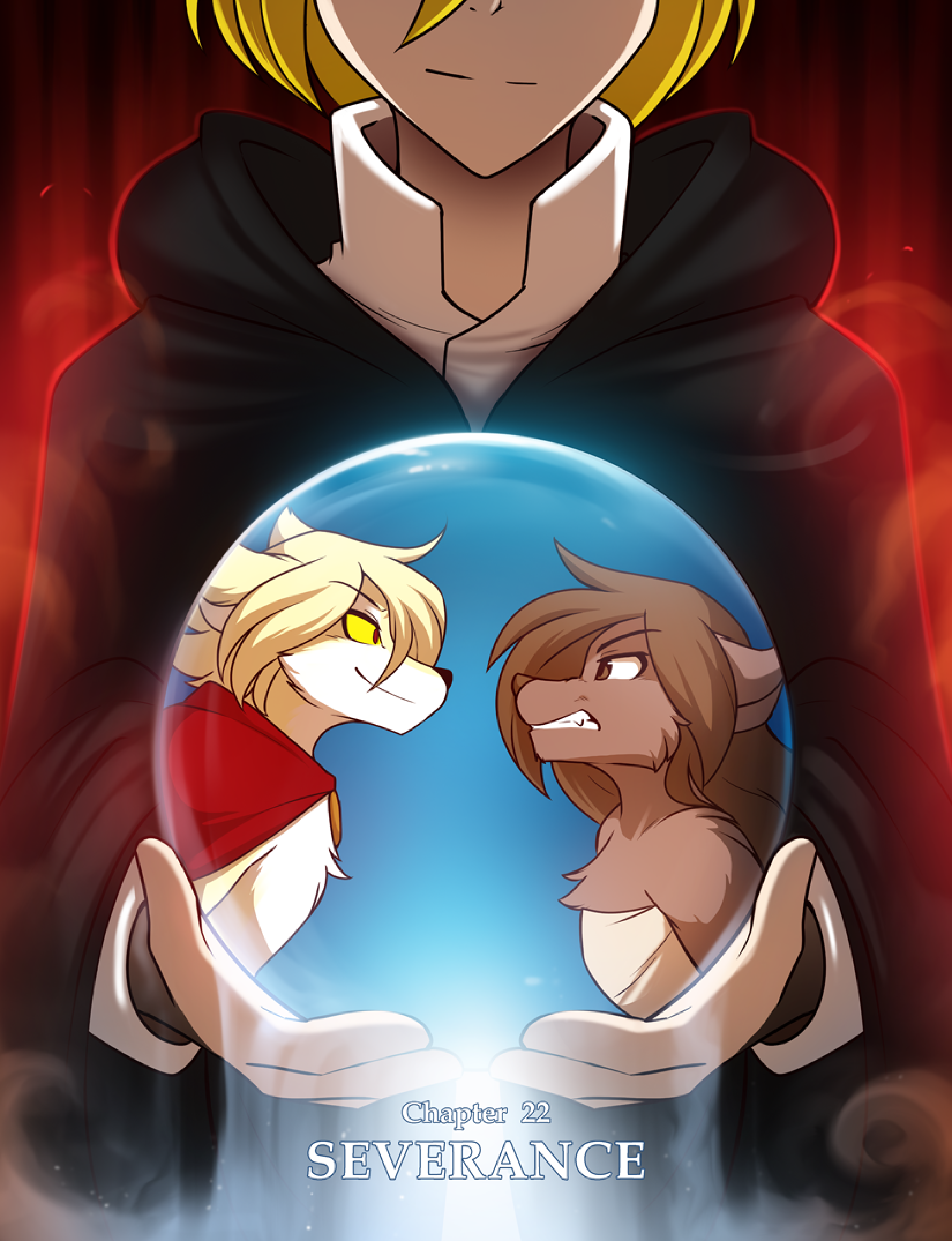

Tsch!
You're not the first of your kind I've encountered.
Years ago, I met another dragon.
An evil creature who enjoyed toying with the lives of innocents for her own amusement!
Nana Nora?
She cursed me for no reason at all! That's the tyranny of a dragon!
Lording over those below them with power they're simply born with!
Well ***I*** was born with ***nothing*** in a brothel to a worthless fox whore!
I had to ***earn*** every bit of ***my*** power! I had to claw my way up to where I am by ***myself!***
And she tries to knock ***me*** back down?! Humiliate ***me?! Prince Clovis?!***
Well all she did was show me what true power looks like!
Power that I deserve!


ROOAAAR!
You're nothing but a raving lunatic!
Whatever Nora did to you, I'm sure it was deserved!
And you'll soon regret this as well!
THUNK!
Enough of that! Hm! There, that's better.
RAAAAHHH!
Save your energy!
After all, I'm going to need it!
ERG!
Yes!
Yes, I can feel it! I can—!
N-ngh...!


Uh, guys?
Reni just went unconscious.
Aw, she's tired!
BLEH~♥
[Ah! There you are, sir.]
[Oh, everyone here is.. rather... underdressed.]
Lynn?
[Where have you been?]
[I was in my room scribing.. letters for the homeland.
At first, I thought the noise might be training...]
[But then when I heard the.. crash, I felt I should see if you needed any assistance.]
[Oh, well, thanks, but you're a little late, Lynn. I don't think we're in any more danger.]
RUMBLE!
‹Hey, you two quit with the weird Basitin talking for a second...
What is that?!›
EGAAAAHHHHH!
That... that's a lot of magic!
What the hell?!
AAAAAAHHHH!
Woah!

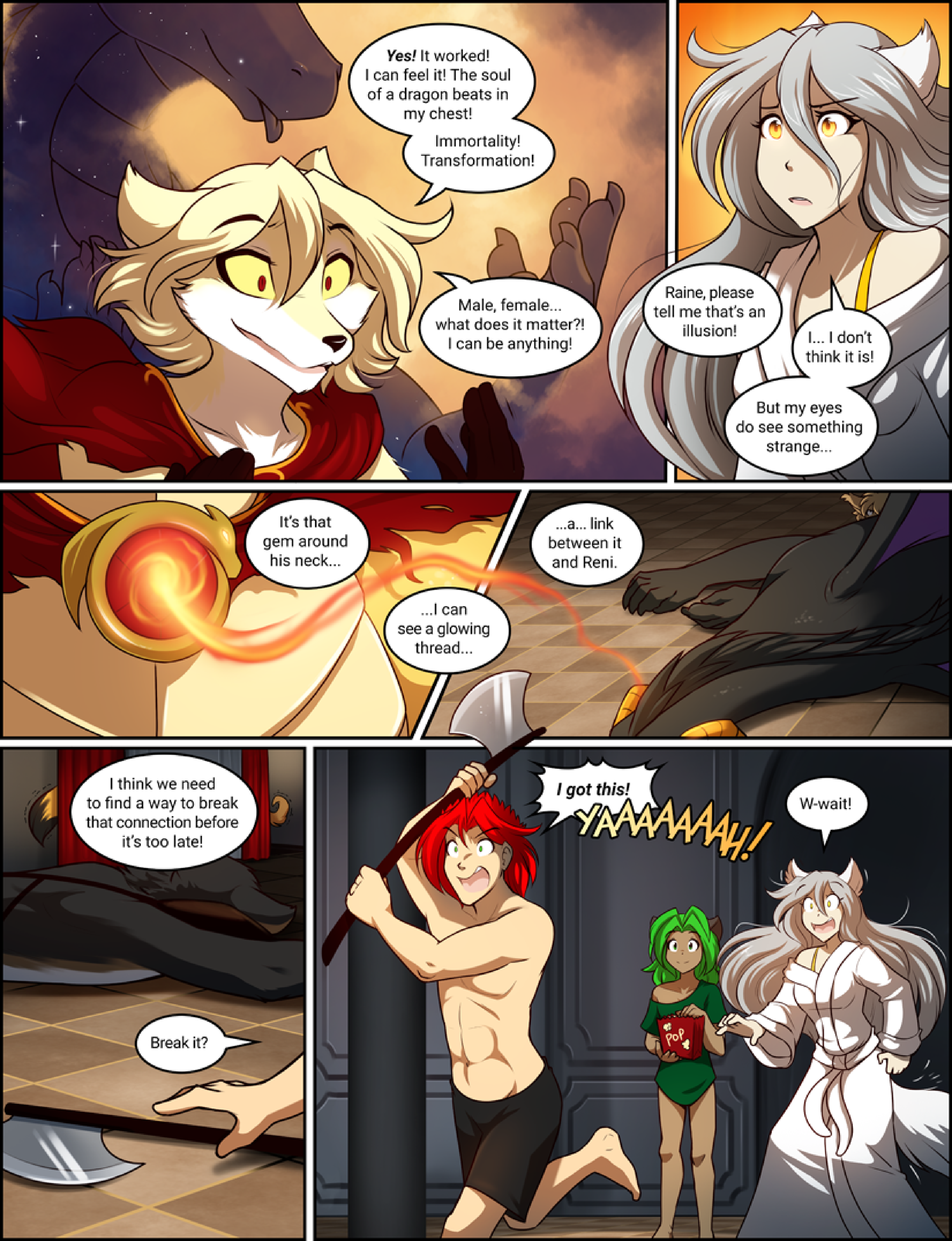

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
TWOKINDS RESUMES JANUARY 4TH
NEW UPDATE SCHEDULE EVERY WEDNESDAY

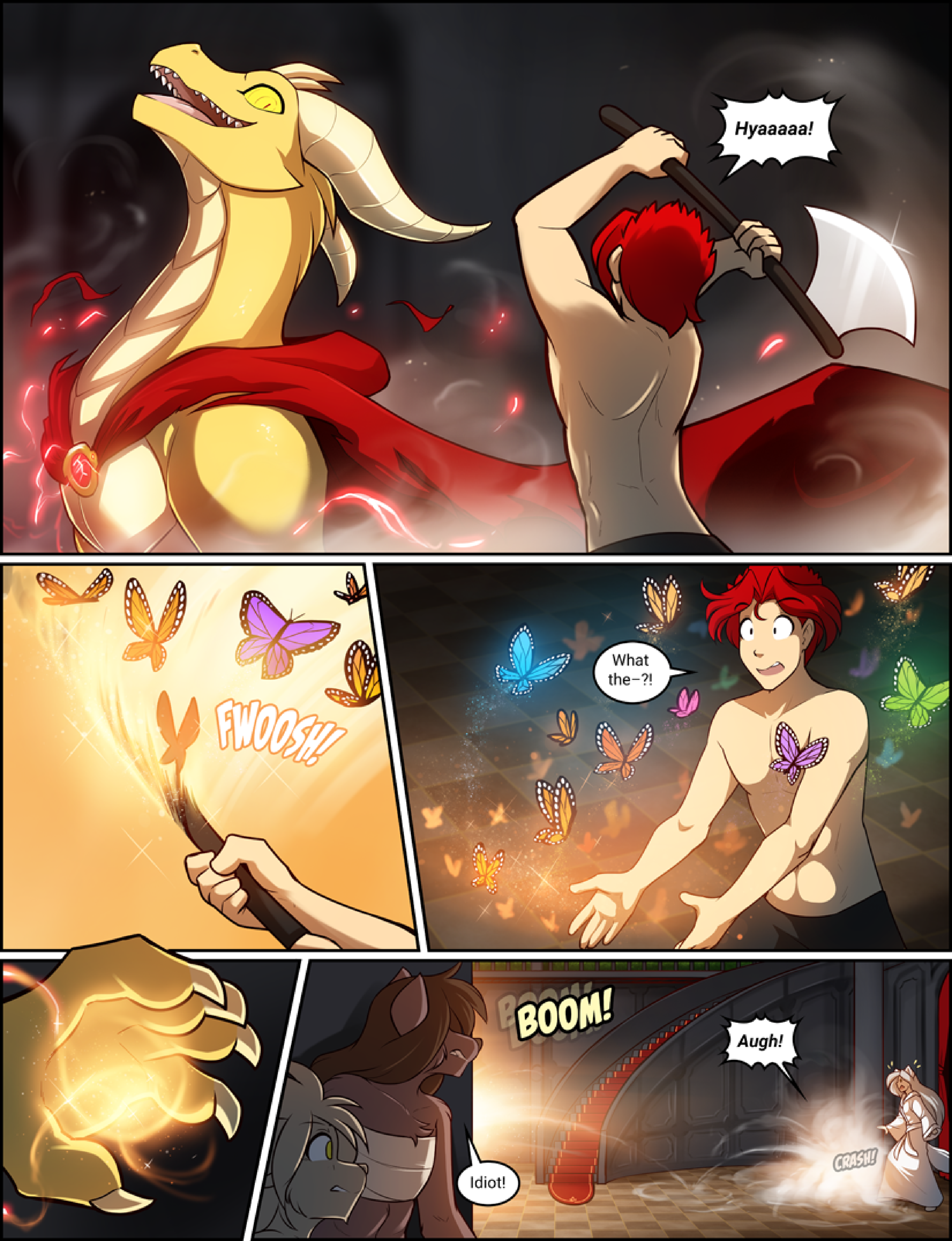

‹What's going on?!›
‹*It's Clovis!*›
Ah, Natani...
That's ***King*** *Clovis to you.*
End.

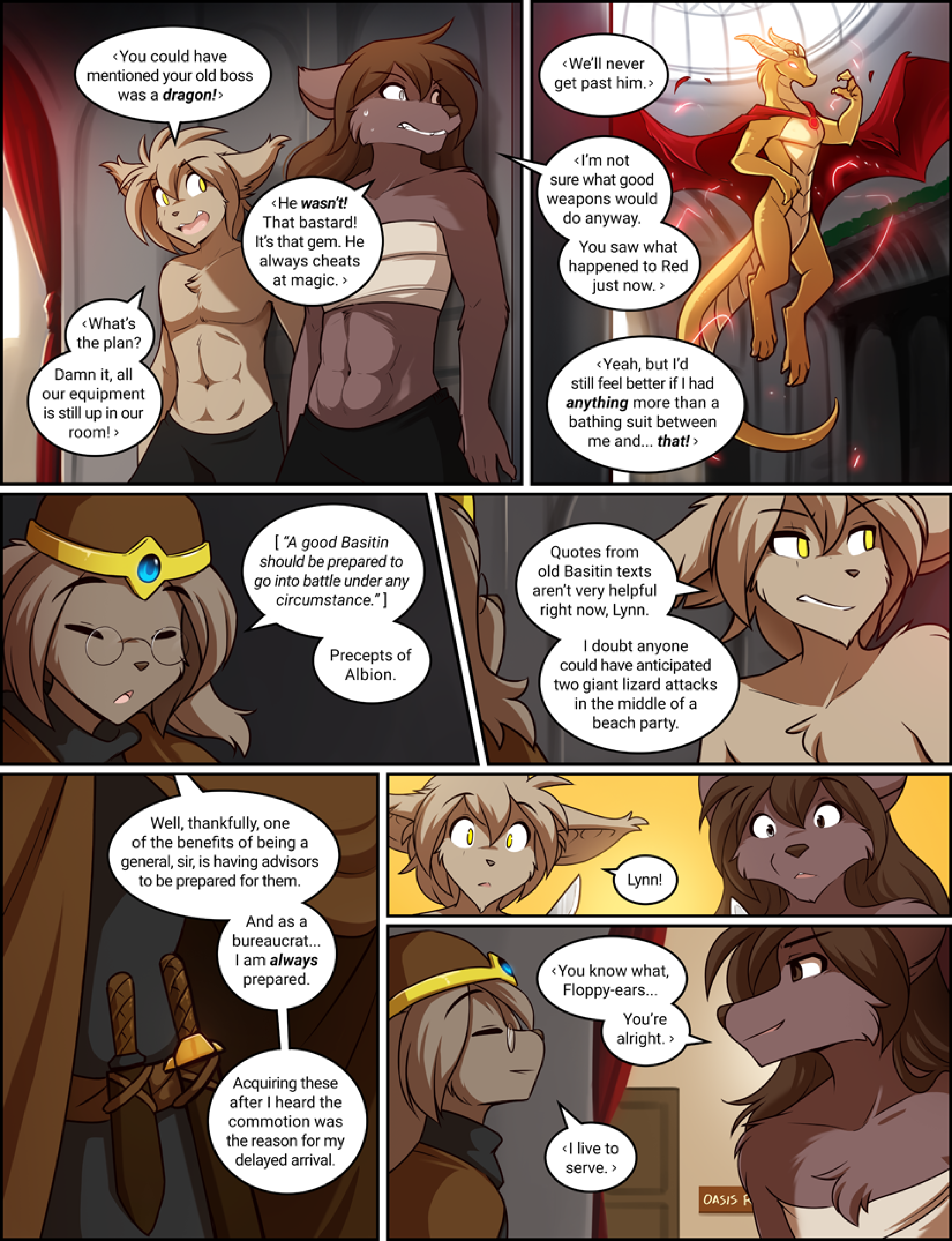


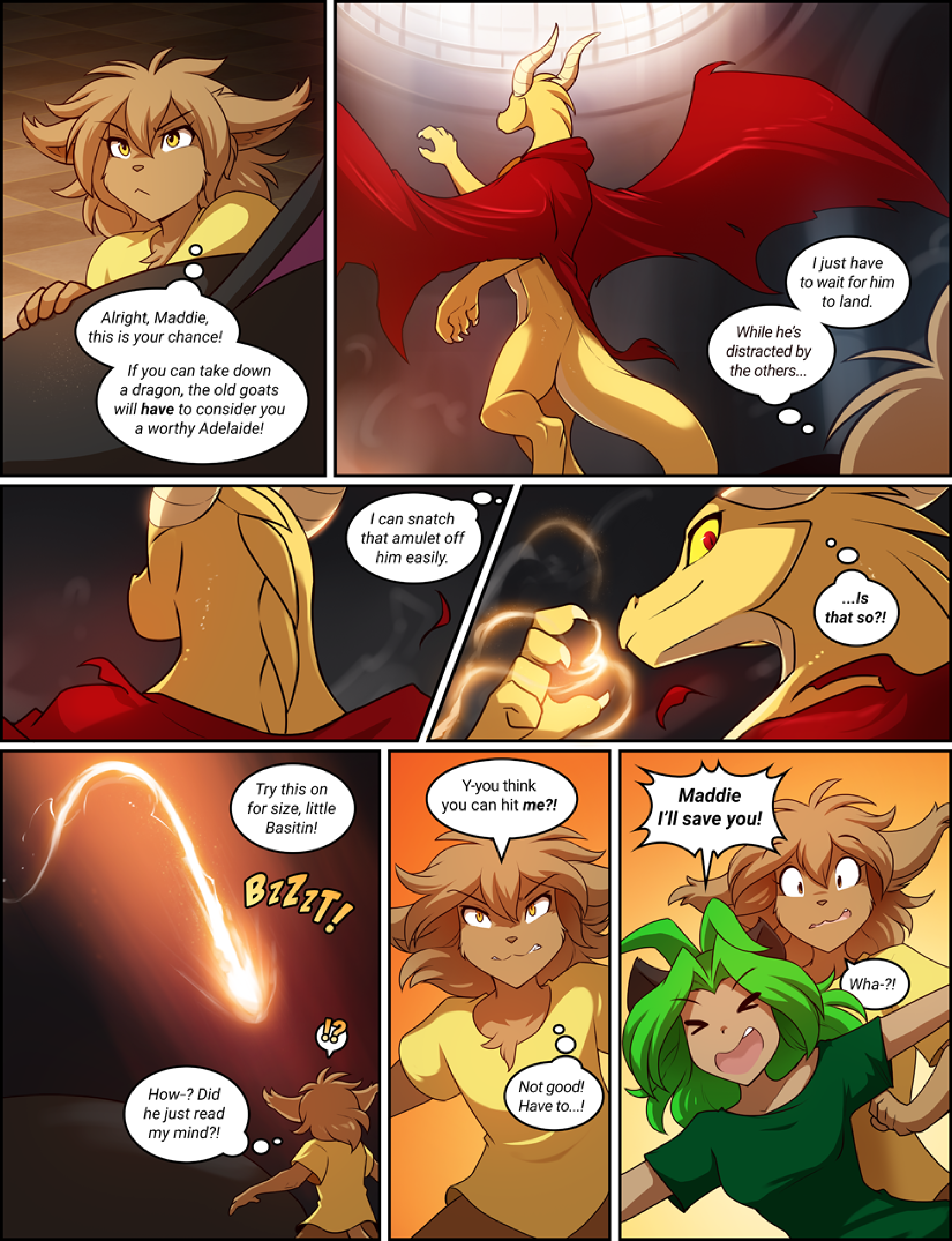
Chapter 22

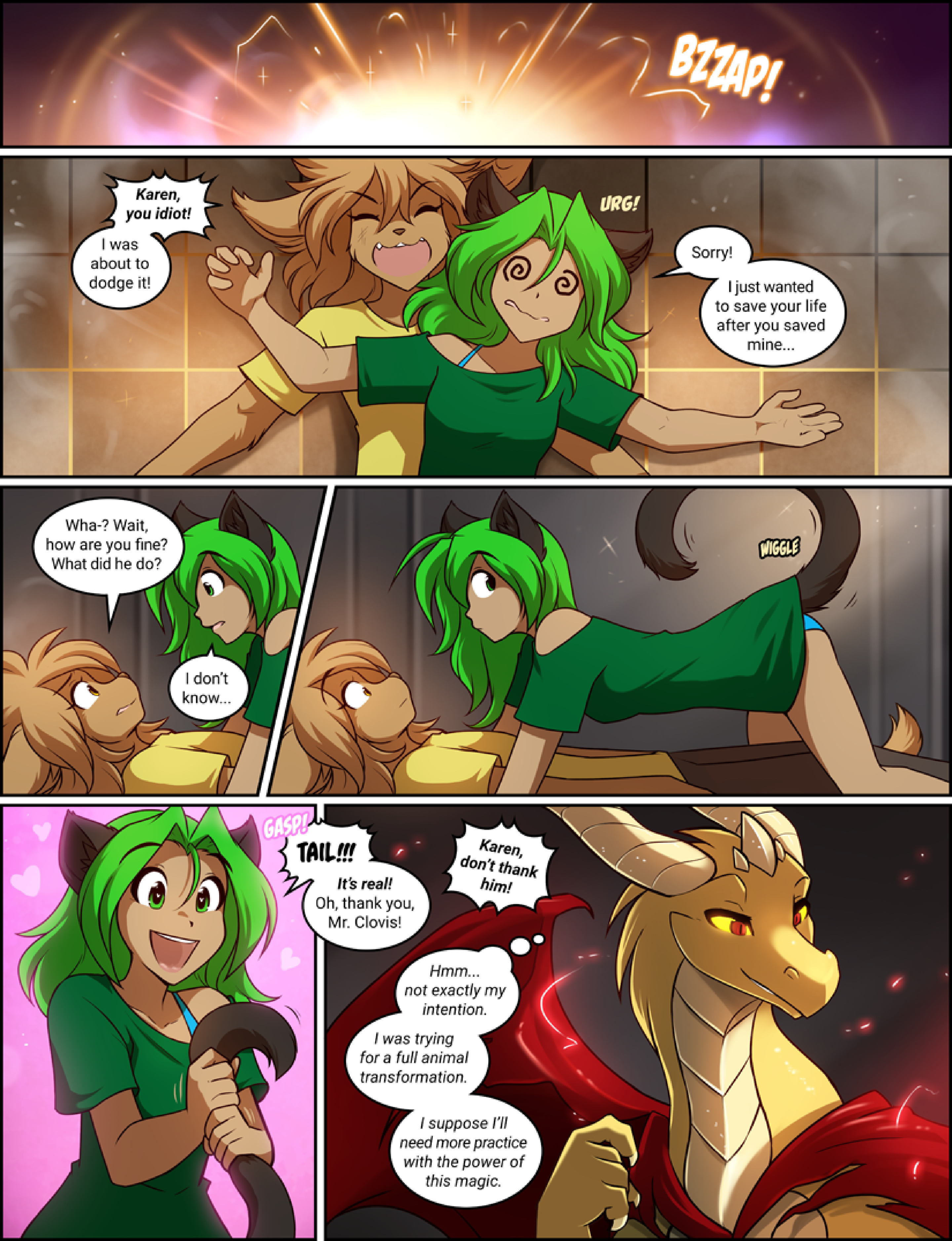
SEVERANCE

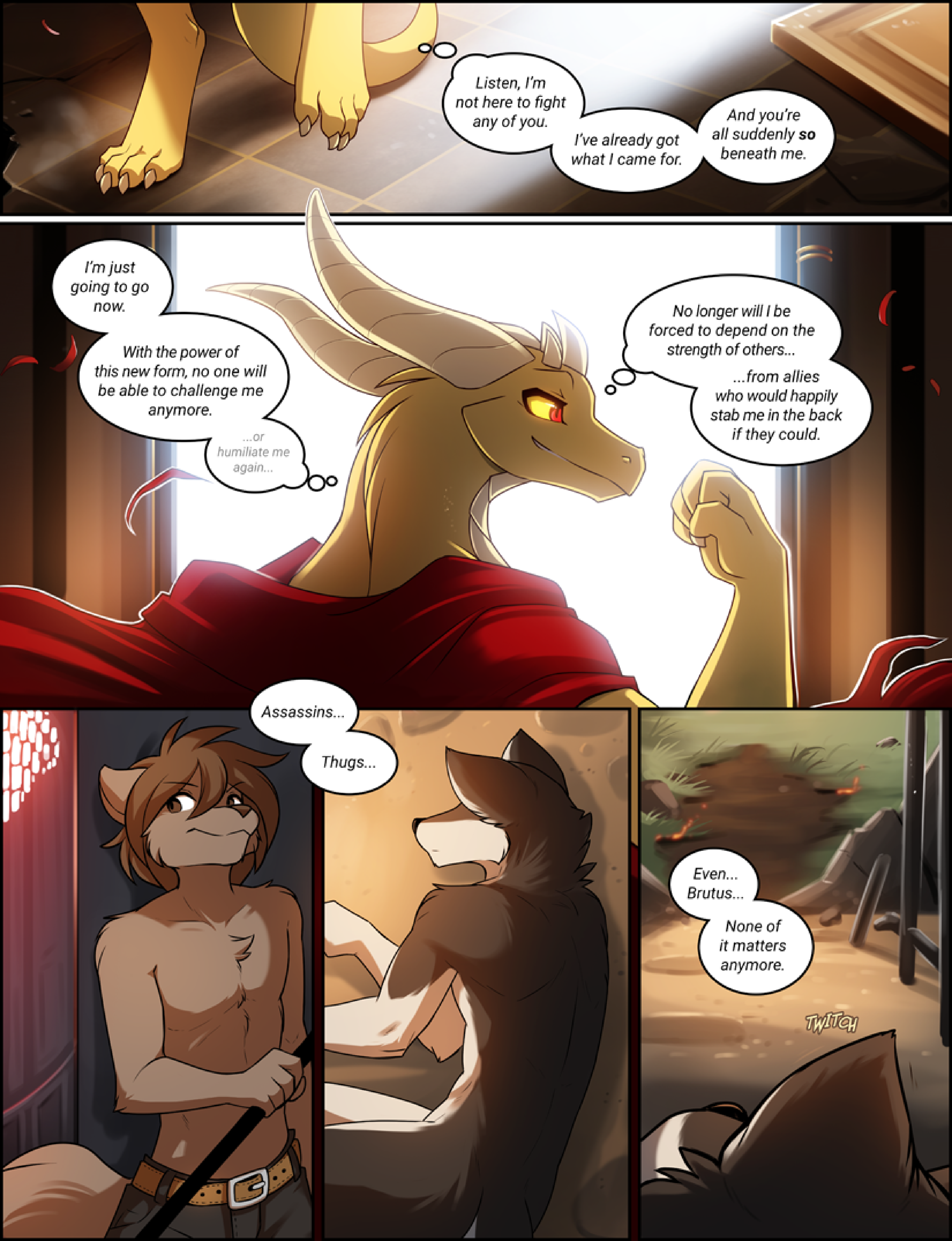

Yes! It worked! I can feel it! The soul of a dragon beats in my chest!
Immortality! Transformation!
Male, female... what does it matter?! I can be anything!
Raine, please tell me that's an illusion!
I... I don't think it is!
But my eyes do see something strange...
It's that gem around his neck...
...I can see a glowing thread...
...a... link between it and Reni.
I think we need to find a way to break that connection before it's too late!
Break it?
I got this!
YAAAAAAAH!
W-wait!
POP

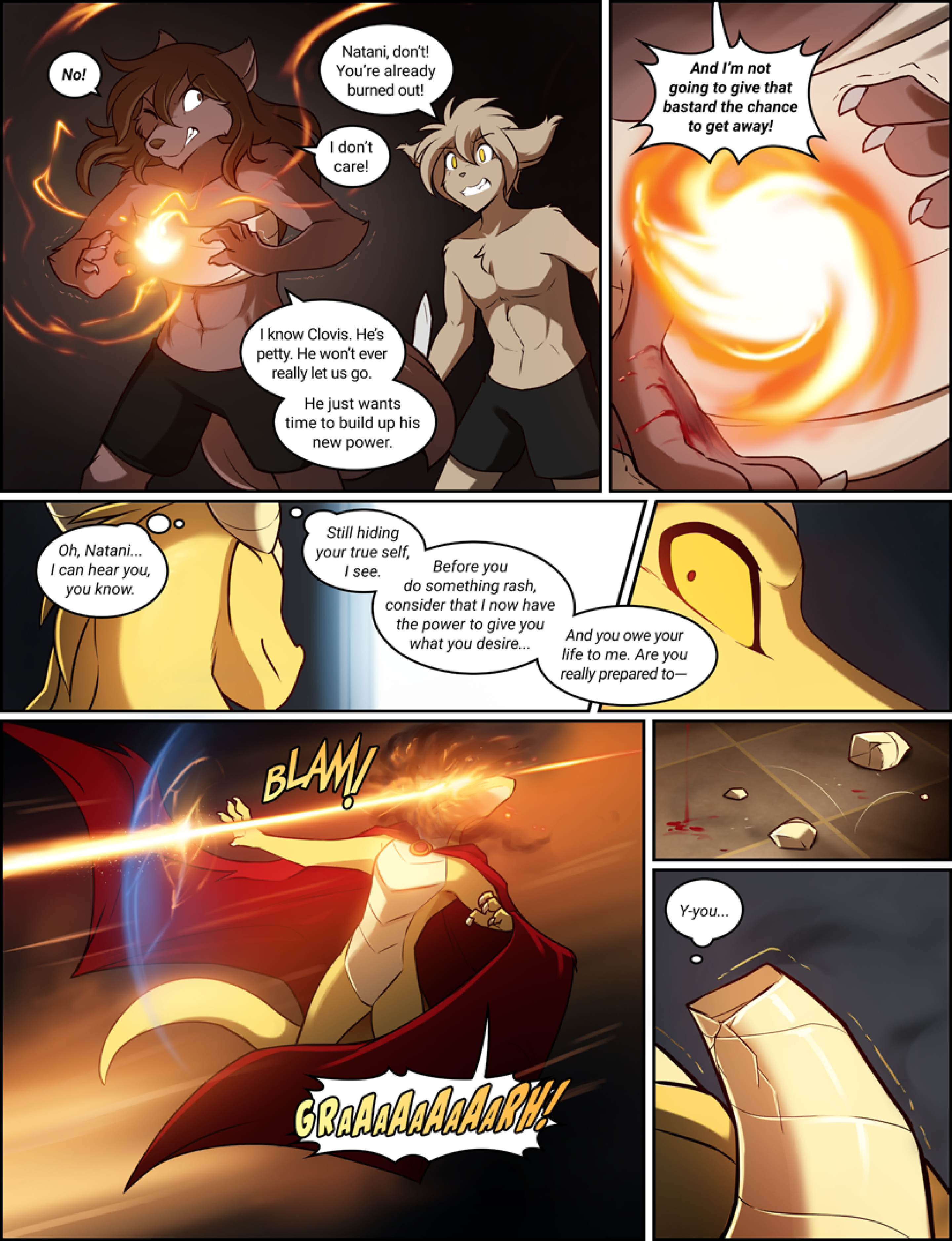

Hyaaaaa!
FWOOSH!
What the−?!
BOOM!
Augh!
Idiot!
CRASH!

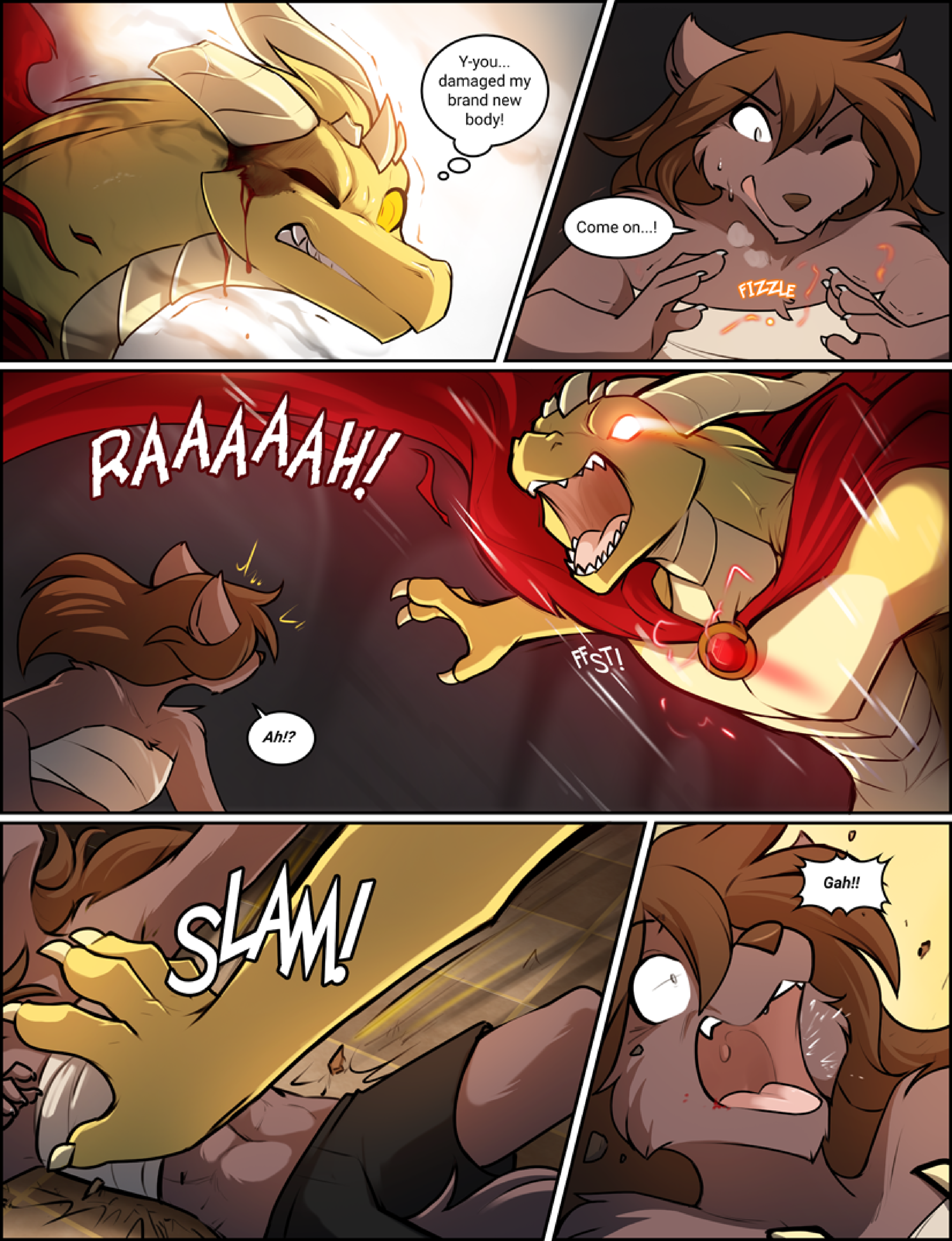

‹You could have mentioned your old boss was a ***dragon!***›
‹What's the plan?
Damn it, all our equipment is still up in our room! ›
‹He ***wasn't!*** That bastard! It's that gem. He always cheats at magic. ›
‹We'll never get past him. ›
‹I'm not sure what good weapons would do anyway.
You saw what happened to Red just now. ›
‹Yeah, but I'd still feel better if I had ***anything*** more than a bathing suit between me and... ***that!*** ›
[*"A good Basitin should be prepared to go into battle under any circumstance."*]
Precepts of Albion.
Quotes from old Basitin texts aren't very helpful right now, Lynn.
I doubt anyone could have anticipated two giant lizard attacks in the middle of a beach party.
Well, thankfully, one of the benefits of being a general, sir, is having advisors to be prepared for them.
And as a bureaucrat... I am ***always*** prepared.
Acquiring these after I heard the commotion was the reason for my delayed arrival.
Lynn!
‹You know what, Floppy-ears...
You're alright. ›
‹I live to serve. ›
OASIS R

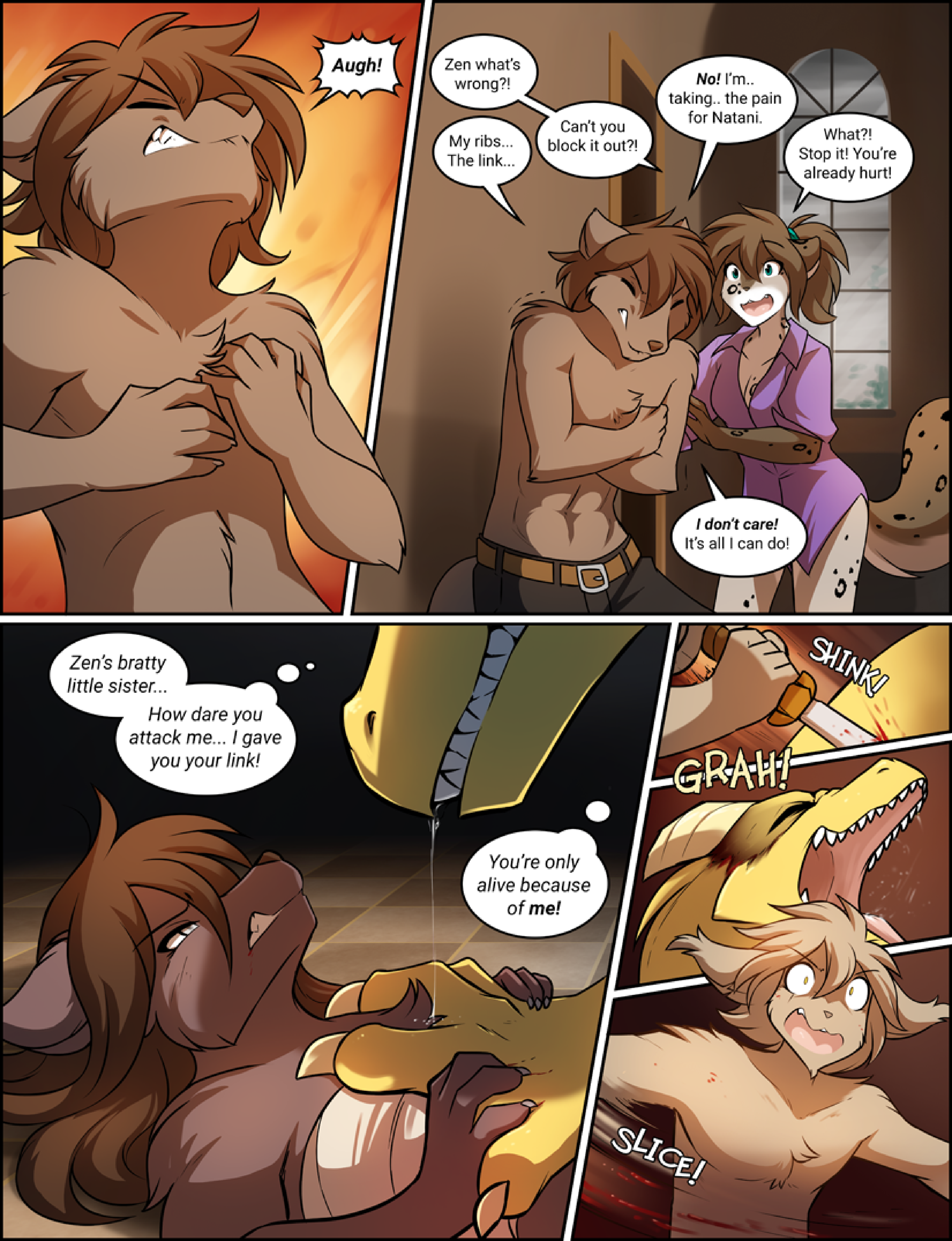

Alright, Maddie, this is your chance!
If you can take down a dragon, the old goats will **have** to consider you a worthy Adelaide!
I just have to wait for him to land.
While he's distracted by the others...
I can snatch that amulet off him easily.
...Is that so?!
Try this on for size, little Basitin!
BZZZT!
!?
How-? Did he just read my mind?!
Y-you think you can hit ***me?!***
Not good! Have to...!
Maddie I'll save you!
Wha-?!

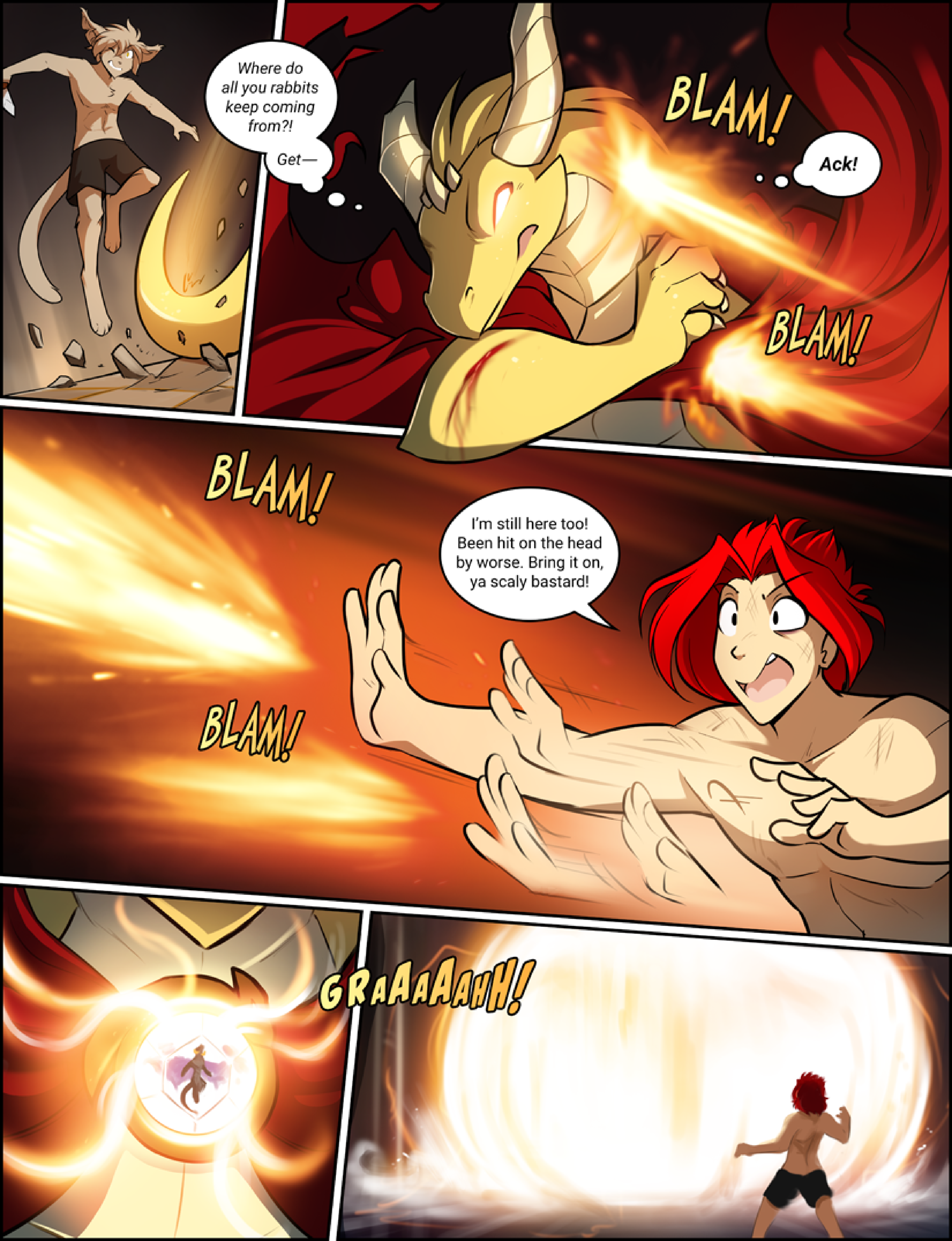

BZZAP!
Karen, you idiot!
I was about to dodge it!
URG!
Sorry!
I just wanted to save your life after you saved mine...
Wha-? Wait, how are you fine? What did he do?
I don't know...
WIGGLE
GASP!
TAIL!!!
It's real! Oh, thank you, Mr. Clovis!
Karen, don't thank him!
Hmm... not exactly my intention.
I was trying for a full animal transformation.
I suppose I'll need more practice with the power of this magic.

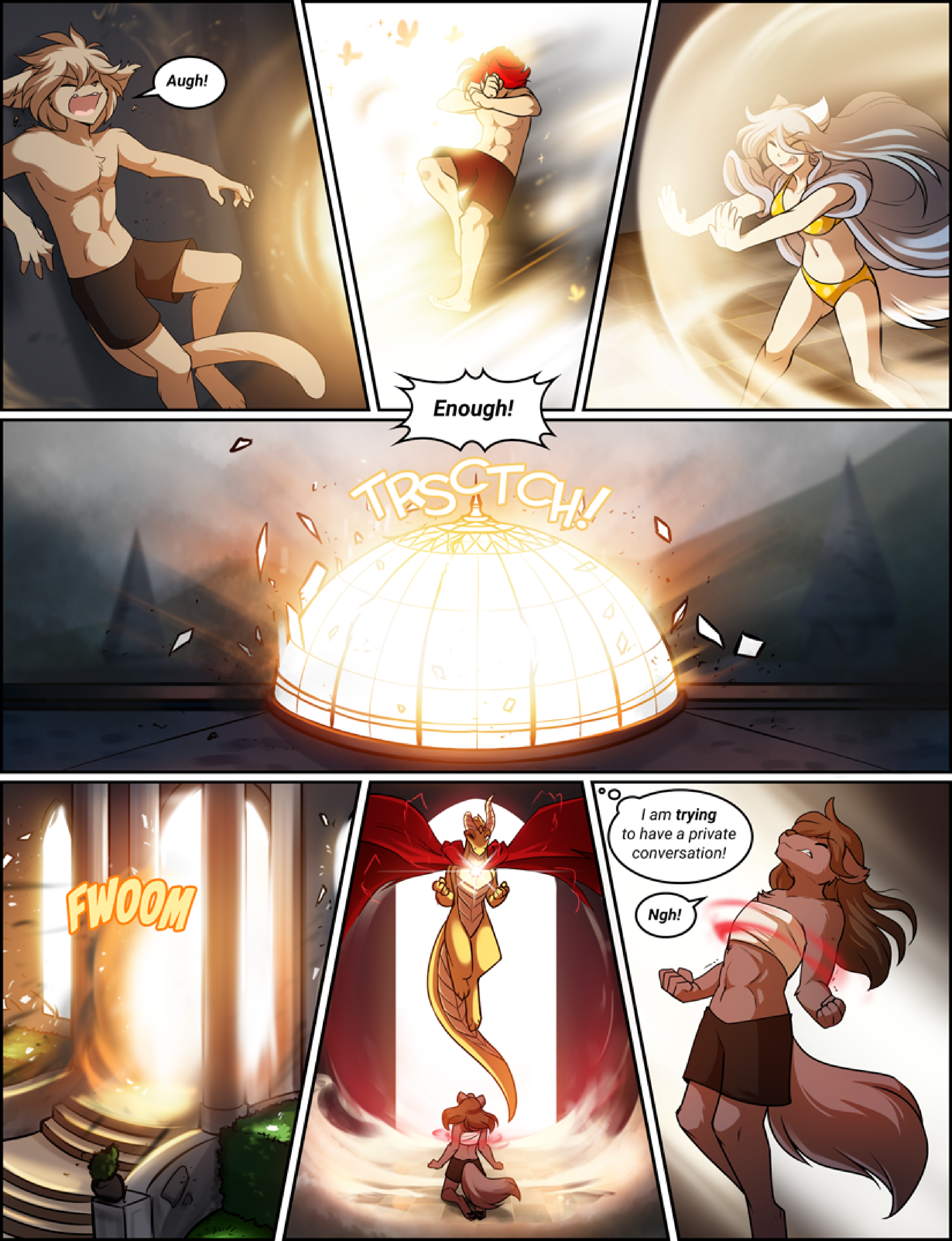

Listen, I'm not here to fight any of you.
I've already got what I came for.
And you're all suddenly **so** beneath me.
I'm just going to go now.
With the power of this new form, no one will be able to challenge me anymore.
...or humiliate me again...
No longer will I be forced to depend on the strength of others...
...from allies who would happily stab me in the back if they could.
Assassins...
Thugs...
Even... Brutus...
None of it matters anymore.
TWITCH

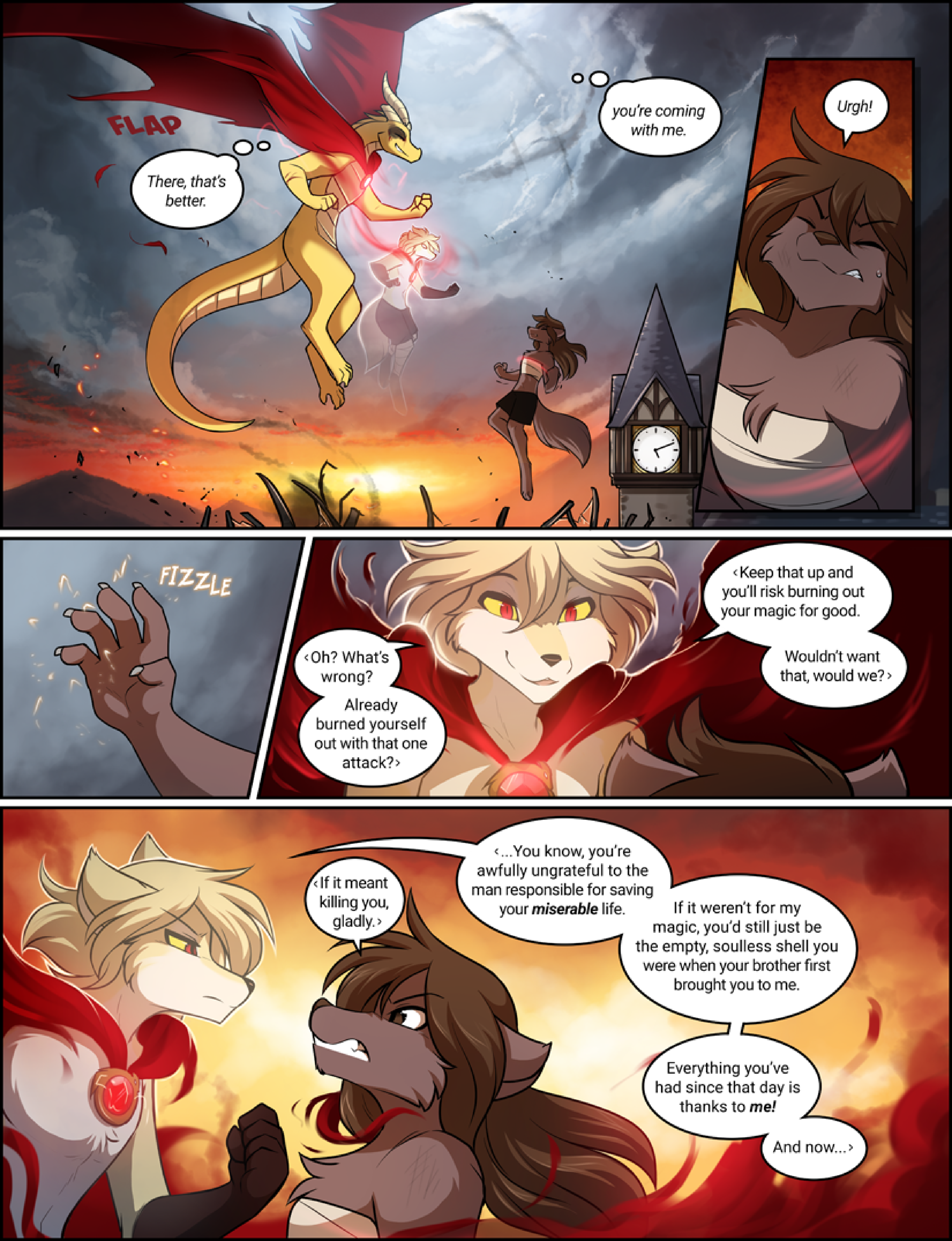

No!
Natani, don't! You're already burned out!
I don't care!
I know Clovis. He's petty. He won't ever really let us go.
He just wants time to build up his new power.
And I'm not going to give that bastard the chance to get away!
Oh, Natani... I can hear you, you know.
Still hiding your true self, I see.
Before you do something rash, consider that I now have the power to give you what you desire...
And you owe your life to me. Are you really prepared to—
BLAM!
GRAAAAAAAAARH!
Y-you...

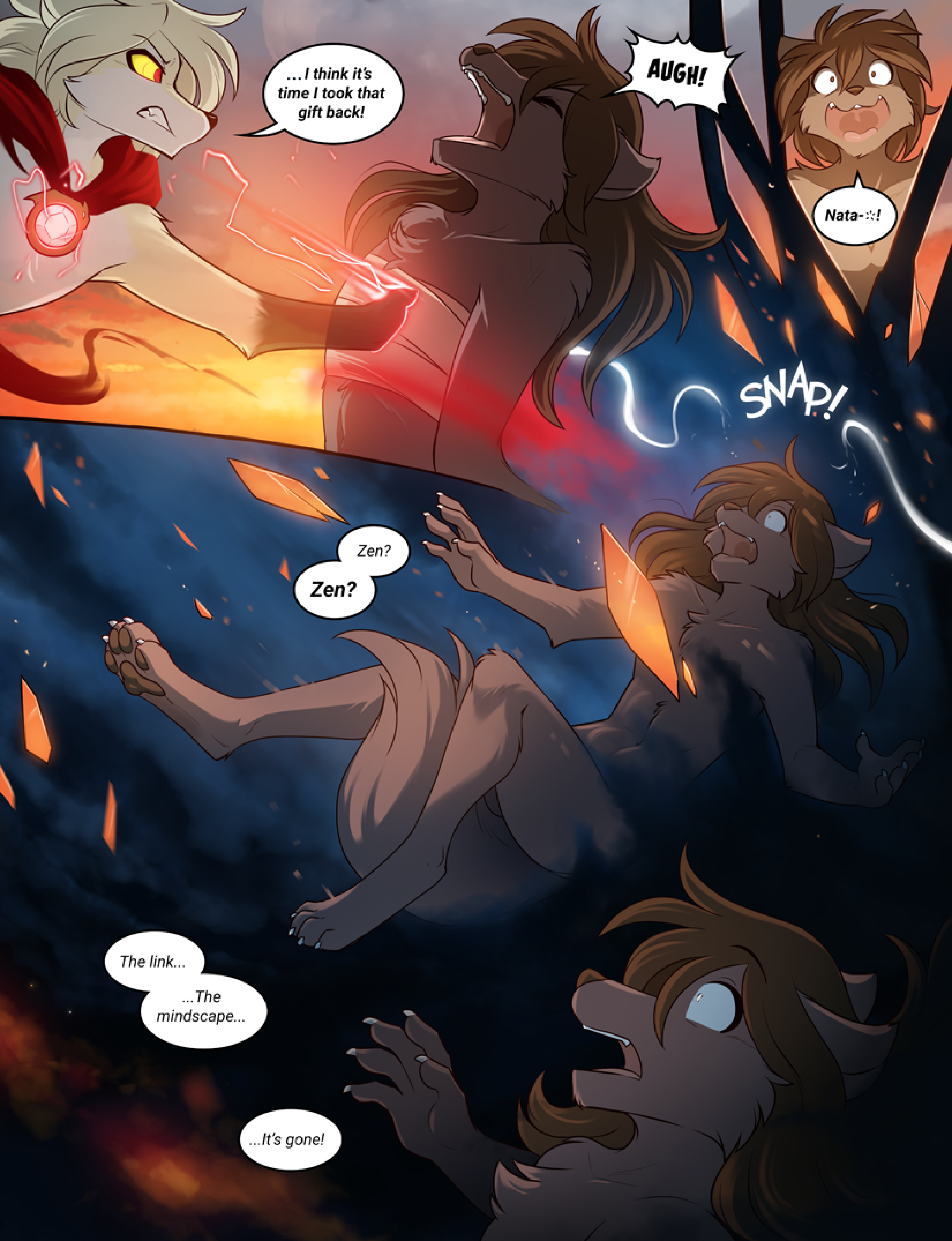

Y-you... damaged my brand new body!
Come on...!
FIZZLE
RAAAAAH!
FFST!
Ah!?
SLAM!
Gah!!

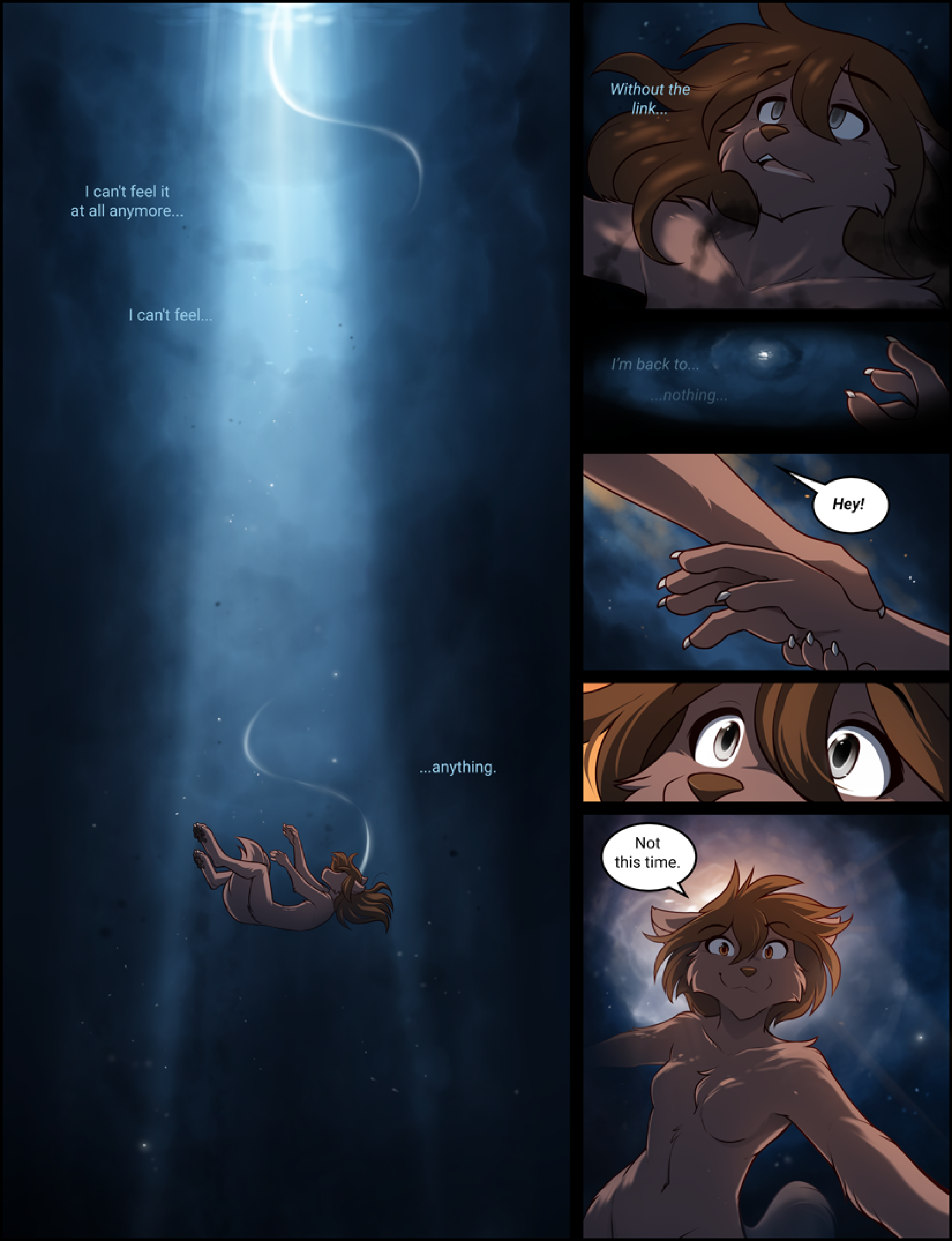

Augh!
Zen what's wrong?!
My ribs... The link...
Can't you block it out?!
No! I'm.. taking.. the pain for Natani.
What?! Stop it! You're already hurt!
I don't care! It's all I can do!
Zen's bratty little sister...
How dare you attack me... I gave you your link!
*You're only alive because of **me!***
SHINK!
GRAH!
SLICE!

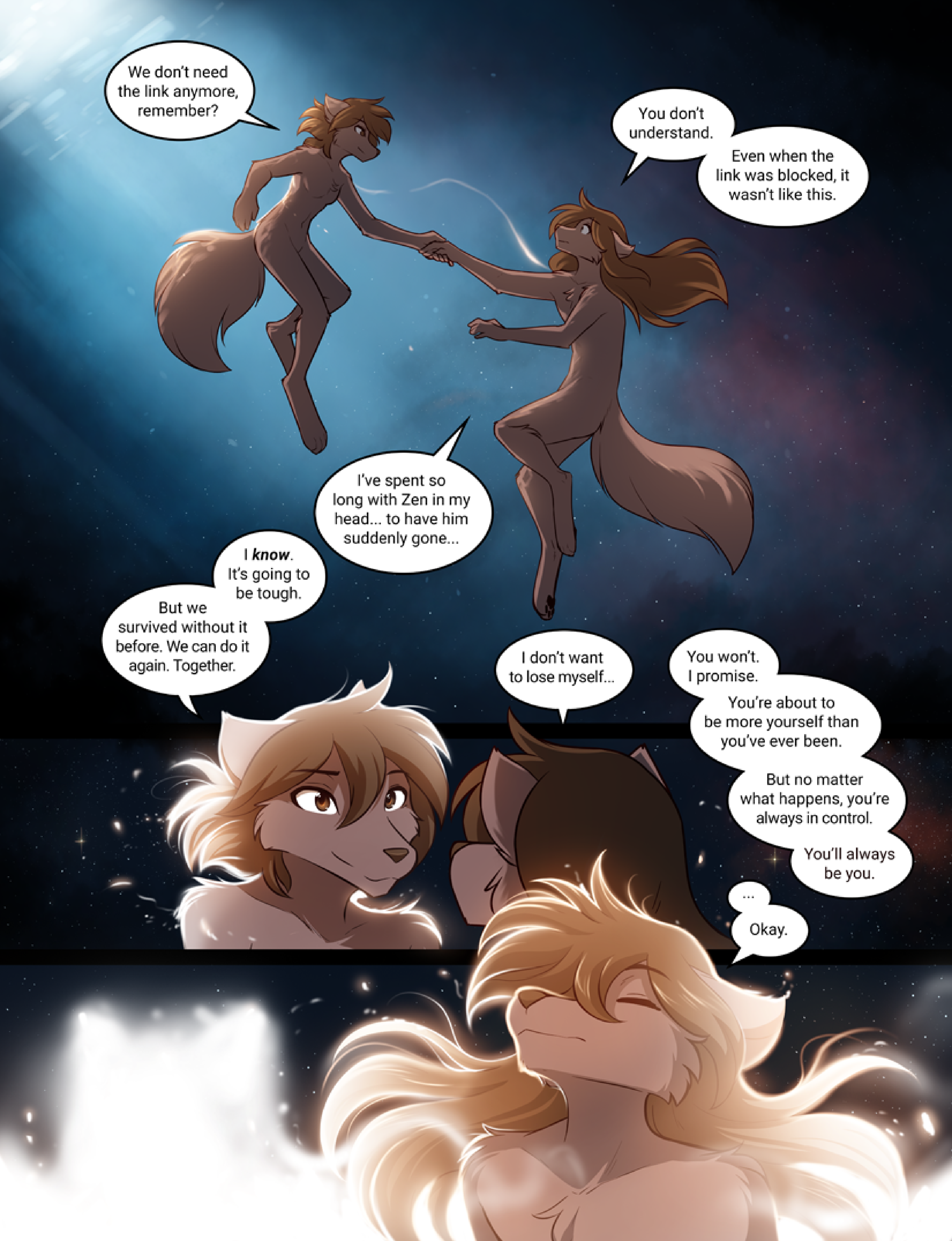

Where do all you rabbits keep coming from?!
Get—
BLAM!
Ack!
BLAM!
BLAM!
I'm still here too! Been hit on the head by worse. Bring it on, ya scaly bastard!
BLAM!
GRAAAAAHH!

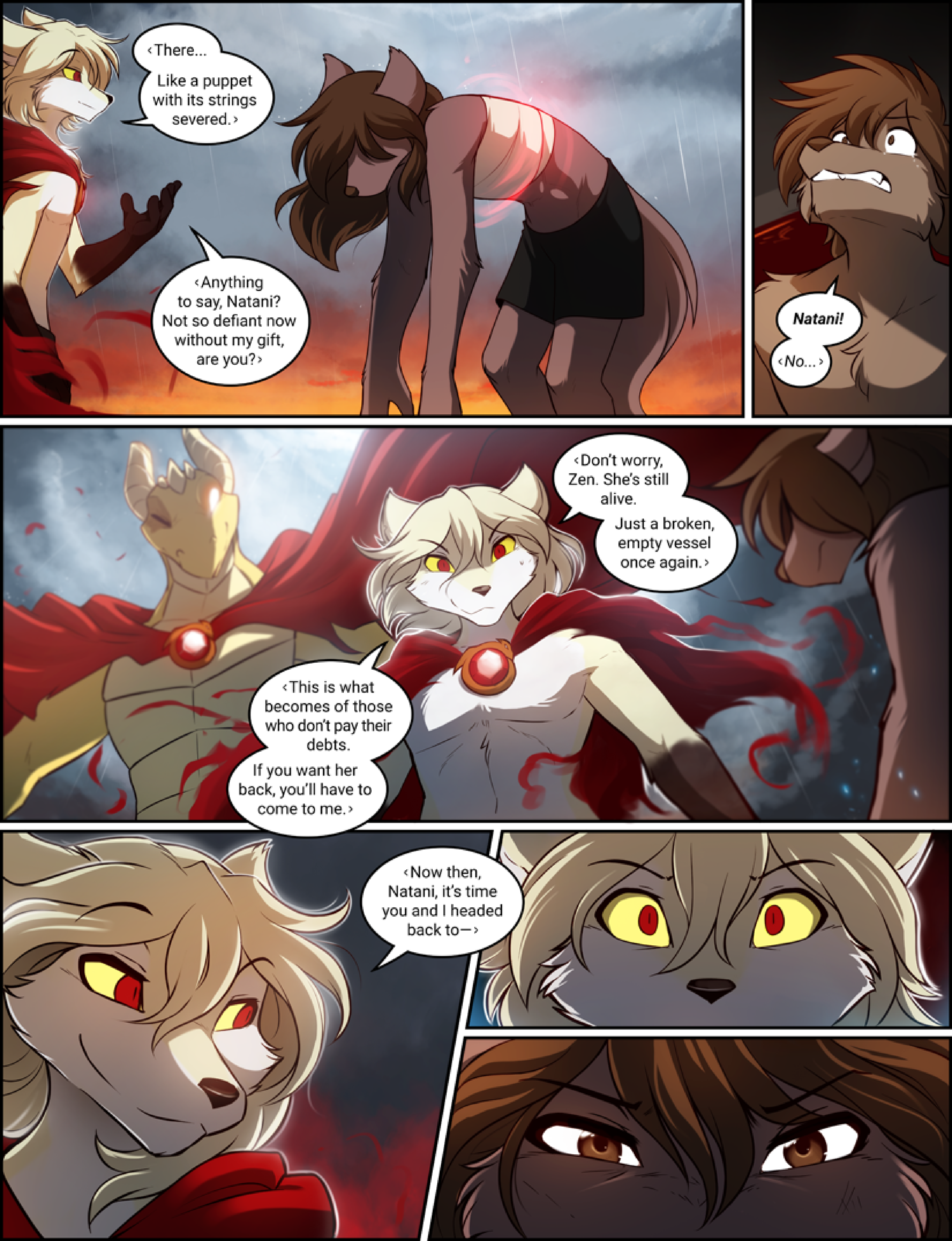

Augh!
Enough!
TRSCTCH!
FWOOM
I am **trying** to have a private conversation!
Ngh!

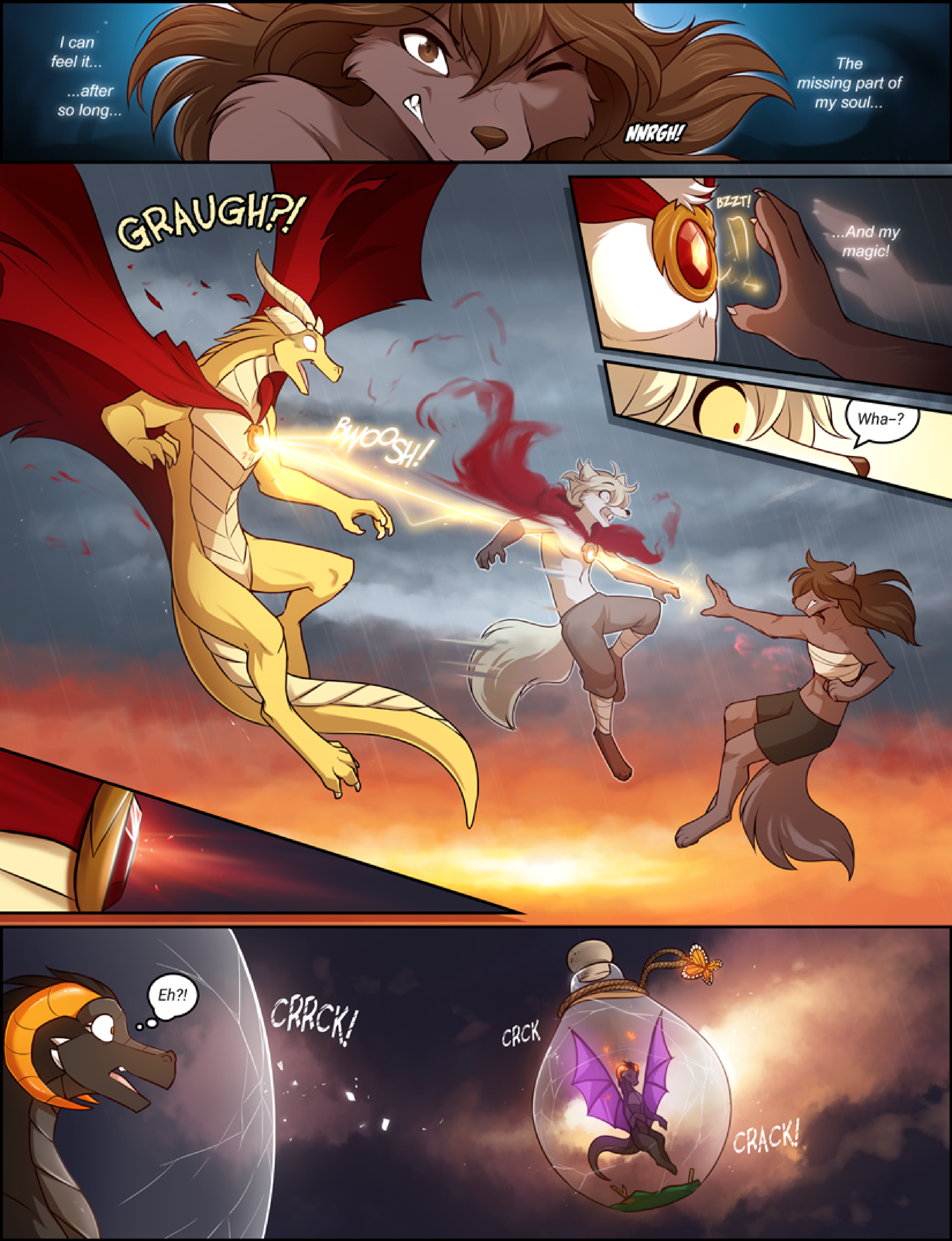

FLAP
There, that's better.
you're coming with me.
Urgh!
FIZZLE
‹Oh? What's wrong?
Already burned yourself out with that one attack?›
‹Keep that up and you'll risk burning out your magic for good.
Wouldn't want that, would we?›
‹If it meant killing you, gladly.›
‹...You know, you're awfully ungrateful to the man responsible for saving your *miserable* life.
If it weren't for my magic, you'd still just be the empty, soulless shell you were when your brother first brought you to me.
Everything you've had since that day is thanks to *me!*
And now...›

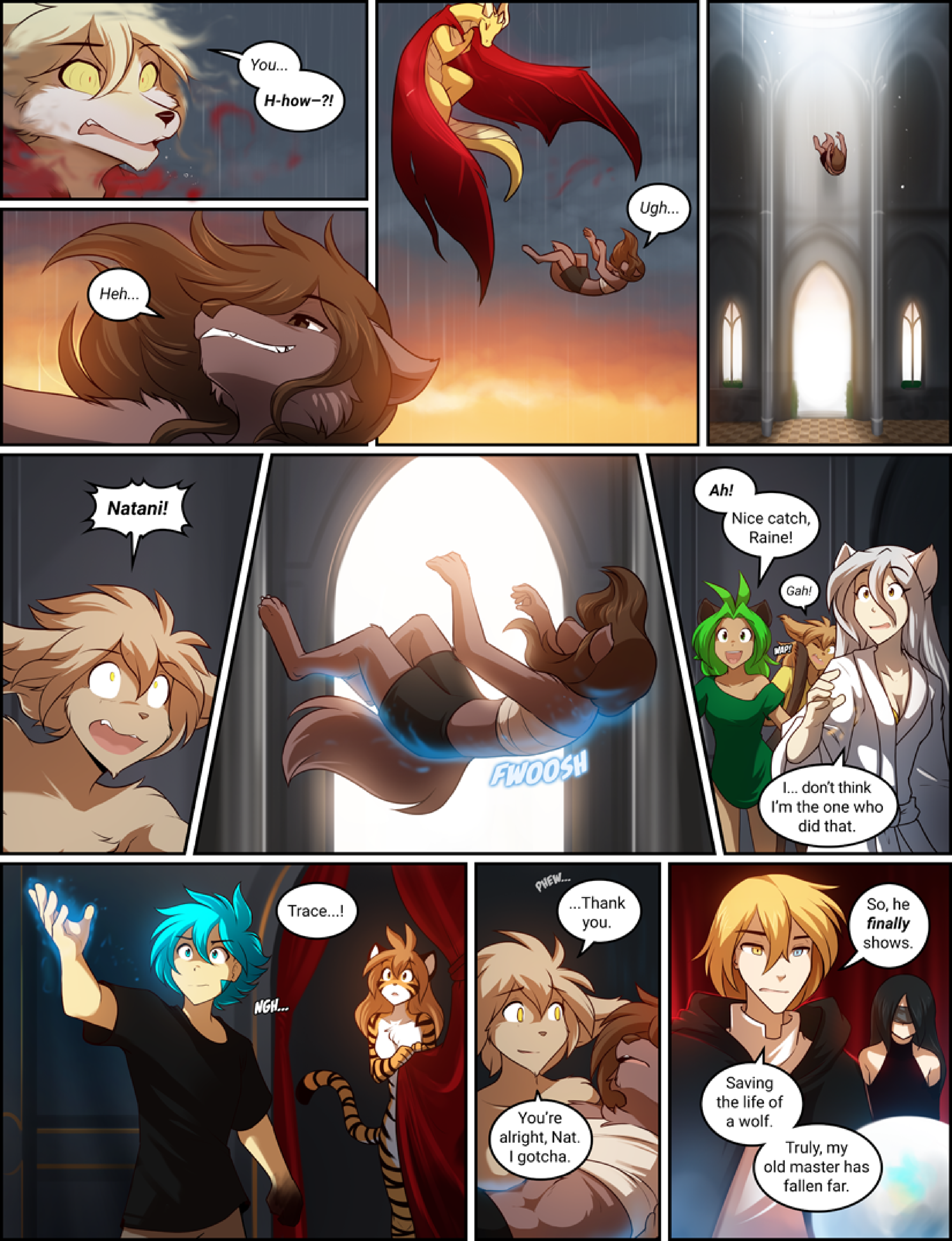

…I think it's time I took that gift back!
AUGH!
Nata-!
SNAP!
Zen?
Zen?
The link...
...The mindscape...
...It's gone!

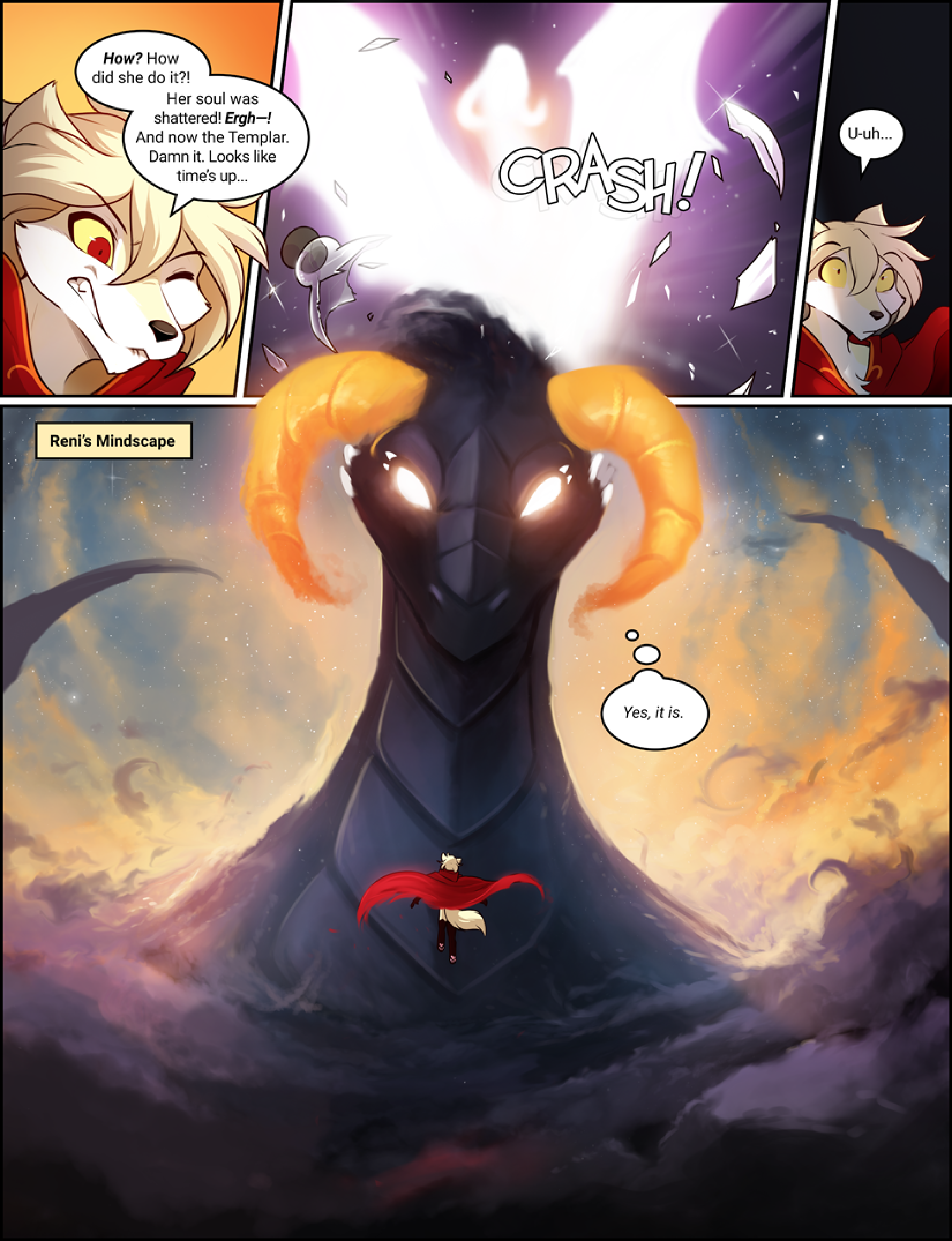

I can't feel it
at all anymore...
I can't feel...
...anything.
Without the
link...
I'm back to...
...nothing...
Hey!
Not
this time.

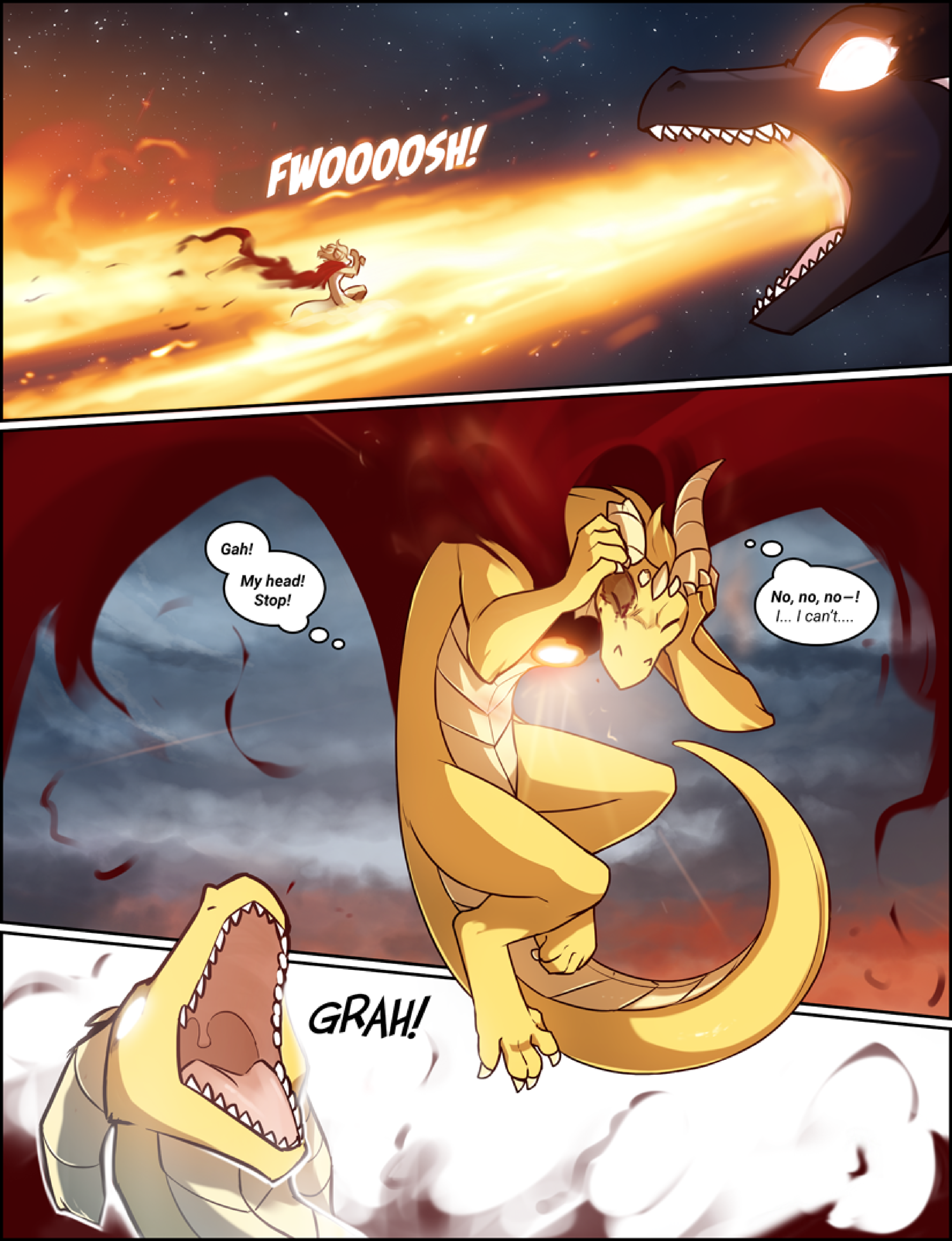

We don't need the link anymore, remember?
You don't understand.
Even when the link was blocked, it wasn't like this.
I've spent so long with Zen in my head... to have him suddenly gone...
I ***know***. It's going to be tough.
But we survived without it before. We can do it again. Together.
I don't want to lose myself...
You won't. I promise.
You're about to be more yourself than you've ever been.
But no matter what happens, you're always in control.
You'll always be you.
...
Okay.

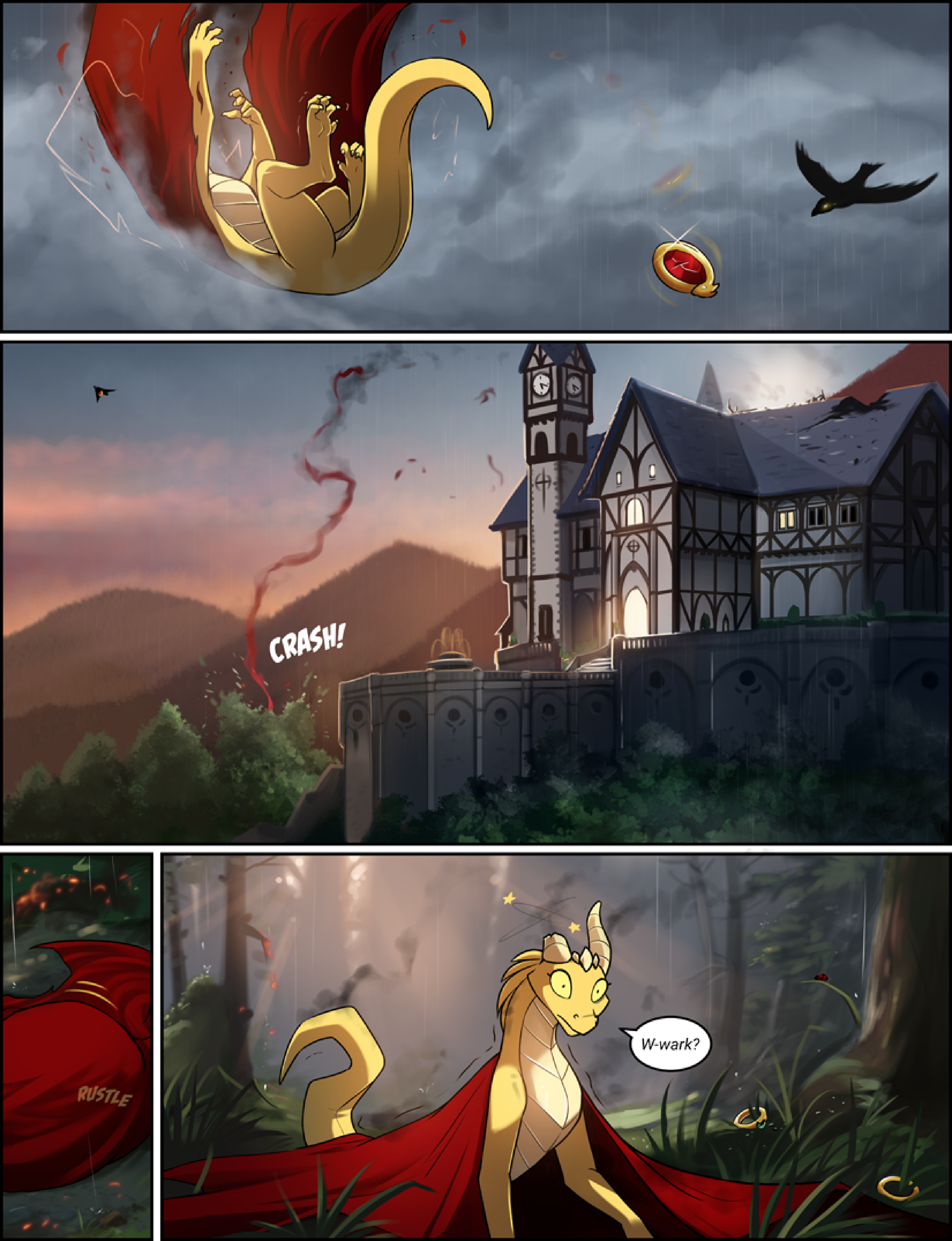

‹There...
Like a puppet with its strings severed.›
‹Anything to say, Natani? Not so defiant now without my gift, are you?›
Natani!
‹*No...*›
‹Don't worry, Zen. She's still alive.
Just a broken, empty vessel once again.›
‹This is what becomes of those who don't pay their debts.
If you want her back, you'll have to come to me.›
‹Now then, Natani, it's time you and I headed back to—›

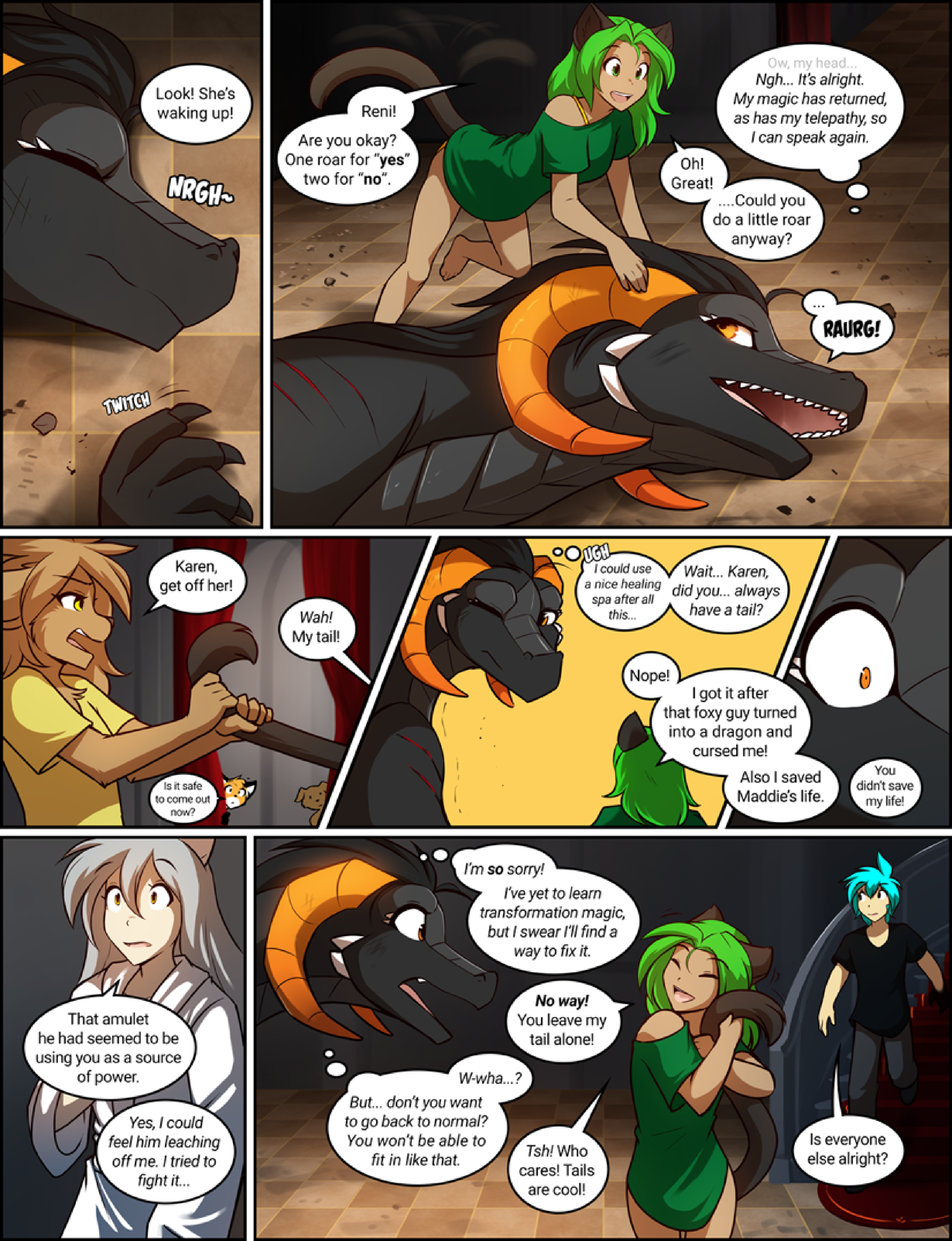

I can feel it...
...after so long...
NNRGH!
The missing part of my soul...
GRAUGH?!
BZZT!
...And my magic!
Wha-?
BWOOSH!
Eh?!
CRRCK!
CRCK
CRACK!

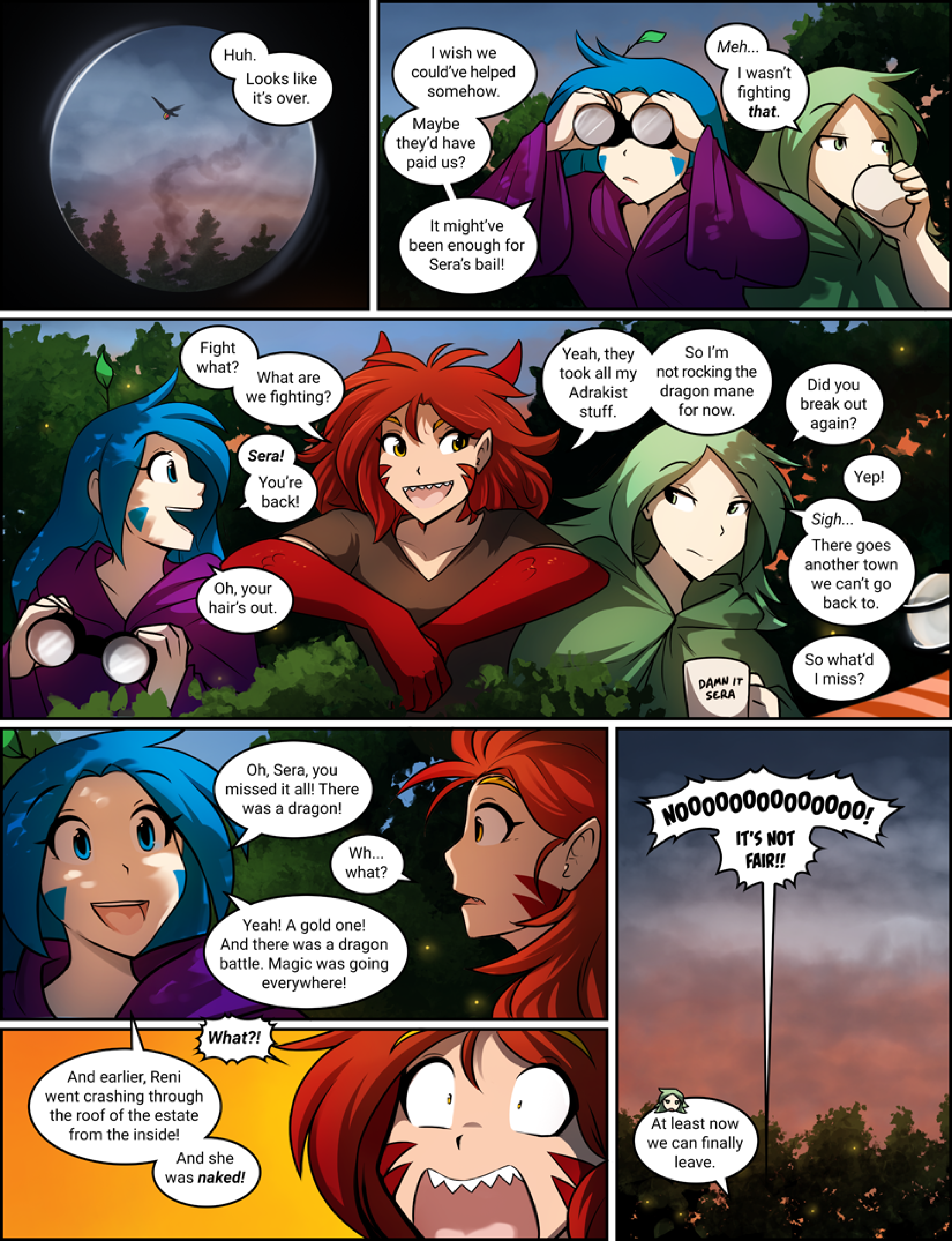

You...
H-how–?!
Heh...
Ugh...
Natani!
FWOOSH
Ah!
Nice catch, Raine!
Gah!
WAP!
I... don't think I'm the one who did that.
NGH...
Trace...!
PHEW...
...Thank you.
You're alright, Nat. I gotcha.
So, he *finally* shows.
Saving the life of a wolf.
Truly, my old master has fallen far.

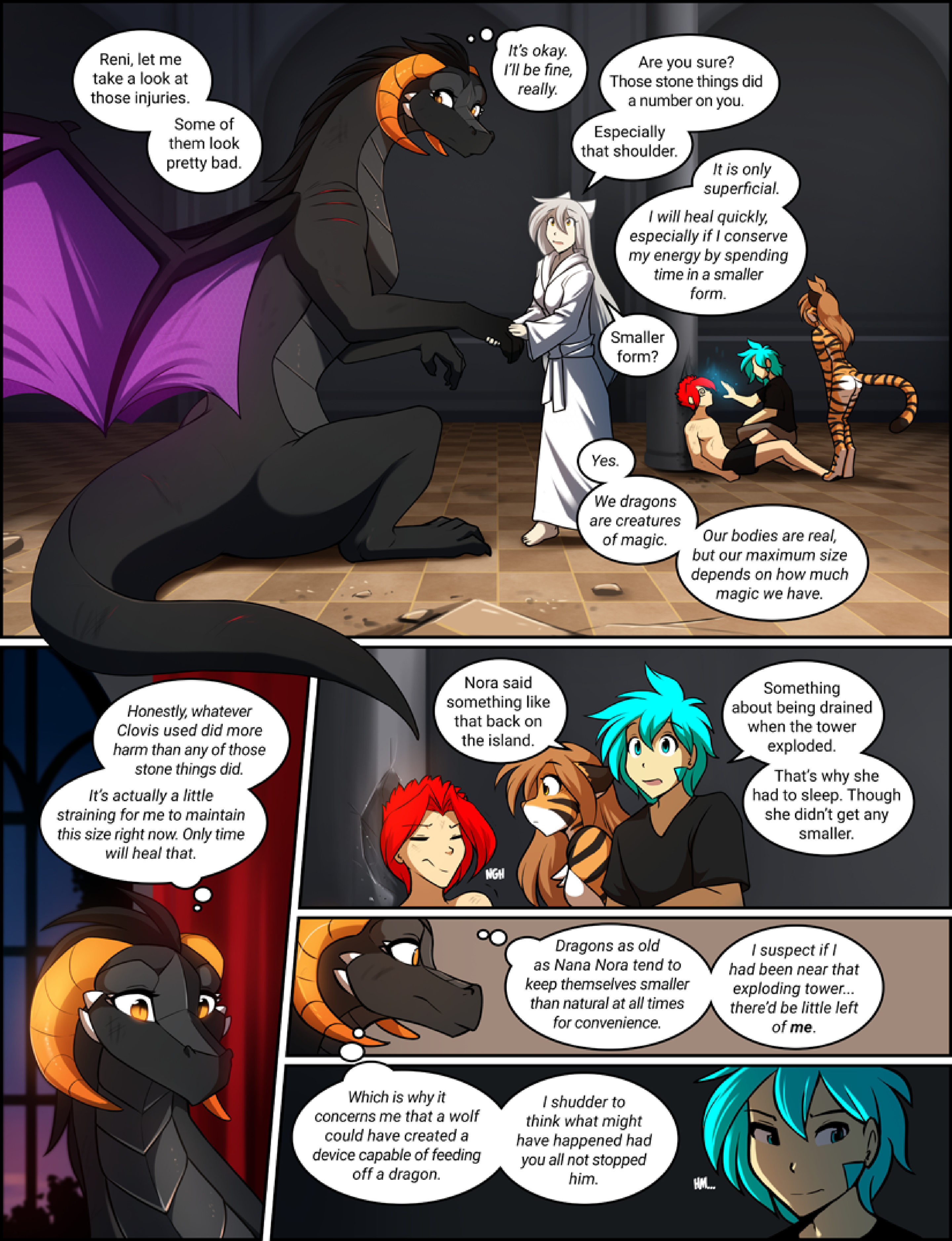

How? How did she do it?!
Her soul was shattered! *Ergh—!* And now the Templar. Damn it. Looks like time's up...
CRASH!
U-uh...
Reni's Mindscape
Yes, it is.


FWOOOOSH!
Gah! My head! Stop!
No, no, no—! I... I can't....
GRAH!


CRASH!
RUSTLE
W-wark?


Look! She's waking up!
NRGH~
TWITCH
Reni!
Are you okay? One roar for "**yes**" two for "**no**".
Ow, my head...
Ngh... It's alright. My magic has returned, as has my telepathy, so I can speak again.
Oh! Great!
....Could you do a little roar anyway?
...
RAURG!
Karen, get off her!
Wah! My tail!
Is it safe to come out now?
UGH
I could use a nice healing spa after all this...
Wait... Karen, did you... always have a tail?
Nope!
I got it after that foxy guy turned into a dragon and cursed me!
Also I saved Maddie's life.
You didn't save my life!
That amulet he had seemed to be using you as a source of power.
Yes, I could feel him leaching off me. I tried to fight it...
*I'm **so** sorry! I've yet to learn transformation magic, but I swear I'll find a way to fix it.*
No way! You leave my tail alone!
W-wha...? But... don't you want to go back to normal? You won't be able to fit in like that.
Tsh! Who cares! Tails are cool!
Is everyone else alright?


Huh.
Looks like it's over.
I wish we could've helped somehow.
Maybe they'd have paid us?
It might've been enough for Sera's bail!
Meh...
I wasn't fighting ***that***.
Fight what?
What are we fighting?
Sera!
You're back!
Oh, your hair's out.
Yeah, they took all my Adrakist stuff.
So I'm not rocking the dragon mane for now.
Did you break out again?
Yep!
Sigh...
There goes another town we can't go back to.
DAMN IT SERA
So what'd I miss?
Oh, Sera, you missed it all! There was a dragon!
Wh... what?
Yeah! A gold one! And there was a dragon battle. Magic was going everywhere!
And earlier, Reni went crashing through the roof of the estate from the inside!
And she was ***naked!***
What?!
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!
IT'S NOT FAIR!!
At least now we can finally leave.


Reni, let me take a look at those injuries.
Some of them look pretty bad.
It's okay. I'll be fine, really.
Are you sure? Those stone things did a number on you.
Especially that shoulder.
It is only superficial.
I will heal quickly, especially if I conserve my energy by spending time in a smaller form.
Smaller form?
Yes.
We dragons are creatures of magic.
Our bodies are real, but our maximum size depends on how much magic we have.
Honestly, whatever Clovis used did more harm than any of those stone things did.
It's actually a little straining for me to maintain this size right now. Only time will heal that.
Nora said something like that back on the island.
Something about being drained when the tower exploded.
That's why she had to sleep. Though she didn't get any smaller.
NGH
Dragons as old as Nana Nora tend to keep themselves smaller than natural at all times for convenience.
*I suspect if I had been near that exploding tower... there'd be little left of **me**.*
Which is why it concerns me that a wolf could have created a device capable of feeding off a dragon.
I shudder to think what might have happened had you all not stopped him.
HM...

TWOKINDS IS AT ANTHROCON THIS WEEK!

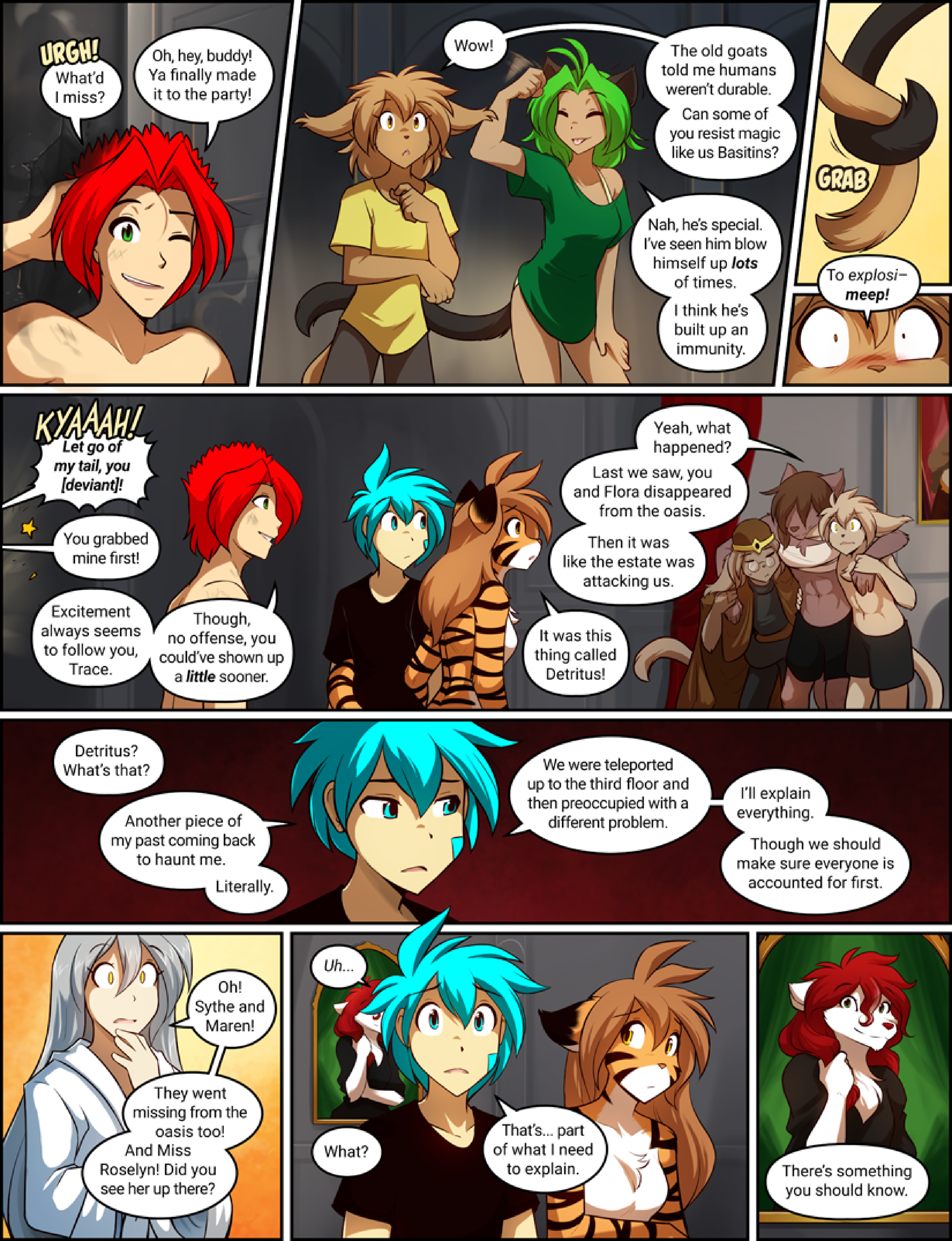
GOING TO A CON!
KINDS
CON

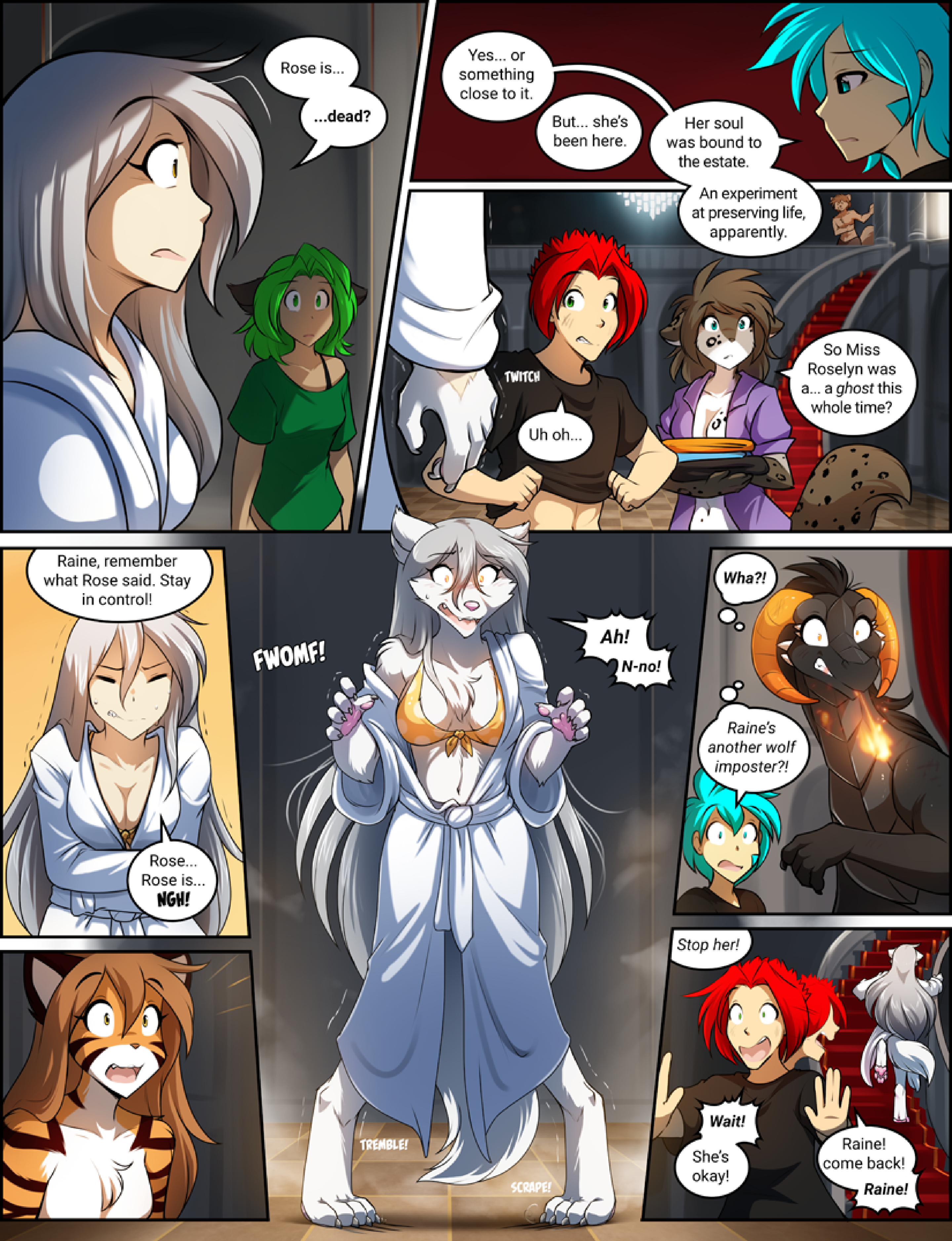
I RETURN ON MONDAY. PAGES WILL RESUME AFTER I RECOVER NEXT WEEK!

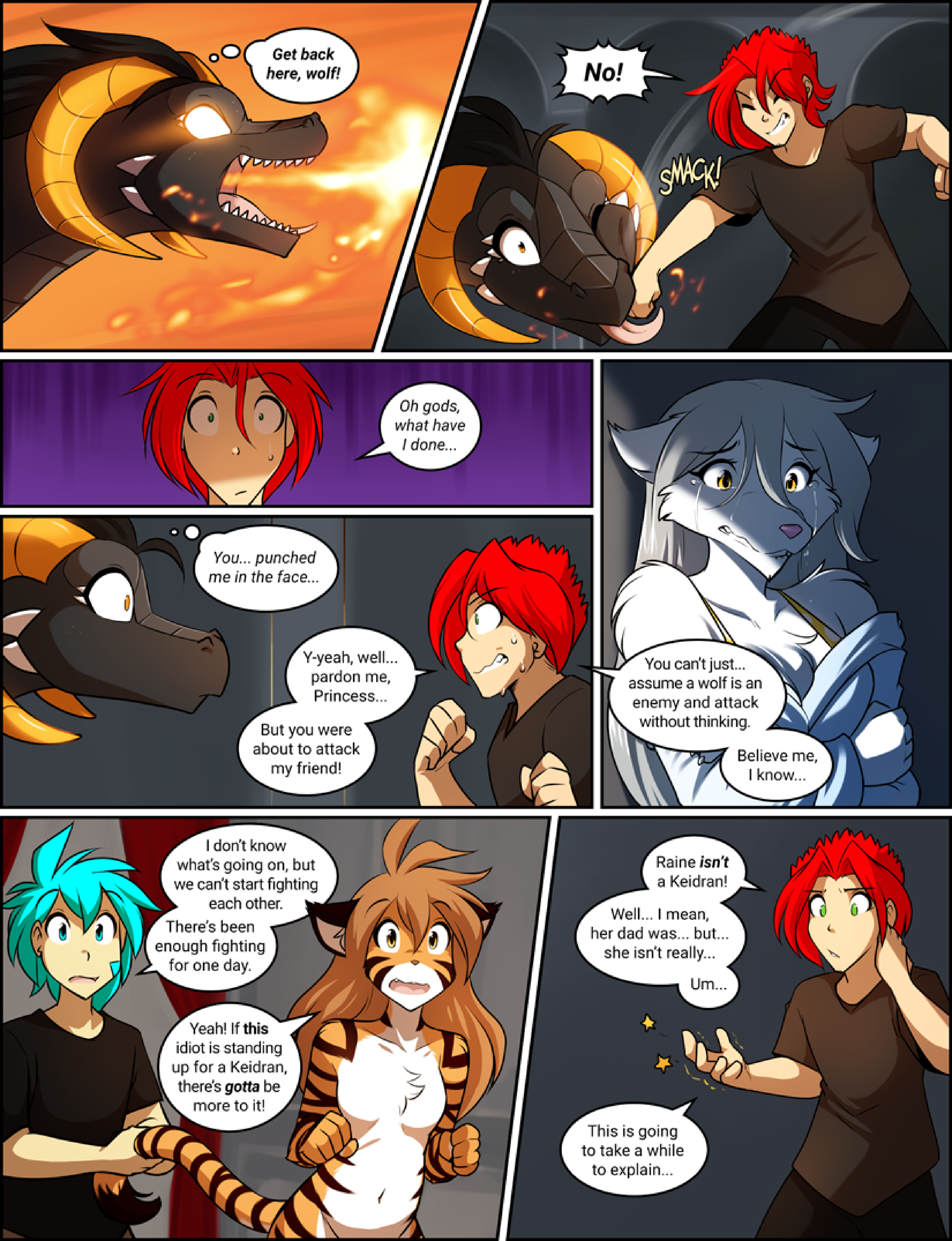
SORRY FOR TAKING SO LONG!

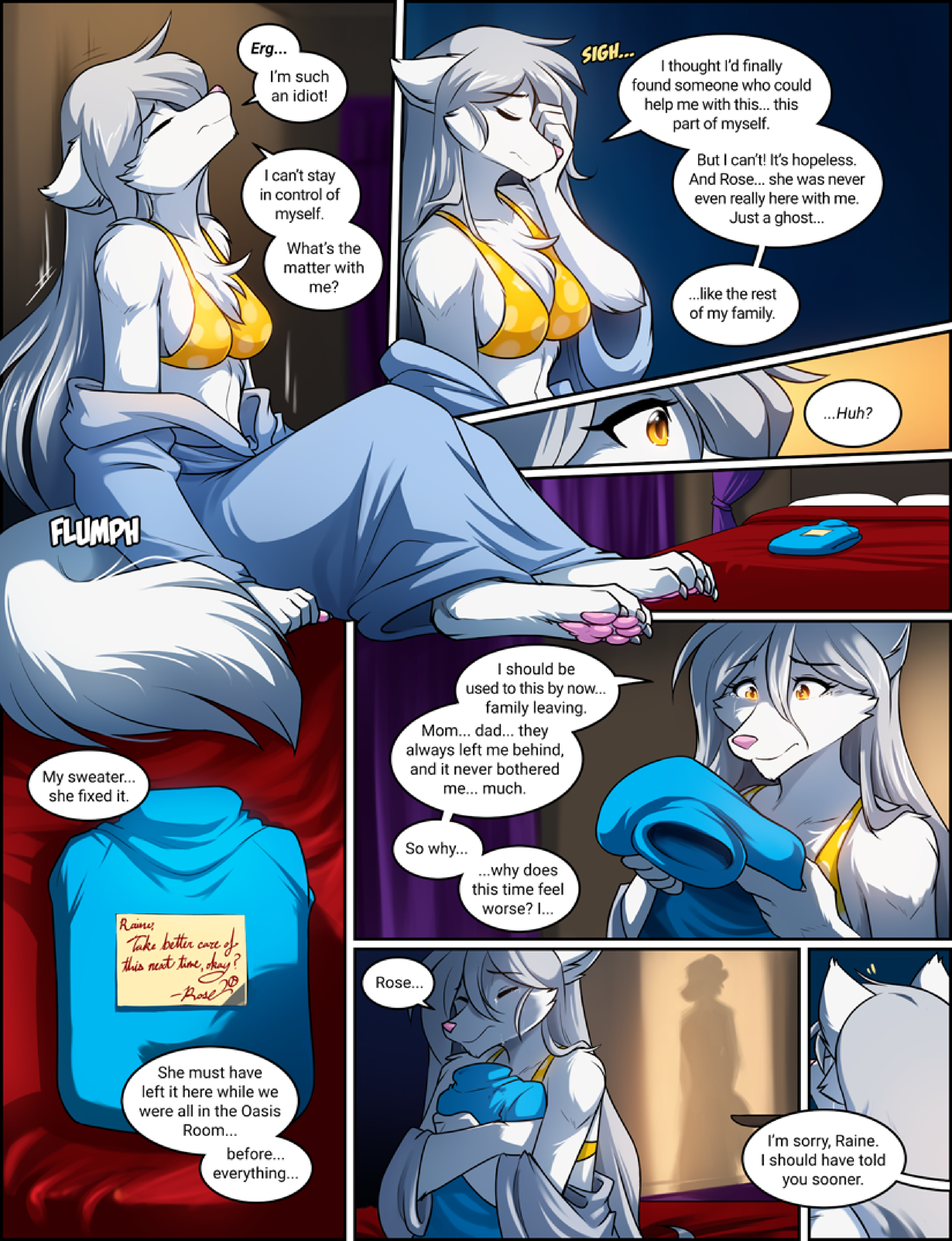
UPDATES WILL
RESUME SHORTLY!

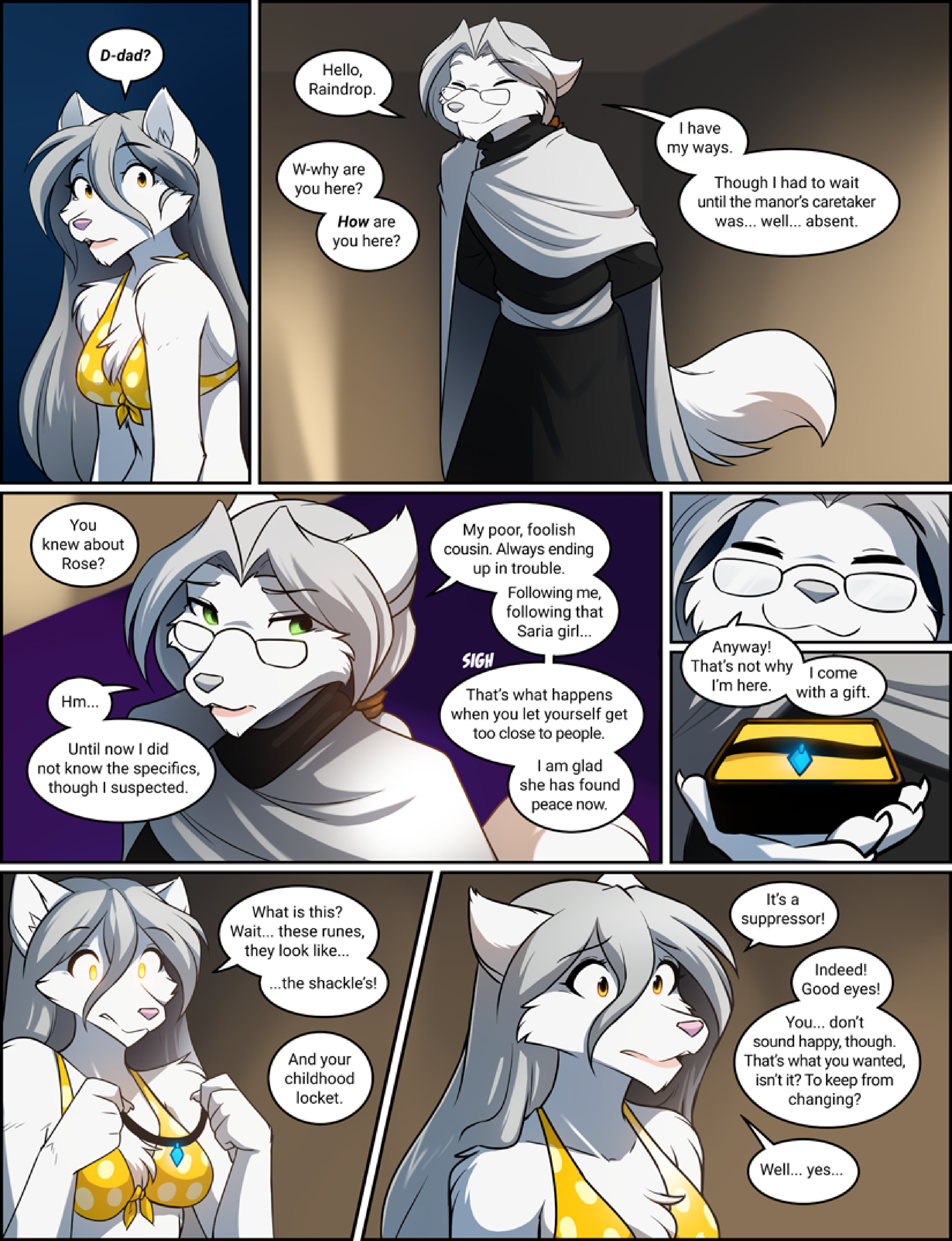
BACK TO THE COMIC, QUICK!
$ MART

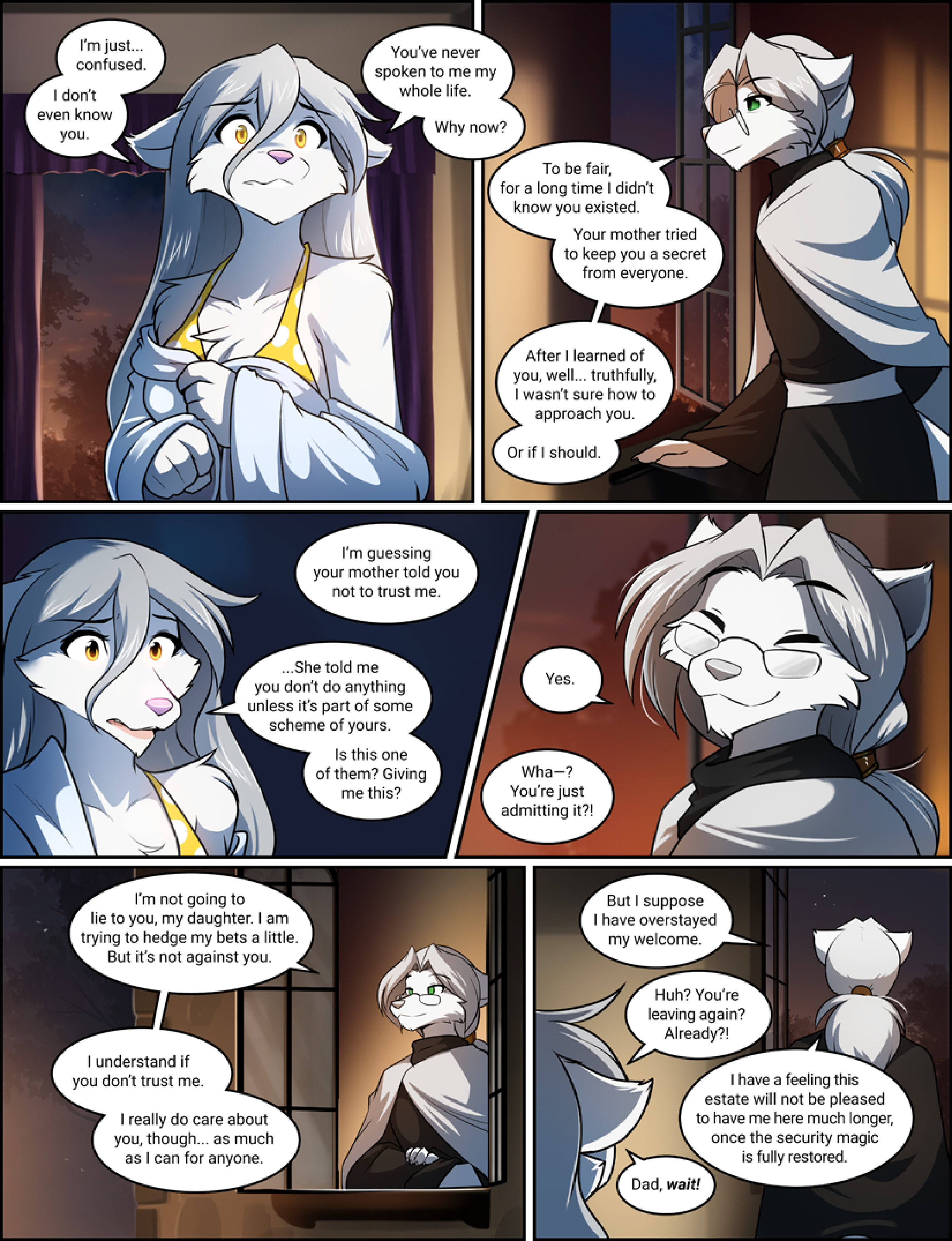

URGH!
What'd I miss?
Oh, hey, buddy! Ya finally made it to the party!
Wow!
The old goats told me humans weren't durable.
Can some of you resist magic like us Basitins?
Nah, he's special. I've seen him blow himself up *lots* of times.
I think he's built up an immunity.
GRAB
To *explosi–* ***meep!***
KYAAAH!
Let go of my tail, you [deviant]!
You grabbed mine first!
Excitement always seems to follow you, Trace.
Though, no offense, you could've shown up a *little* sooner.
Yeah, what happened?
Last we saw, you and Flora disappeared from the oasis.
Then it was like the estate was attacking us.
It was this thing called Detritus!
Detritus? What's that?
Another piece of my past coming back to haunt me.
Literally.
We were teleported up to the third floor and then preoccupied with a different problem.
I'll explain everything.
Though we should make sure everyone is accounted for first.
Oh! Sythe and Maren!
They went missing from the oasis too!
And Miss Roselyn! Did you see her up there?
Uh...
What?
That's... part of what I need to explain.
There's something you should know.

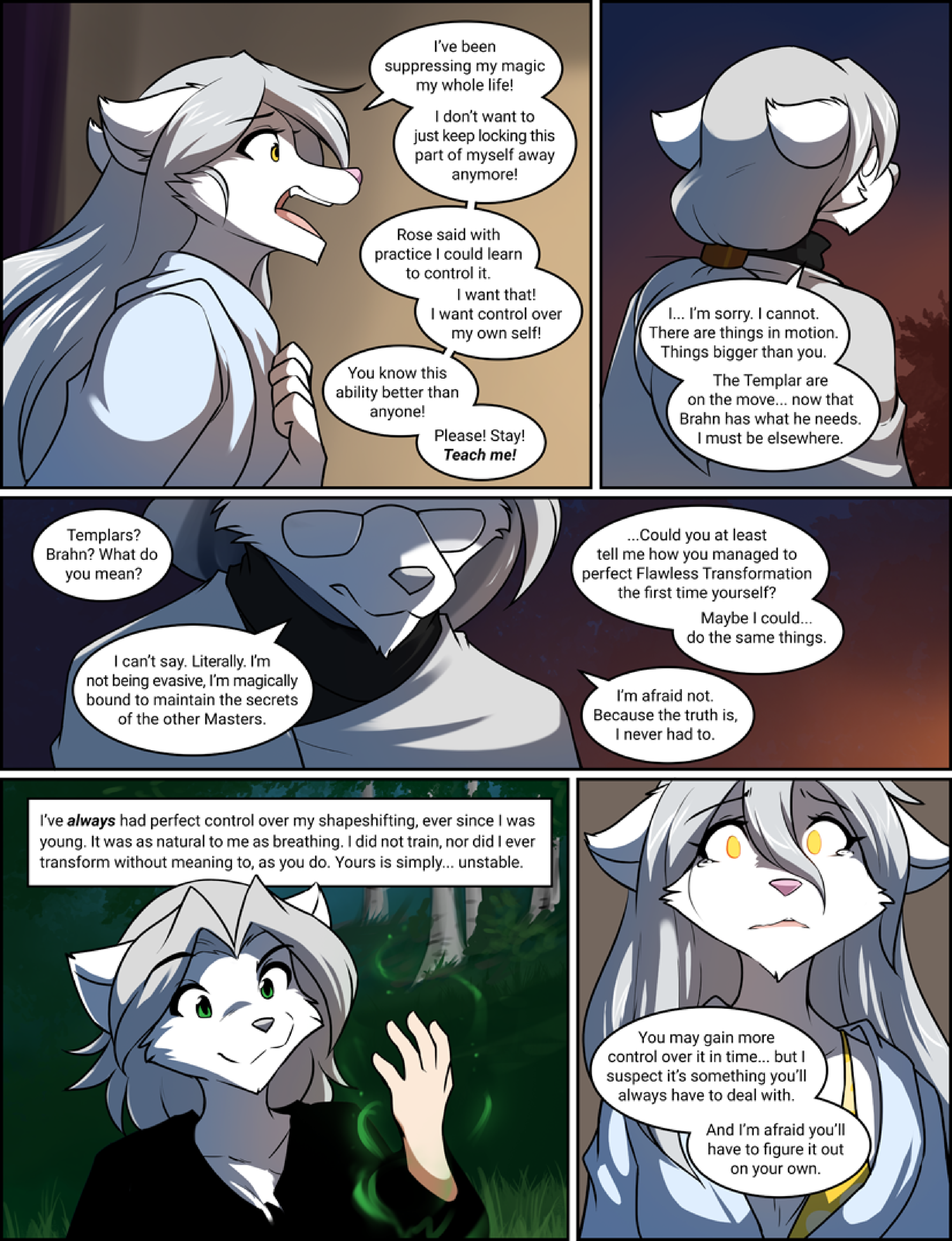

Rose is...
...dead?
Yes... or something close to it.
But... she's been here.
Her soul was bound to the estate.
An experiment at preserving life, apparently.
TWITCH
Uh oh...
So Miss Roselyn was a... a *ghost* this whole time?
Raine, remember what Rose said. Stay in control!
Rose... Rose is... **NGH!**
FWOMF!
Ah!
N-no!
TREMBLE!
SCRAPE!
Wha?!
Raine's another wolf imposter?!
Stop her!
Wait!
She's okay!
Raine! come back!
Raine!

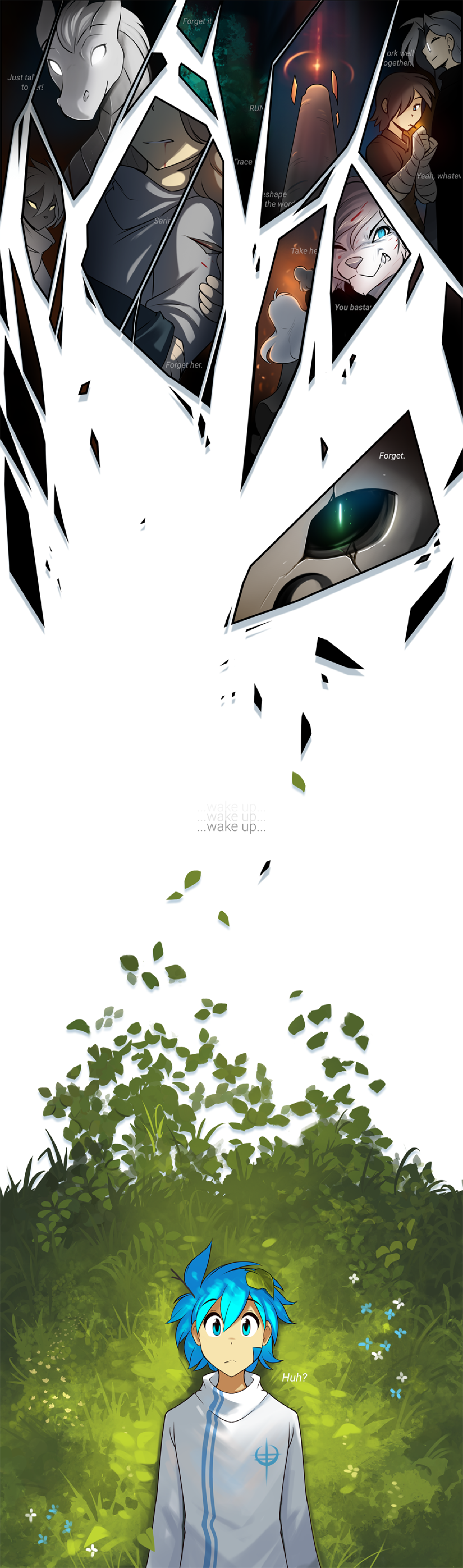

Get back here, wolf!
No!
SMACK!
Oh gods, what have I done...
You... punched me in the face...
Y-yeah, well... pardon me, Princess...
But you were about to attack my friend!
You can't just... assume a wolf is an enemy and attack without thinking.
Believe me, I know...
I don't know what's going on, but we can't start fighting each other.
There's been enough fighting for one day.
Yeah! If **this** idiot is standing up for a Keidran, there's ***gotta*** be more to it!
Raine ***isn't*** a Keidran!
Well... I mean, her dad was... but... she isn't really...
Um...
This is going to take a while to explain...

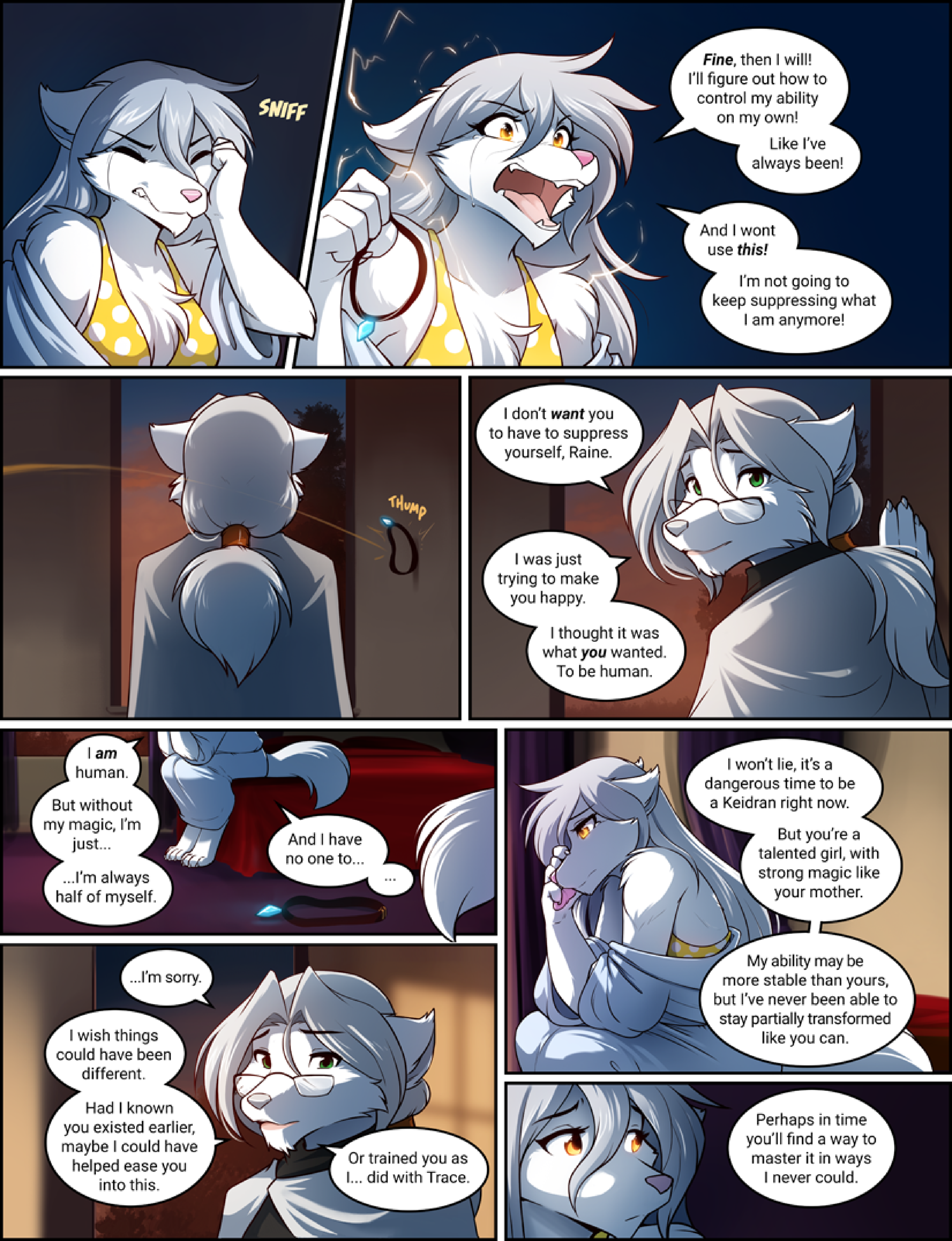

Erg... I'm such an idiot!
I can't stay in control of myself.
What's the matter with me?
FLUMPH
SIGH...
I thought I'd finally found someone who could help me with this... this part of myself.
But I can't! It's hopeless. And Rose... she was never even really here with me. Just a ghost...
...like the rest of my family.
...Huh?
My sweater... she fixed it.
Raine; Take better care of this next time, okay? -Rose
She must have left it here while we were all in the Oasis Room...
before... everything...
I should be used to this by now... family leaving.
Mom... dad... they always left me behind, and it never bothered me... much.
So why...
...why does this time feel worse? I...
Rose...
I'm sorry, Raine. I should have told you sooner.

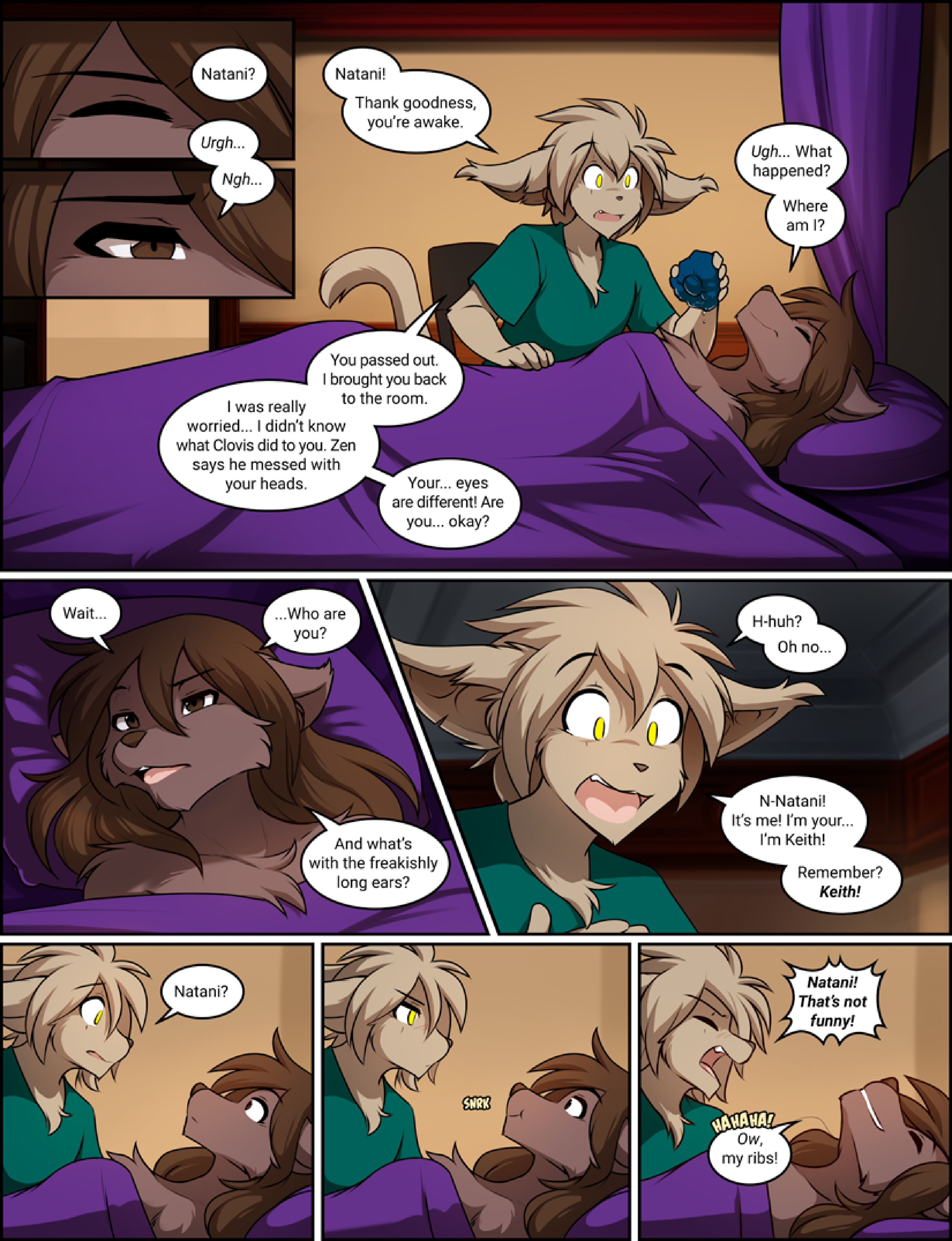

D-dad?
Hello, Raindrop.
W-why are you here?
How are you here?
I have my ways.
Though I had to wait until the manor's caretaker was... well... absent.
You knew about Rose?
Hm...
Until now I did not know the specifics, though I suspected.
My poor, foolish cousin. Always ending up in trouble.
Following me, following that Saria girl...
SIGH
That's what happens when you let yourself get too close to people.
I am glad she has found peace now.
Anyway! That's not why I'm here.
I come with a gift.
What is this? Wait... these runes, they look like...
...the shackle's!
And your childhood locket.
It's a suppressor!
Indeed! Good eyes!
You... don't sound happy, though. That's what you wanted, isn't it? To keep from changing?
Well... yes...

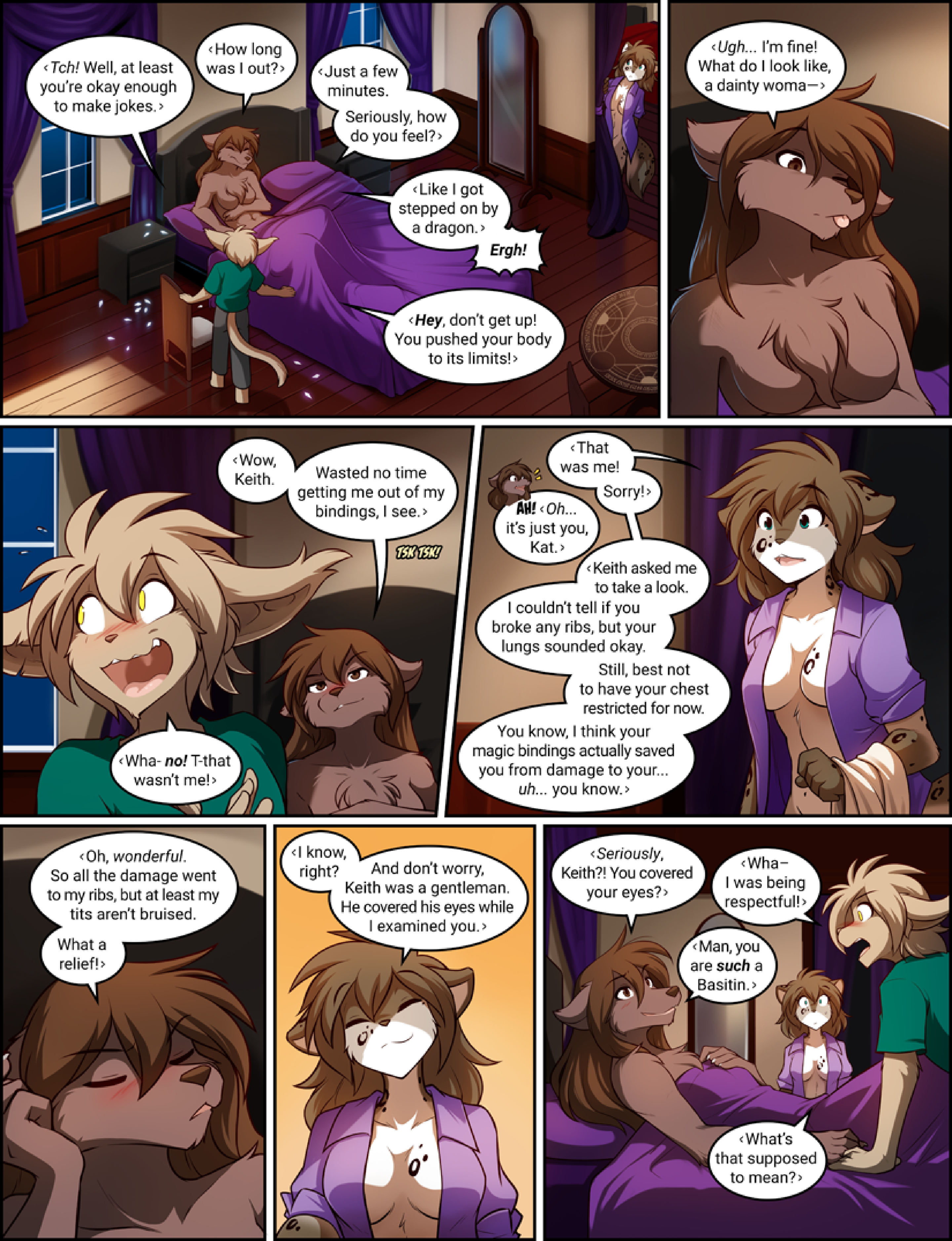

I'm just... confused.
I don't even know you.
You've never spoken to me my whole life.
Why now?
To be fair, for a long time I didn't know you existed.
Your mother tried to keep you a secret from everyone.
After I learned of you, well... truthfully, I wasn't sure how to approach you.
Or if I should.
I'm guessing your mother told you not to trust me.
...She told me you don't do anything unless it's part of some scheme of yours.
Is this one of them? Giving me this?
Yes.
Wha—? You're just admitting it?!
I'm not going to lie to you, my daughter. I am trying to hedge my bets a little. But it's not against you.
I understand if you don't trust me.
I really do care about you, though... as much as I can for anyone.
But I suppose I have overstayed my welcome.
Huh? You're leaving again? Already?!
I have a feeling this estate will not be pleased to have me here much longer, once the security magic is fully restored.
Dad, *wait!*

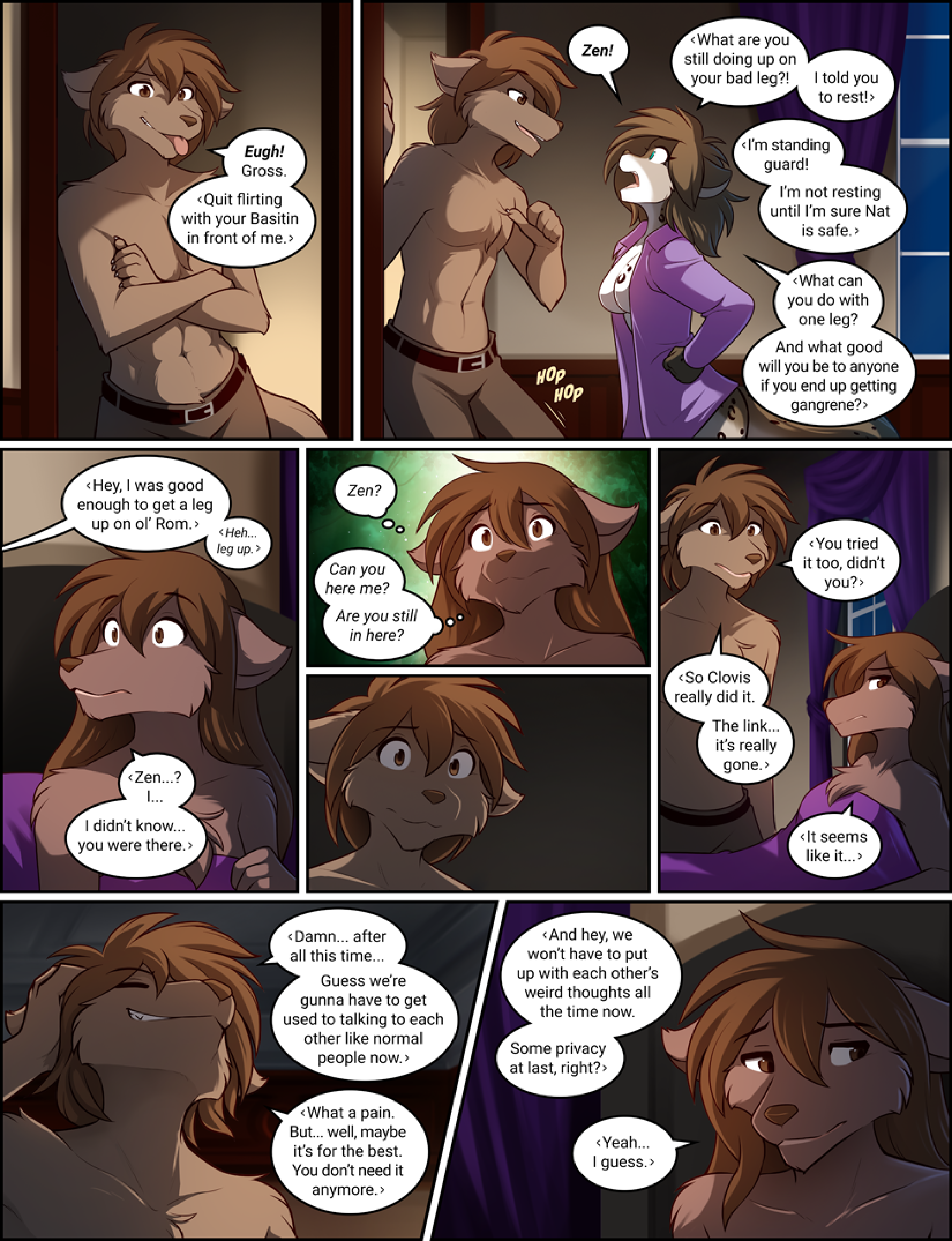

I've been suppressing my magic my whole life!
I don't want to just keep locking this part of myself away anymore!
Rose said with practice I could learn to control it.
I want that! I want control over my own self!
You know this ability better than anyone!
Please! Stay! ***Teach me!***
I... I'm sorry. I cannot. There are things in motion. Things bigger than you.
The Templar are on the move... now that Brahn has what he needs. I must be elsewhere.
Templars? Brahn? What do you mean?
I can't say. Literally. I'm not being evasive, I'm magically bound to maintain the secrets of the other Masters.
...Could you at least tell me how you managed to perfect Flawless Transformation the first time yourself?
Maybe I could... do the same things.
I'm afraid not. Because the truth is, I never had to.
I've *always* had perfect control over my shapeshifting, ever since I was young. It was as natural to me as breathing. I did not train, nor did I ever transform without meaning to, as you do. Yours is simply... unstable.
You may gain more control over it in time... but I suspect it's something you'll always have to deal with.
And I'm afraid you'll have to figure it out on your own.


Just tal
to er!
Forget it
RUN
Trace
ork well
ogether.
Yeah, whatev
eshape
the wor
Saria
Take he
You basta
Forget her.
Forget.
...wake up...
...wake up...
...wake up...
Huh?

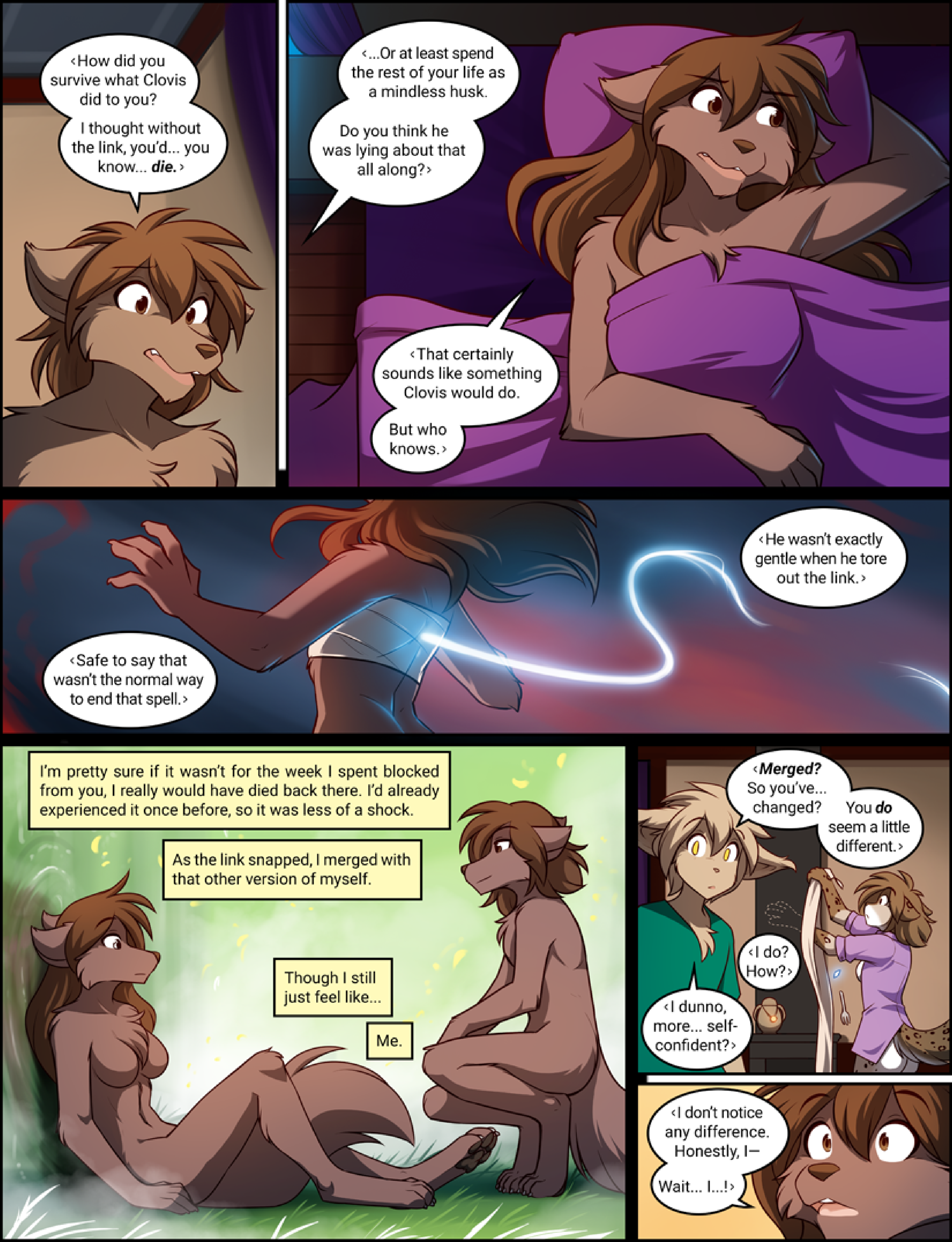

SNIFF
Fine, then I will! I'll figure out how to control my ability on my own!
Like I've always been!
And I wont use *this!*
I'm not going to keep suppressing what I am anymore!
THUMP
I don't *want* you to have to suppress yourself, Raine.
I was just trying to make you happy.
I thought it was what *you* wanted. To be human.
I *am* human.
But without my magic, I'm just...
...I'm always half of myself.
And I have no one to...
...
I won't lie, it's a dangerous time to be a Keidran right now.
But you're a talented girl, with strong magic like your mother.
My ability may be more stable than yours, but I've never been able to stay partially transformed like you can.
...I'm sorry.
I wish things could have been different.
Had I known you existed earlier, maybe I could have helped ease you into this.
Or trained you as I... did with Trace.
Perhaps in time you'll find a way to master it in ways I never could.

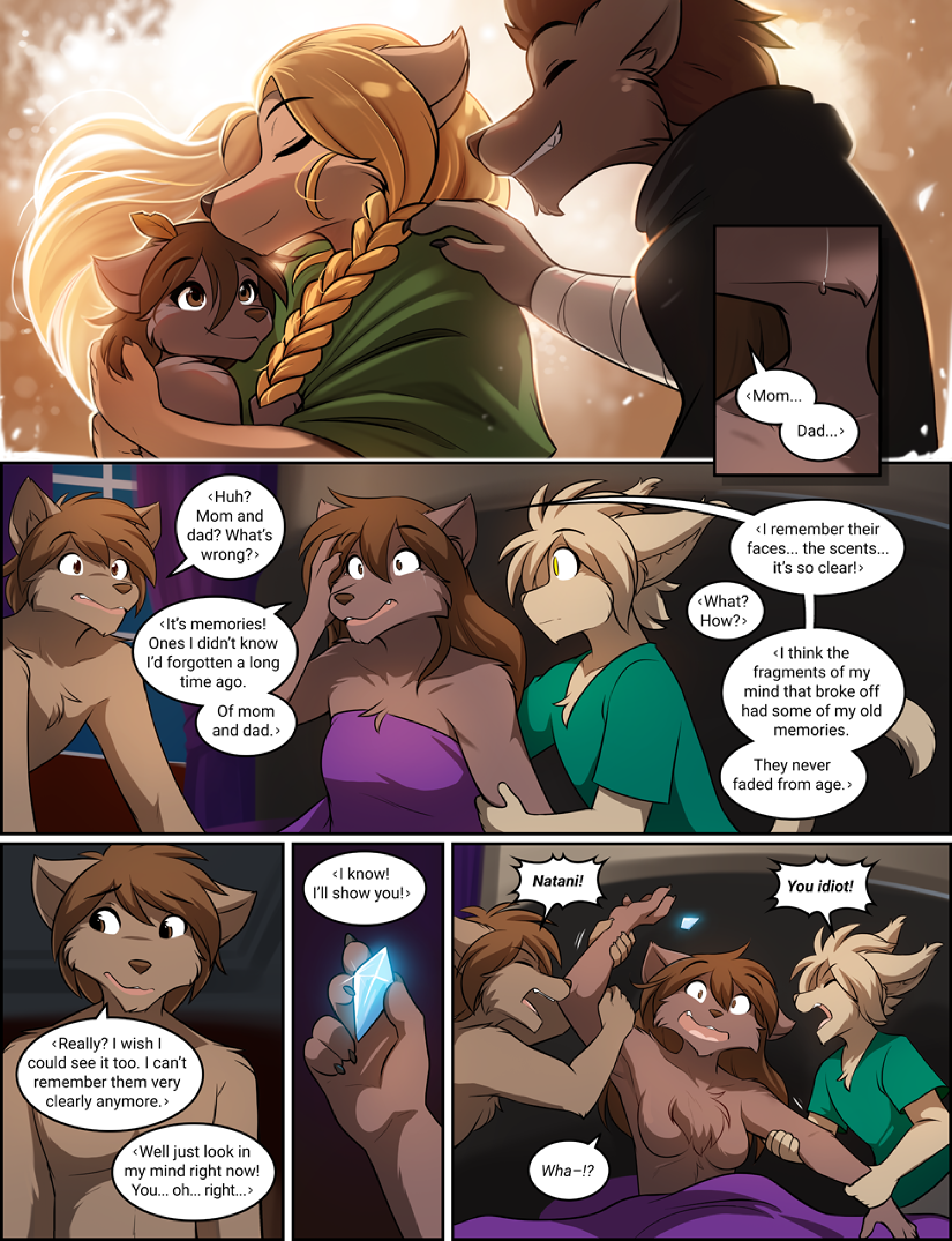

Natani?
Urgh...
Ngh...
Natani!
Thank goodness, you're awake.
Ugh... What happened?
Where am I?
You passed out. I brought you back to the room.
I was really worried... I didn't know what Clovis did to you. Zen says he messed with your heads.
Your... eyes are different! Are you... okay?
Wait...
...Who are you?
And what's with the freakishly long ears?
H-huh?
Oh no...
N-Natani! It's me! I'm your... I'm Keith!
Remember? ***Keith!***
Natani?
SNRK
Natani! That's not funny!
HAHAHA!
Ow, my ribs!

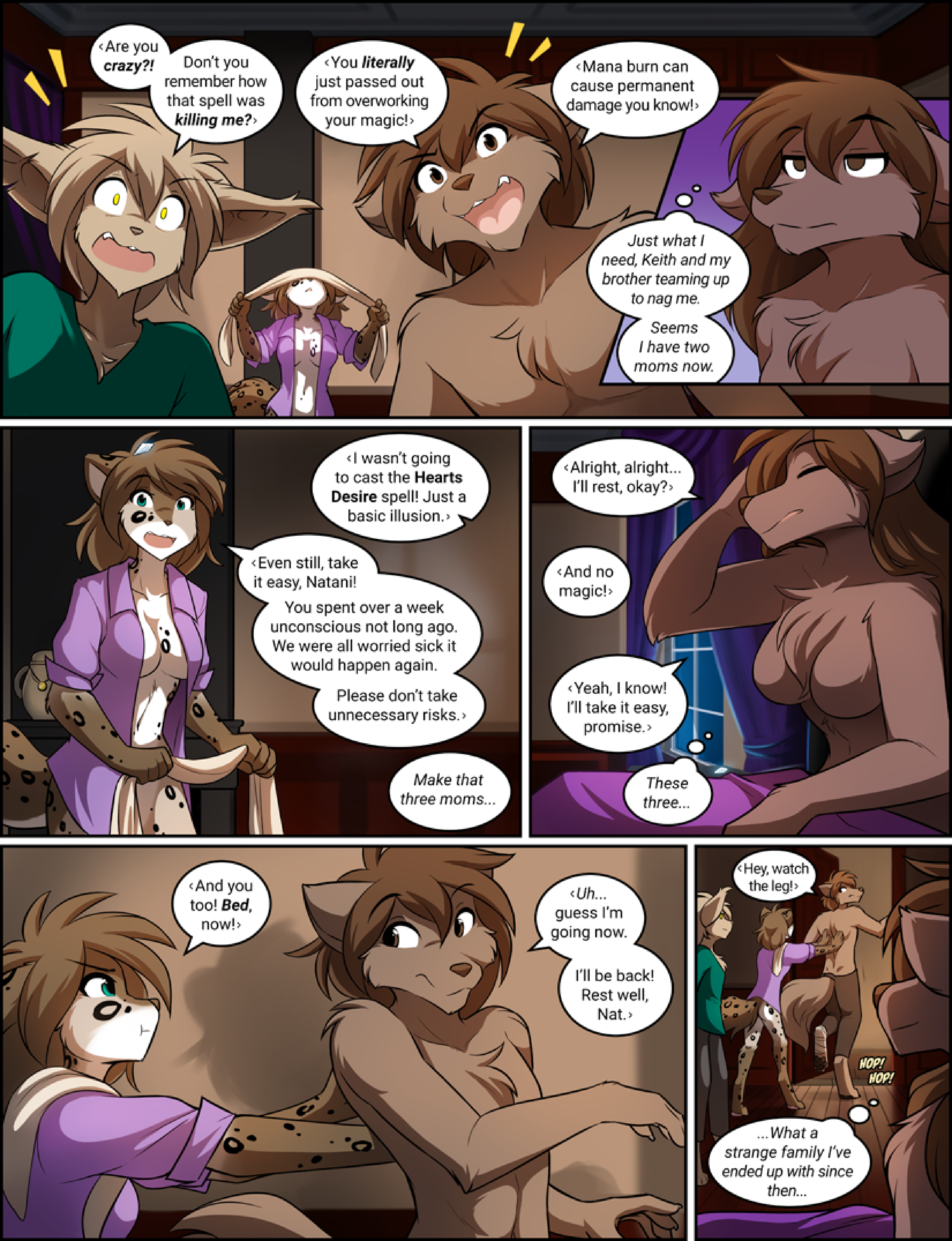

‹How long was I out?›
‹Just a few minutes.
Seriously, how do you feel?›
‹Like I got stepped on by a dragon.›
Ergh!
‹**Hey**, don't get up! You pushed your body to its limits!›
‹*Tch!* Well, at least you're okay enough to make jokes.›
‹*Ugh*... I'm fine! What do I look like, a dainty woma—›
‹Wow, Keith.
Wasted no time getting me out of my bindings, I see.›
TSK TSK!
‹Wha- ***no!*** T-that wasn't me!›
‹That was me!
Sorry!›
AH! ‹*Oh*... it's just you, Kat.›
‹Keith asked me to take a look.
I couldn't tell if you broke any ribs, but your lungs sounded okay.
Still, best not to have your chest restricted for now.
You know, I think your magic bindings actually saved you from damage to your... *uh*... you know.›
‹Oh, *wonderful*. So all the damage went to my ribs, but at least my tits aren't bruised.
What a relief!›
‹I know, right?
And don't worry, Keith was a gentleman. He covered his eyes while I examined you.›
‹*Seriously*, Keith?! You covered your eyes?›
‹Wha— I was being respectful!›
‹Man, you are ***such*** a Basitin.›
‹What's that supposed to mean?›

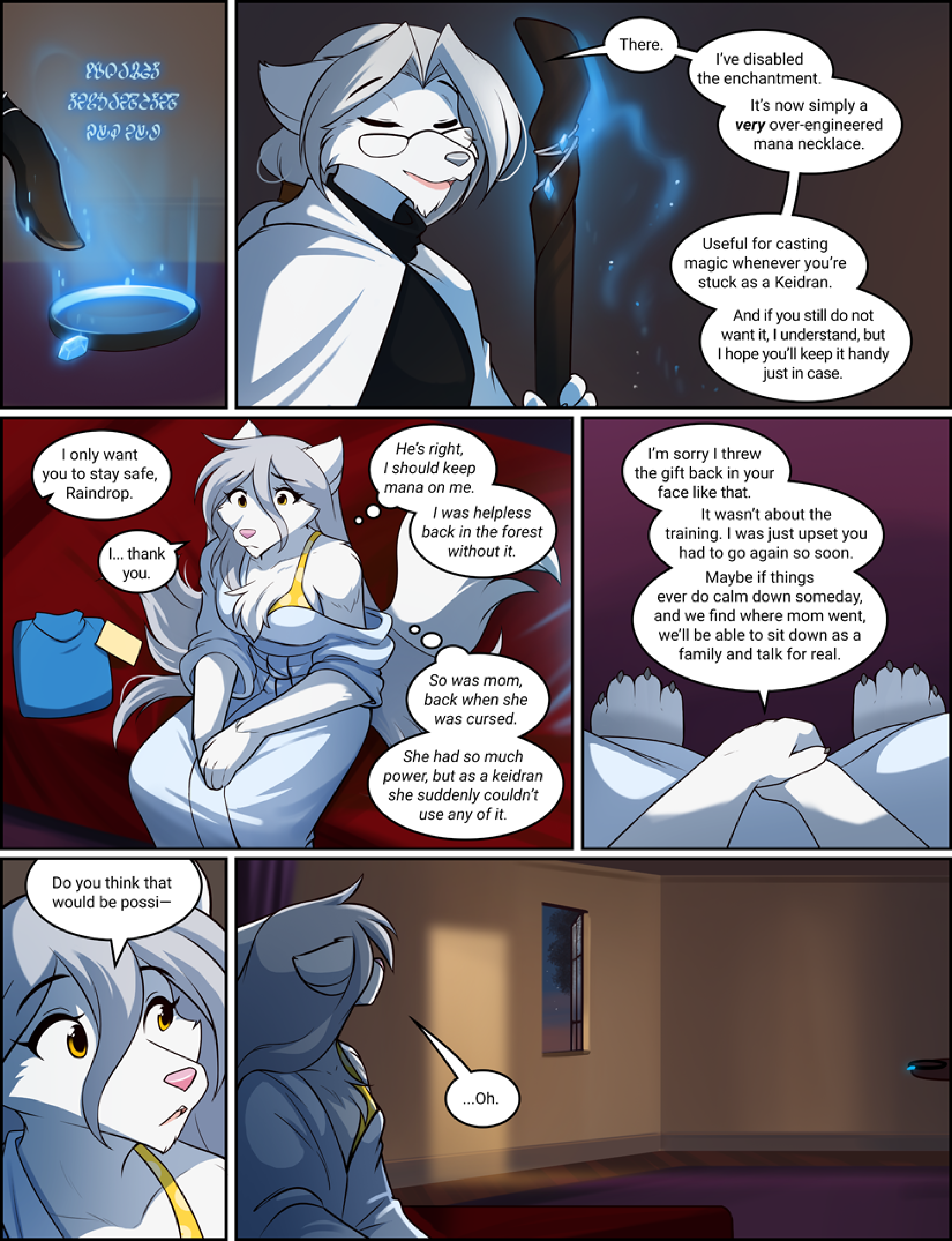

Eugh! Gross.
‹Quit flirting with your Basitin in front of me.›
Zen!
‹What are you still doing up on your bad leg?!
I told you to rest!›
‹I'm standing guard!
I'm not resting until I'm sure Nat is safe.›
HOP HOP
‹What can you do with one leg?
And what good will you be to anyone if you end up getting gangrene?›
‹Hey, I was good enough to get a leg up on ol' Rom.›
‹Heh... leg up.›
‹Zen...? I...
I didn't know... you were there.›
Zen?
Can you here me?
Are you still in here?
‹You tried it too, didn't you?›
‹So Clovis really did it.
The link... it's really gone.›
‹It seems like it...›
‹Damn... after all this time...
Guess we're gunna have to get used to talking to each other like normal people now.›
‹What a pain. But... well, maybe it's for the best. You don't need it anymore.›
‹And hey, we won't have to put up with each other's weird thoughts all the time now.
Some privacy at last, right?›
‹Yeah... I guess.›

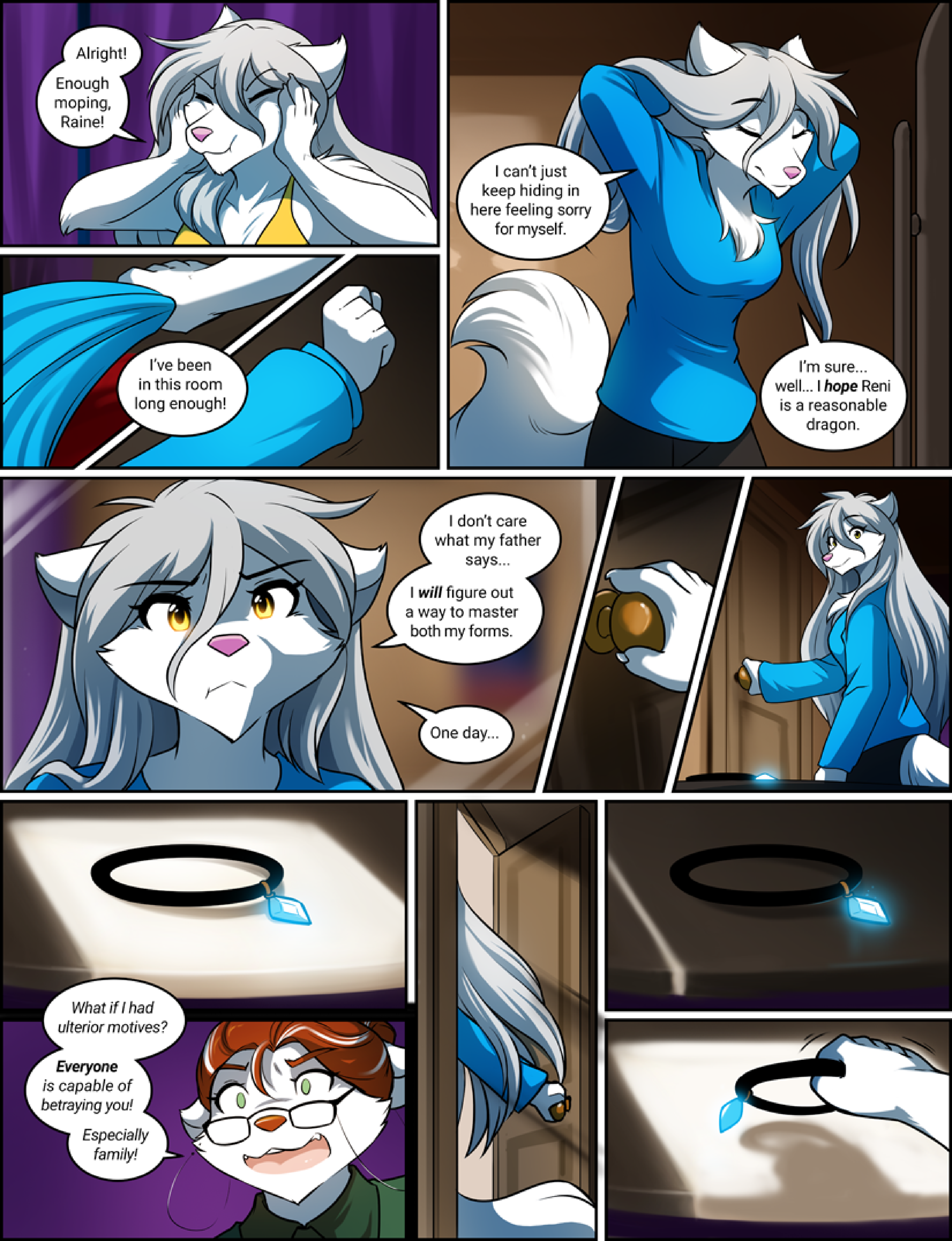
Merry Christmas!

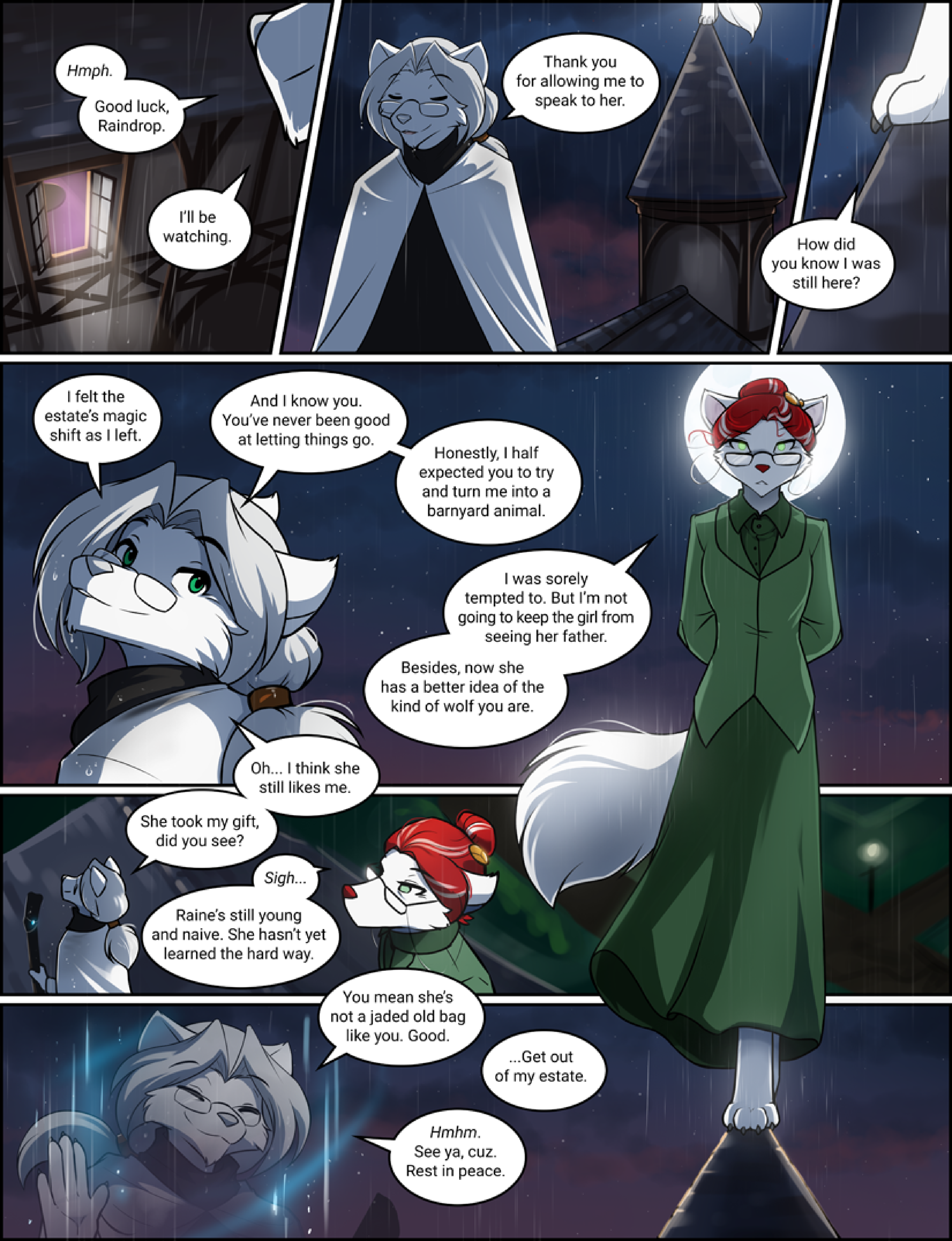

‹How did you survive what Clovis did to you?
I thought without the link, you'd... you know... ***die.***›
‹...Or at least spend the rest of your life as a mindless husk.
Do you think he was lying about that all along?›
‹That certainly sounds like something Clovis would do.
But who knows.›
‹He wasn't exactly gentle when he tore out the link.›
‹Safe to say that wasn't the normal way to end that spell.›
I'm pretty sure if it wasn't for the week I spent blocked from you, I really would have died back there. I'd already experienced it once before, so it was less of a shock.
As the link snapped, I merged with that other version of myself.
Though I still just feel like...
Me.
‹***Merged?*** So you've... changed?
You ***do*** seem a little different.›
‹I do? How?›
‹I dunno, more... self-confident?›
‹I don't notice any difference. Honestly, I—
Wait... I...!›

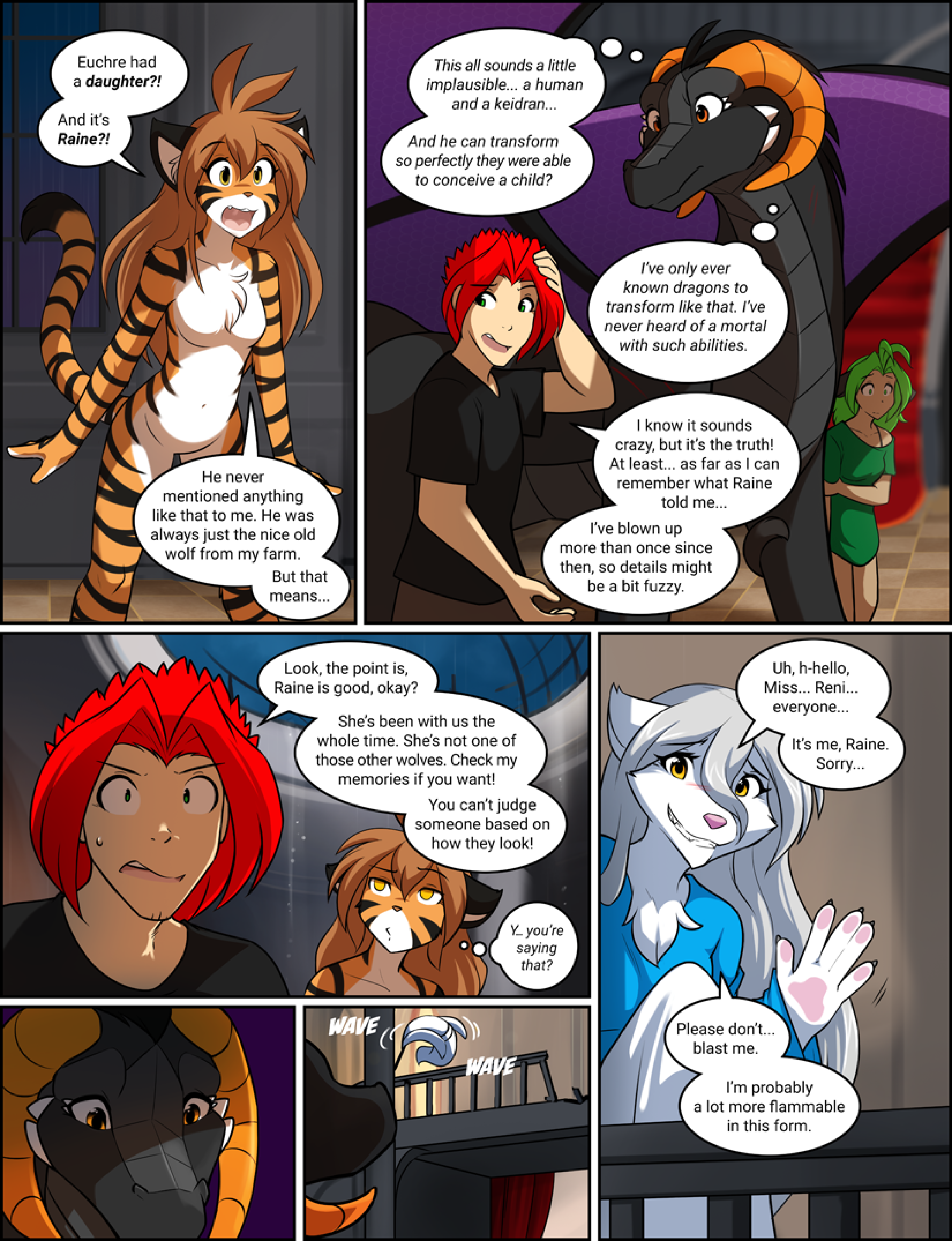

‹Mom...
Dad...›
‹Huh? Mom and dad? What's wrong?›
‹It's memories! Ones I didn't know I'd forgotten a long time ago.
Of mom and dad.›
‹I remember their faces... the scents... it's so clear!›
‹What? How?›
‹I think the fragments of my mind that broke off had some of my old memories.
They never faded from age.›
‹Really? I wish I could see it too. I can't remember them very clearly anymore.›
‹Well just look in my mind right now! You... oh... right...›
‹I know! I'll show you!›
Natani!
You idiot!
Wha-!?

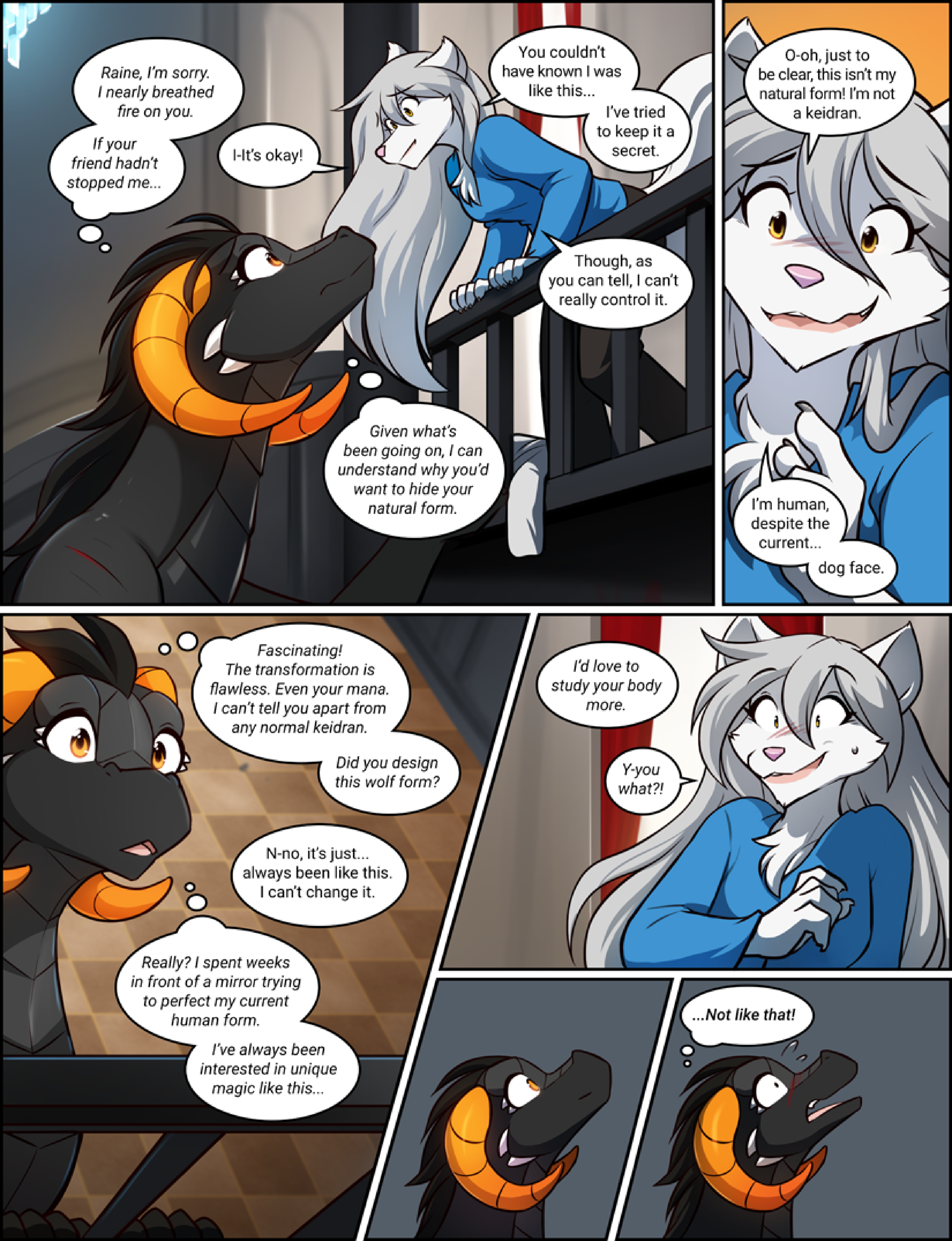

‹Are you *crazy?!*
Don't you remember how that spell was ***killing me?***›
‹You ***literally*** just passed out from overworking your magic!›
‹Mana burn can cause permanent damage you know!›
Just what I need, Keith and my brother teaming up to nag me.
Seems I have two moms now.
‹I wasn't going to cast the **Hearts Desire** spell! Just a basic illusion.›
‹Even still, take it easy, Natani!
You spent over a week unconscious not long ago. We were all worried sick it would happen again.
Please don't take unnecessary risks.›
Make that three moms...
‹Alright, alright... I'll rest, okay?›
‹And no magic!›
‹Yeah, I know! I'll take it easy, promise.›
These three...
‹And you too! ***Bed***, now!›
‹*Uh...* guess I'm going now.
I'll be back! Rest well, Nat.›
‹Hey, watch the leg!›
HOP! HOP!
...What a strange family I've ended up with since then...

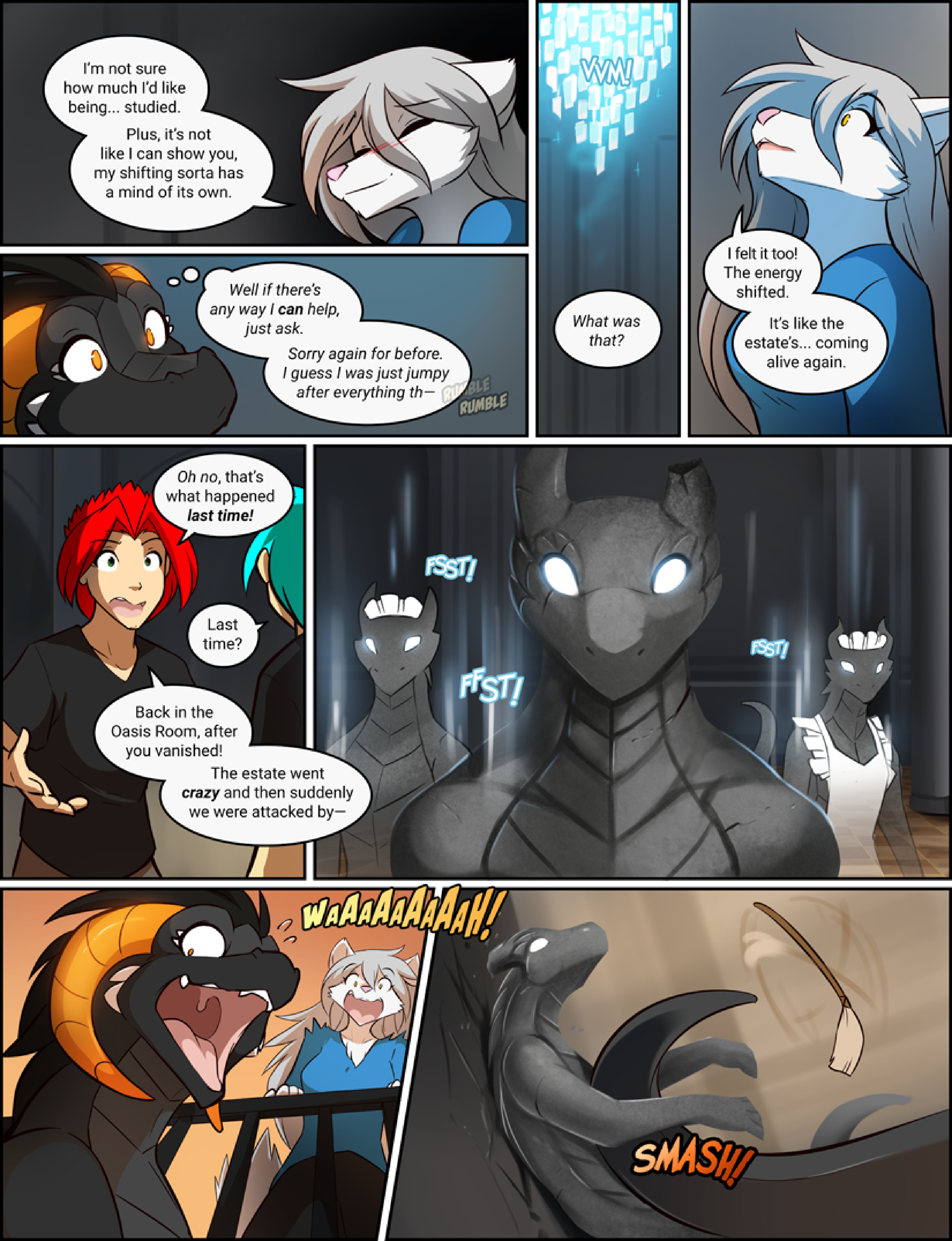

There.
I've disabled the enchantment.
It's now simply a **very** over-engineered mana necklace.
Useful for casting magic whenever you're stuck as a Keidran.
And if you still do not want it, I understand, but I hope you'll keep it handy just in case.
I only want you to stay safe, Raindrop.
I... thank you.
He's right, I should keep mana on me.
I was helpless back in the forest without it.
So was mom, back when she was cursed.
She had so much power, but as a keidran she suddenly couldn't use any of it.
I'm sorry I threw the gift back in your face like that.
It wasn't about the training. I was just upset you had to go again so soon.
Maybe if things ever do calm down someday, and we find where mom went, we'll be able to sit down as a family and talk for real.
Do you think that would be possi—
...Oh.

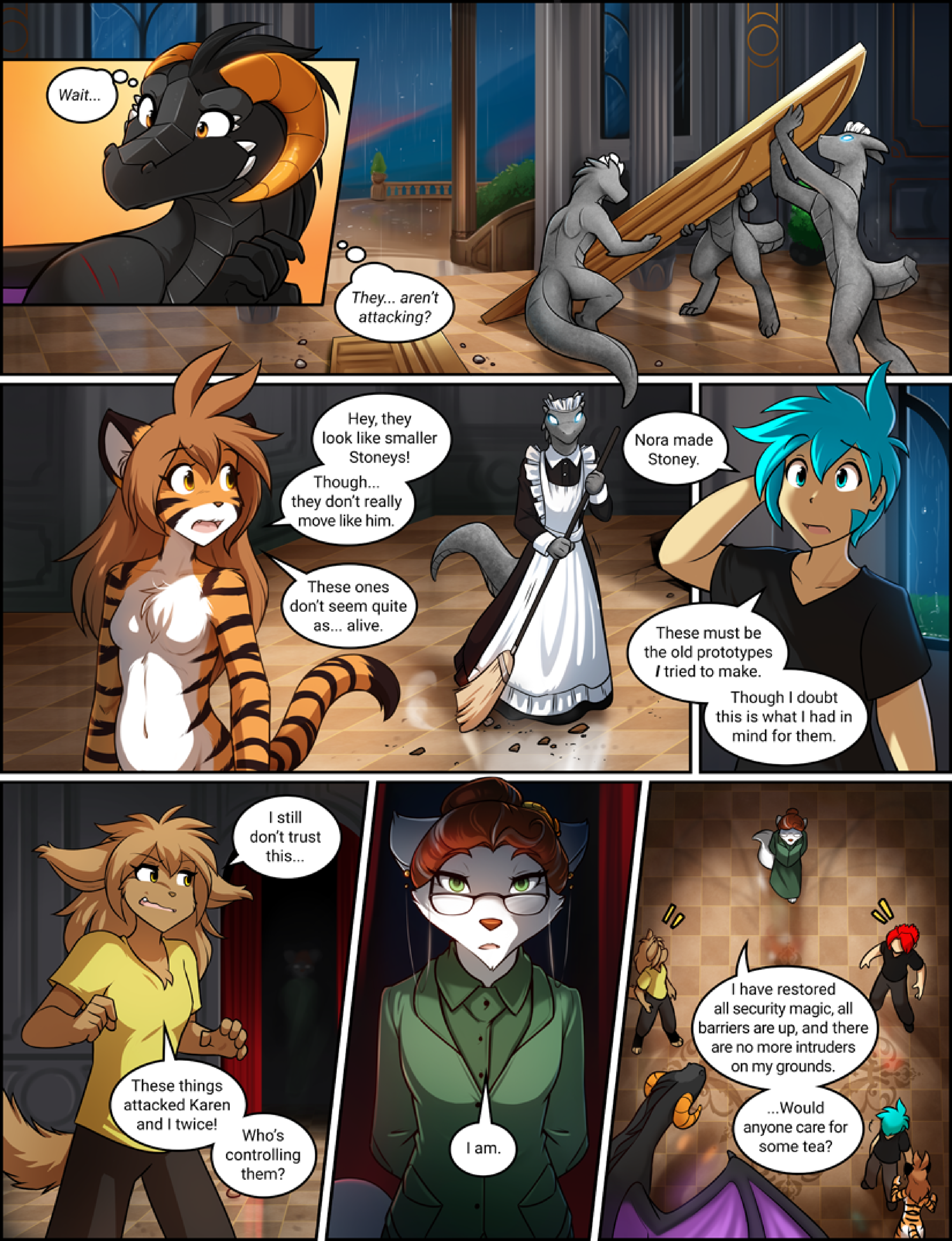

Alright!
Enough moping, Raine!
I've been in this room long enough!
I can't just keep hiding in here feeling sorry for myself.
I'm sure... well... I ***hope*** Reni is a reasonable dragon.
I don't care what my father says...
I ***will*** figure out a way to master both my forms.
One day...
What if I had ulterior motives?
Everyone *is capable of betraying you!*
Especially family!

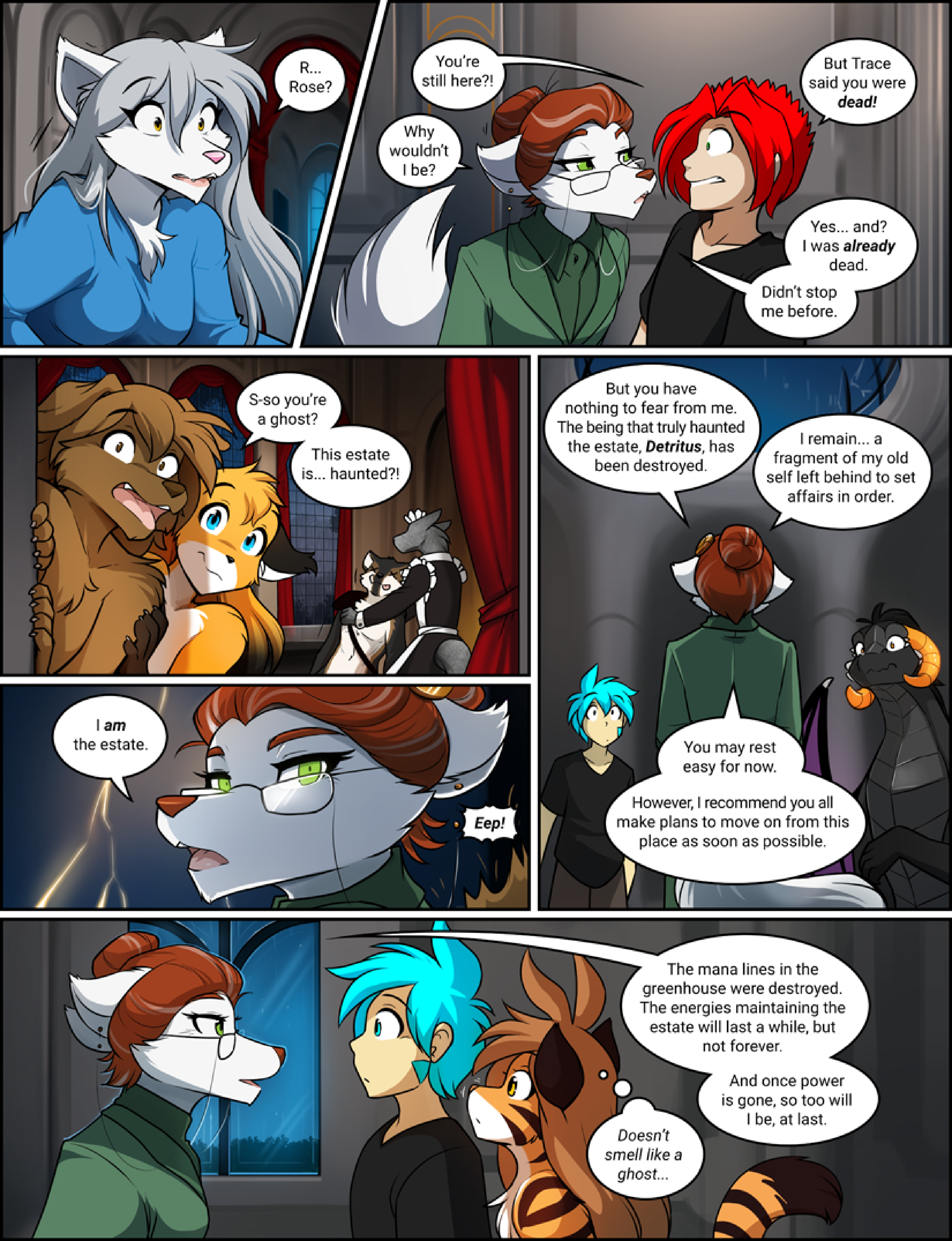

Hmph.
Good luck, Raindrop.
I'll be watching.
Thank you for allowing me to speak to her.
How did you know I was still here?
I felt the estate's magic shift as I left.
And I know you. You've never been good at letting things go.
Honestly, I half expected you to try and turn me into a barnyard animal.
I was sorely tempted to. But I'm not going to keep the girl from seeing her father.
Besides, now she has a better idea of the kind of wolf you are.
Oh... I think she still likes me.
She took my gift, did you see?
Sigh...
Raine's still young and naive. She hasn't yet learned the hard way.
You mean she's not a jaded old bag like you. Good.
...Get out of my estate.
Hmhm. See ya, cuz. Rest in peace.

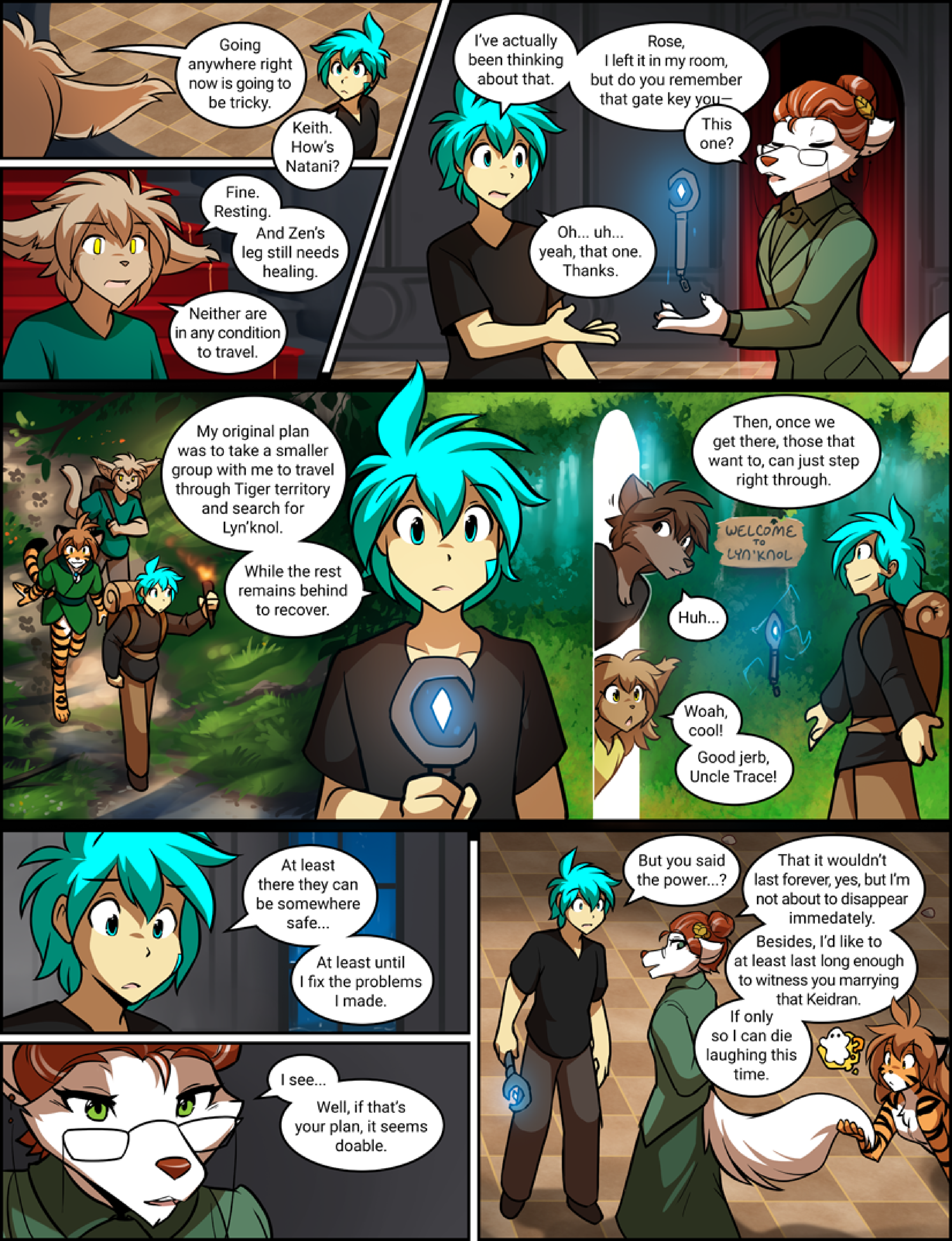

Euchre had a **daughter?!**
And it's **Raine?!**
He never mentioned anything like that to me. He was always just the nice old wolf from my farm.
But that means...
This all sounds a little implausible... a human and a keidran...
And he can transform so perfectly they were able to conceive a child?
I've only ever known dragons to transform like that. I've never heard of a mortal with such abilities.
I know it sounds crazy, but it's the truth! At least... as far as I can remember what Raine told me...
I've blown up more than once since then, so details might be a bit fuzzy.
Look, the point is, Raine is good, okay?
She's been with us the whole time. She's not one of those other wolves. Check my memories if you want!
You can't judge someone based on how they look!
Y_ you're saying that?
WAVE
WAVE
Uh, h-hello, Miss... Reni... everyone...
It's me, Raine. Sorry...
Please don't... blast me.
I'm probably a lot more flammable in this form.

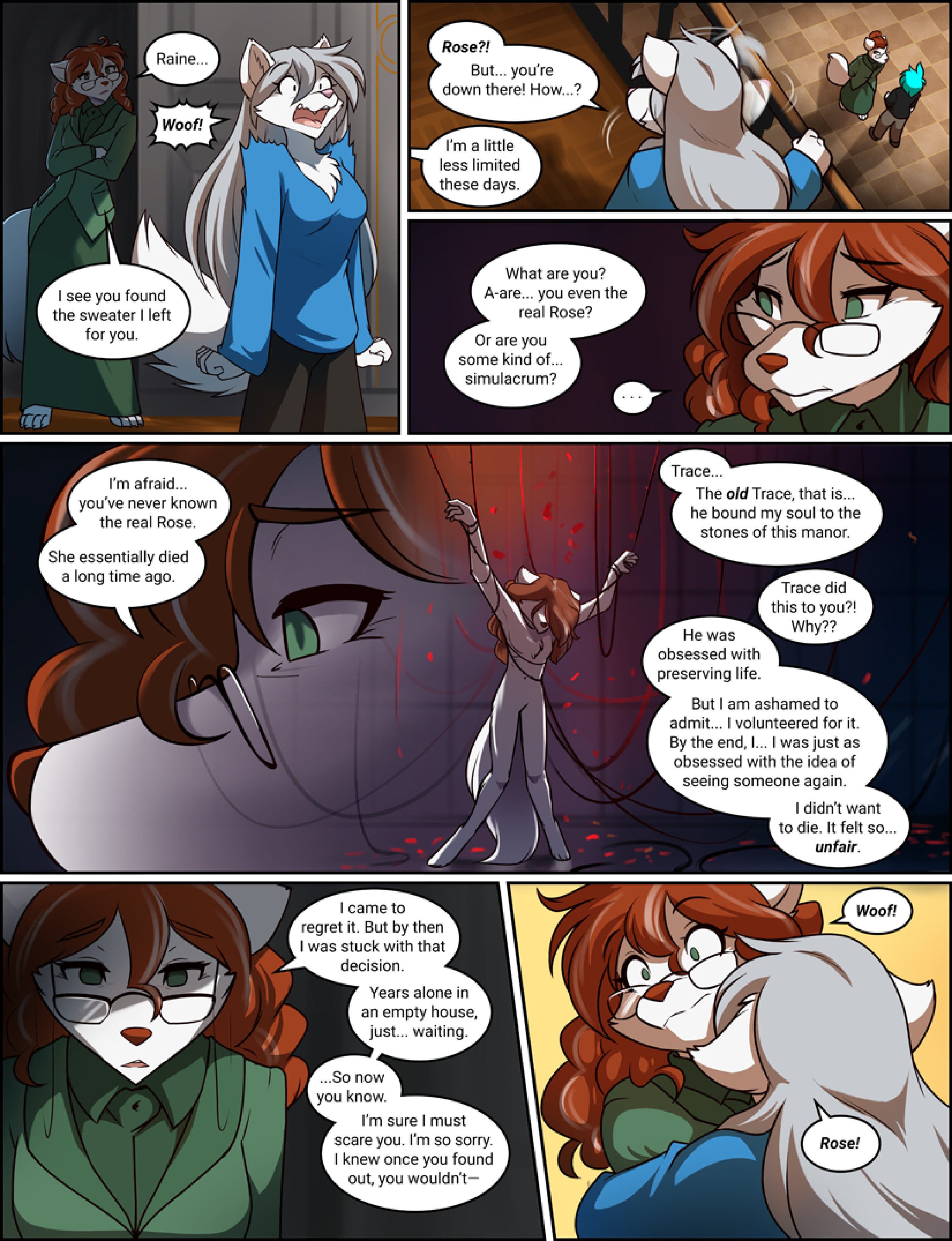

Raine, I'm sorry. I nearly breathed fire on you.
If your friend hadn't stopped me...
I-It's okay!
You couldn't have known I was like this...
I've tried to keep it a secret.
Though, as you can tell, I can't really control it.
Given what's been going on, I can understand why you'd want to hide your natural form.
O-oh, just to be clear, this isn't my natural form! I'm not a keidran.
I'm human, despite the current...
dog face.
Fascinating! The transformation is flawless. Even your mana. I can't tell you apart from any normal keidran.
Did you design this wolf form?
N-no, it's just... always been like this. I can't change it.
Really? I spent weeks in front of a mirror trying to perfect my current human form.
I've always been interested in unique magic like this...
I'd love to study your body more.
Y-you what?!
...Not like that!


I'm not sure how much I'd like being... studied.
Plus, it's not like I can show you, my shifting sorta has a mind of its own.
*Well if there's any way I **can** help, just ask.*
Sorry again for before. I guess I was just jumpy after everything th—
RUMBLE RUMBLE
VVM!
What was that?
I felt it too! The energy shifted.
It's like the estate's... coming alive again.
Oh no, that's what happened ***last time!***
Last time?
Back in the Oasis Room, after you vanished!
The estate went ***crazy*** and then suddenly we were attacked by—
FSST!
FFST!
FSST!
WAAAAAAAAAH!
SMASH!

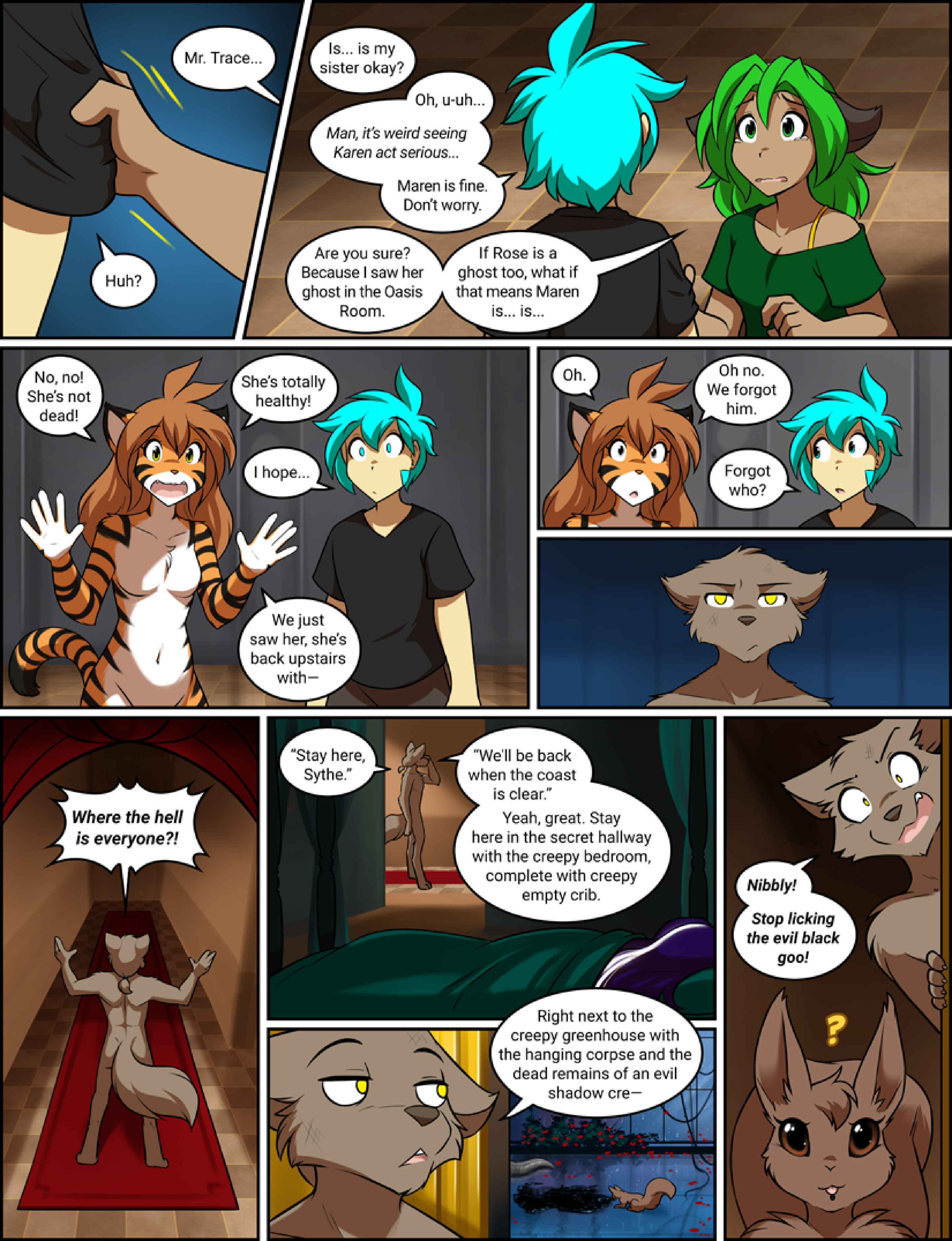

Wait...
They... aren't attacking?
Hey, they look like smaller Stoneys!
Though... they don't really move like him.
These ones don't seem quite as... alive.
Nora made Stoney.
These must be the old prototypes *I* tried to make.
Though I doubt this is what I had in mind for them.
I still don't trust this...
These things attacked Karen and I twice!
Who's controlling them?
I am.
I have restored all security magic, all barriers are up, and there are no more intruders on my grounds.
...Would anyone care for some tea?

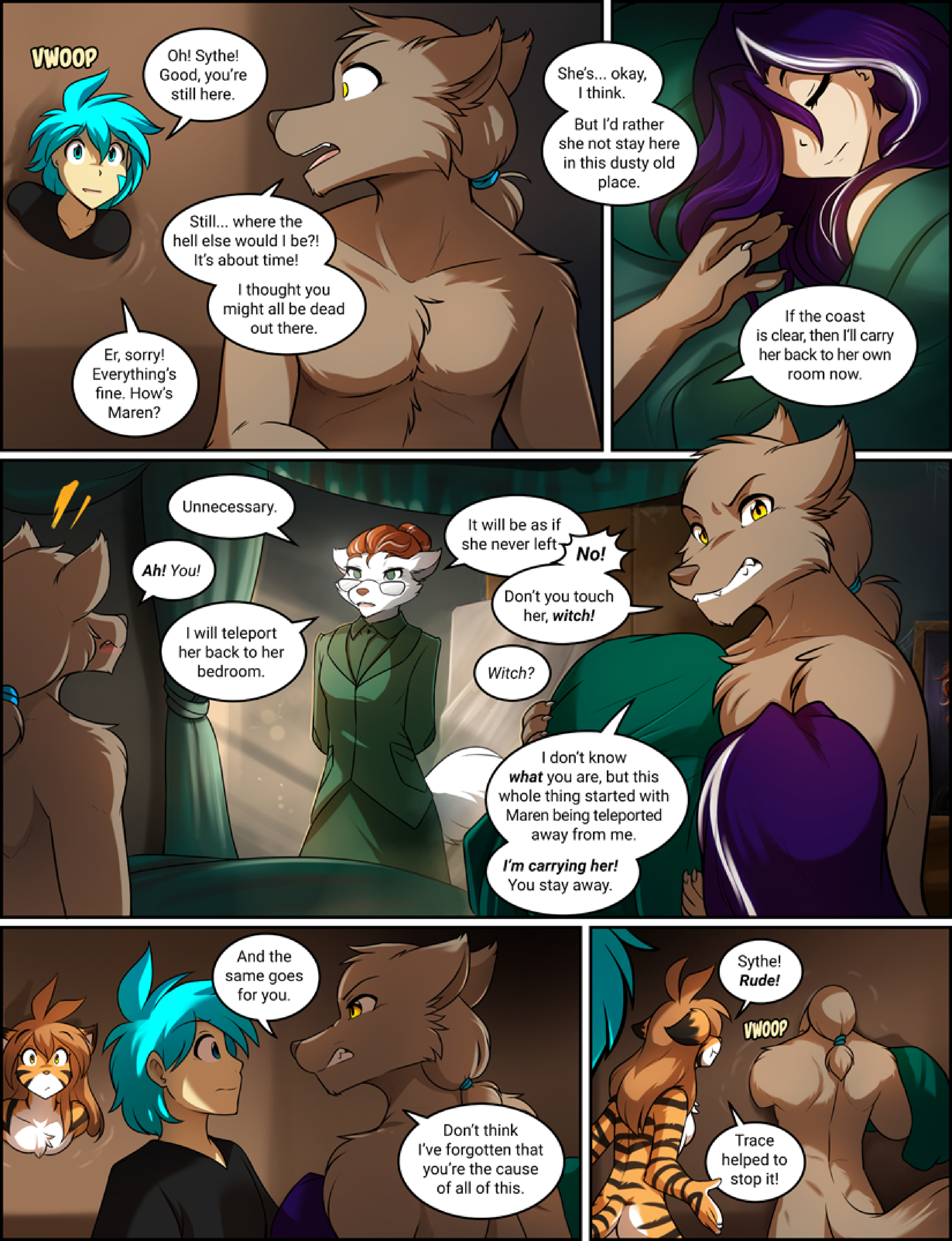

R... Rose?
You're still here?!
But Trace said you were *dead!*
Why wouldn't I be?
Yes... and? I was *already* dead.
Didn't stop me before.
S-so you're a ghost?
This estate is... haunted?!
But you have nothing to fear from me. The being that truly haunted the estate, ***Detritus***, has been destroyed.
I remain... a fragment of my old self left behind to set affairs in order.
I *am* the estate.
Eep!
You may rest easy for now.
However, I recommend you all make plans to move on from this place as soon as possible.
The mana lines in the greenhouse were destroyed. The energies maintaining the estate will last a while, but not forever.
And once power is gone, so too will I be, at last.
Doesn't smell like a ghost...

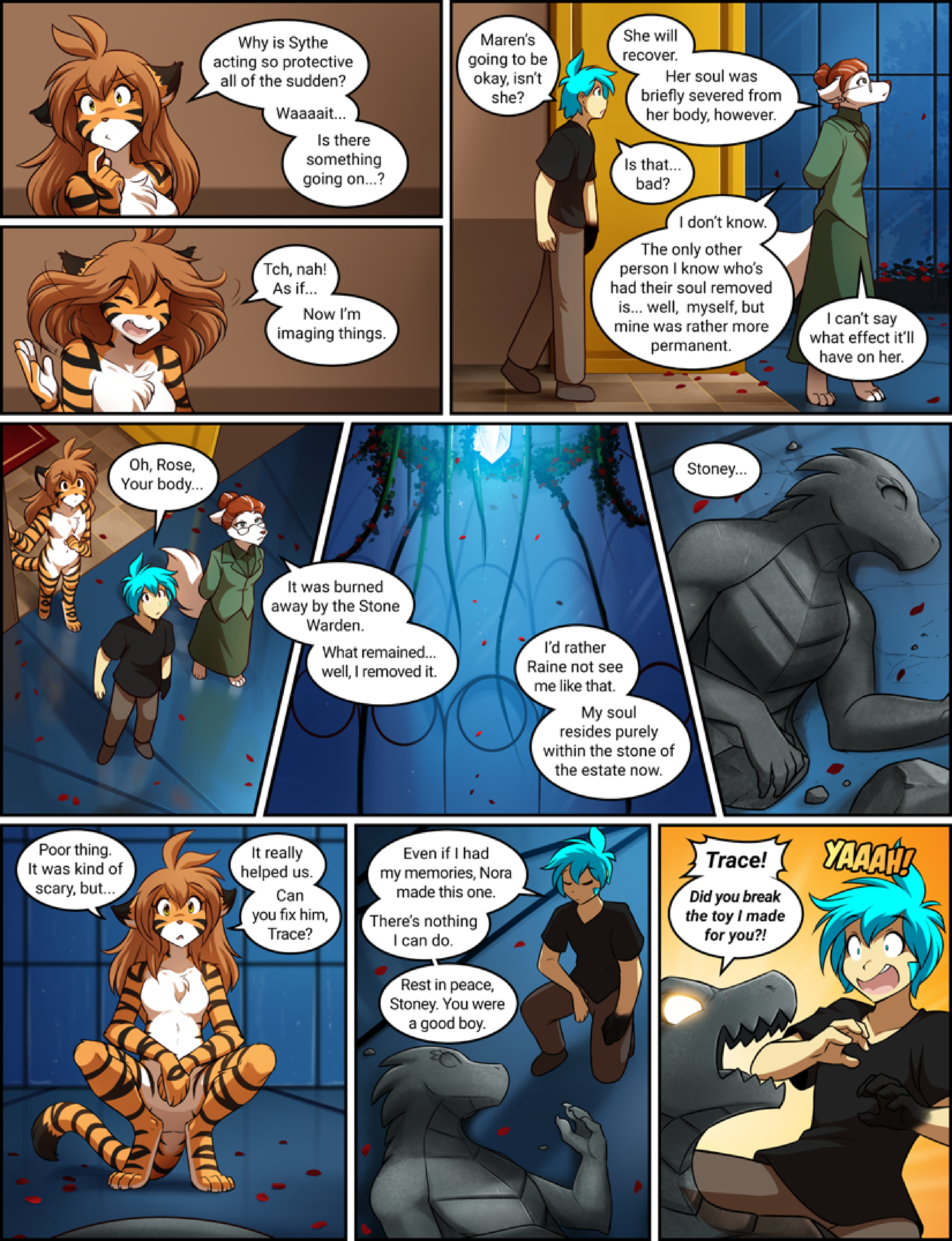

Going anywhere right now is going to be tricky.
Keith. How's Natani?
Fine. Resting.
And Zen's leg still needs healing.
Neither are in any condition to travel.
I've actually been thinking about that.
Rose, I left it in my room, but do you remember that gate key you—
This one?
Oh... uh... yeah, that one. Thanks.
My original plan was to take a smaller group with me to travel through Tiger territory and search for Lyn'knol.
While the rest remains behind to recover.
Then, once we get there, those that want to, can just step right through.
WELCOME TO LYN'KNOL
Huh...
Woah, cool!
Good jerb, Uncle Trace!
At least there they can be somewhere safe...
At least until I fix the problems I made.
I see...
Well, if that's your plan, it seems doable.
But you said the power...?
That it wouldn't last forever, yes, but I'm not about to disappear immedately.
Besides, I'd like to at least last long enough to witness you marrying that Keidran.
If only so I can die laughing this time.

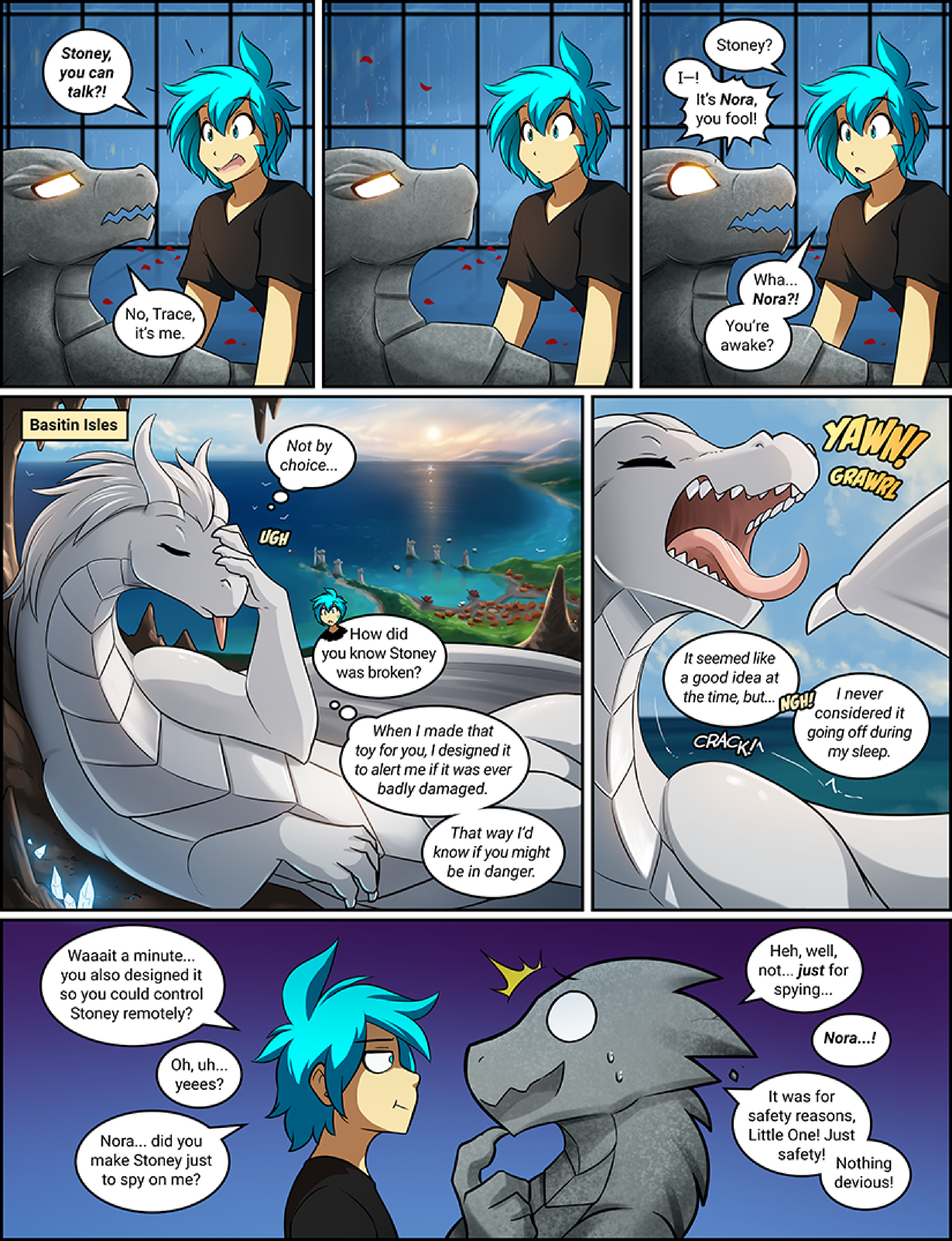

Raine...
Woof!
I see you found the sweater I left for you.
Rose?!
But... you're down there! How...?
I'm a little less limited these days.
What are you? A-are... you even the real Rose?
Or are you some kind of... simulacrum?
...
I'm afraid... you've never known the real Rose.
She essentially died a long time ago.
Trace...
The *old* Trace, that is... he bound my soul to the stones of this manor.
Trace did this to you?! Why??
He was obsessed with preserving life.
But I am ashamed to admit... I volunteered for it. By the end, I... I was just as obsessed with the idea of seeing someone again.
I didn't want to die. It felt so... *unfair*.
I came to regret it. But by then I was stuck with that decision.
Years alone in an empty house, just... waiting.
...So now you know.
I'm sure I must scare you. I'm so sorry. I knew once you found out, you wouldn't—
Woof!
Rose!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!
FLORA!
2

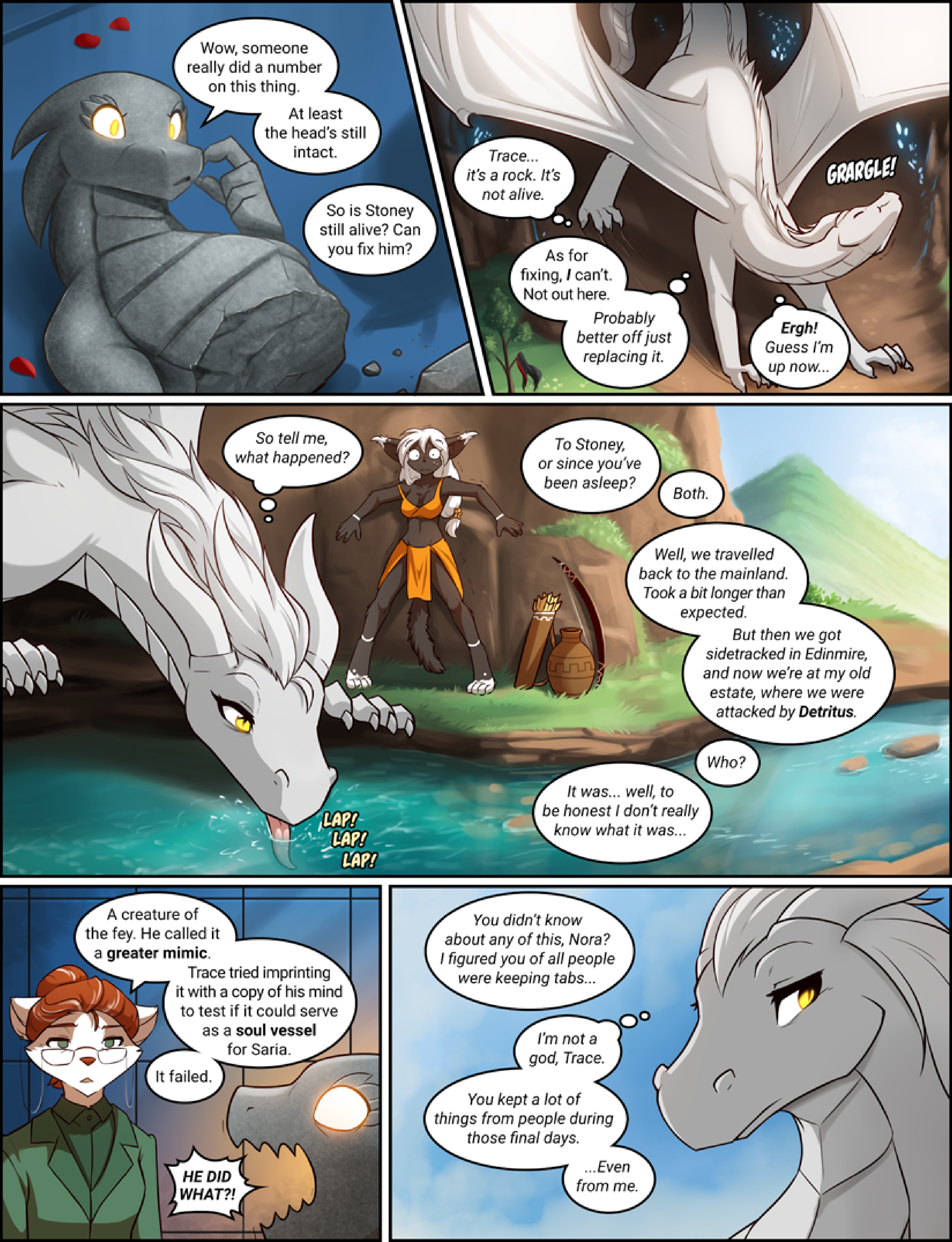

Mr. Trace...
Huh?
Is... is my sister okay?
Oh, u-uh...
Man, it's weird seeing Karen act serious...
Maren is fine. Don't worry.
Are you sure? Because I saw her ghost in the Oasis Room.
If Rose is a ghost too, what if that means Maren is... is...
No, no! She's not dead!
She's totally healthy!
I hope...
We just saw her, she's back upstairs with–
Oh.
Oh no. We forgot him.
Forgot who?
Where the hell is everyone?!
"Stay here, Sythe."
"We'll be back when the coast is clear."
Yeah, great. Stay here in the secret hallway with the creepy bedroom, complete with creepy empty crib.
Right next to the creepy greenhouse with the hanging corpse and the dead remains of an evil shadow cre–
Nibbly!
Stop licking the evil black goo!
?

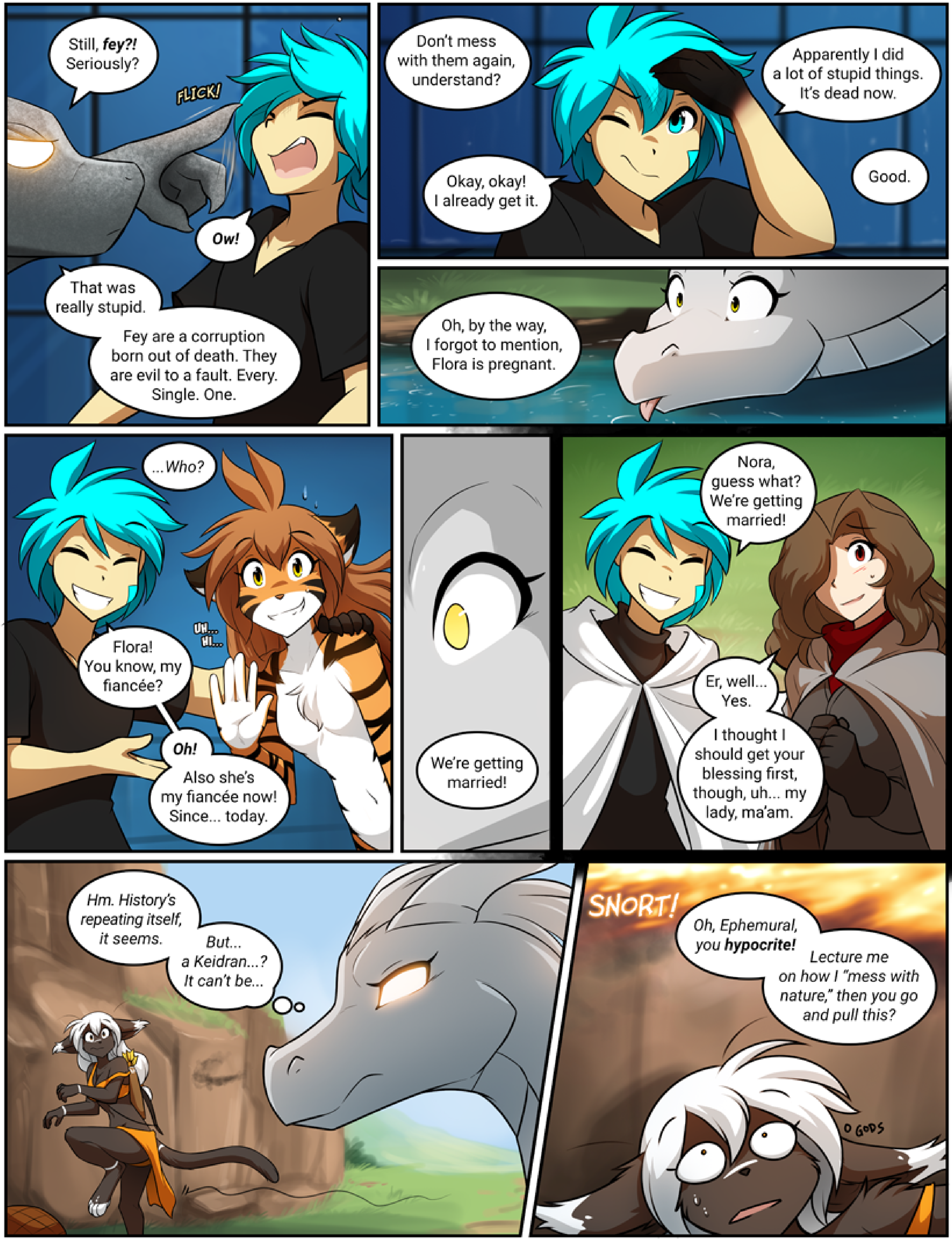

VWOOP
Oh! Sythe! Good, you're still here.
Still... where the hell else would I be?! It's about time!
I thought you might all be dead out there.
Er, sorry! Everything's fine. How's Maren?
She's... okay, I think.
But I'd rather she not stay here in this dusty old place.
If the coast is clear, then I'll carry her back to her own room now.
Unnecessary.
Ah! *You!*
I will teleport her back to her bedroom.
It will be as if she never left
No!
Don't you touch her, ***witch!***
Witch?
I don't know ***what*** you are, but this whole thing started with Maren being teleported away from me.
I'm carrying her! You stay away.
And the same goes for you.
Don't think I've forgotten that you're the cause of all of this.
Sythe! ***Rude!***
VWOOP
Trace helped to stop it!

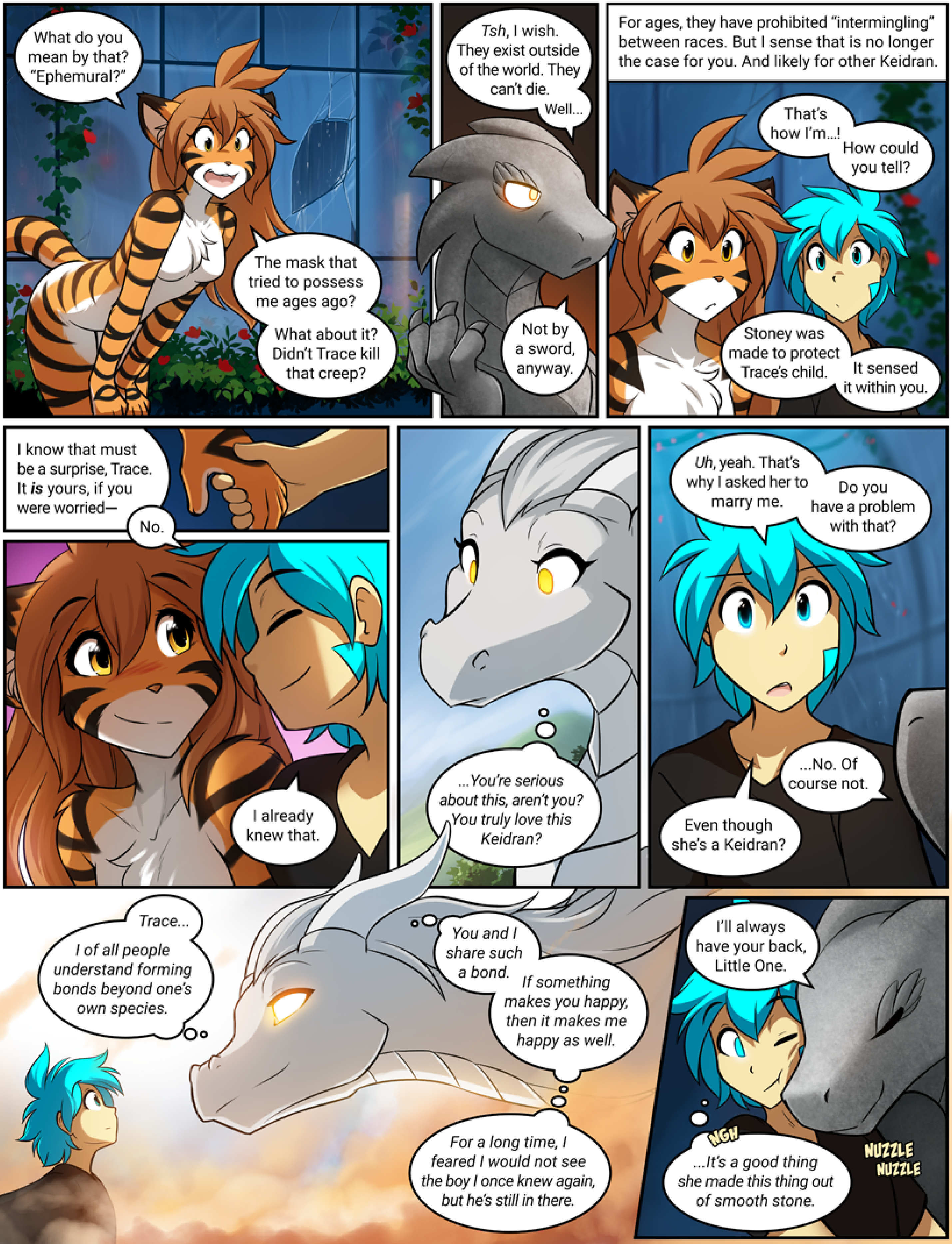

Why is Sythe acting so protective all of the sudden?
Waaaait...
Is there something going on...?
Tch, nah! As if...
Now I'm imaging things.
Maren's going to be okay, isn't she?
She will recover.
Her soul was briefly severed from her body, however.
Is that... bad?
I don't know.
The only other person I know who's had their soul removed is... well, myself, but mine was rather more permanent.
I can't say what effect it'll have on her.
Oh, Rose, Your body...
It was burned away by the Stone Warden.
What remained... well, I removed it.
I'd rather Raine not see me like that.
My soul resides purely within the stone of the estate now.
Stoney...
Poor thing. It was kind of scary, but...
It really helped us.
Can you fix him, Trace?
Even if I had my memories, Nora made this one.
There's nothing I can do.
Rest in peace, Stoney. You were a good boy.
Trace!
Did you break the toy I made for you?!
YAAAH!

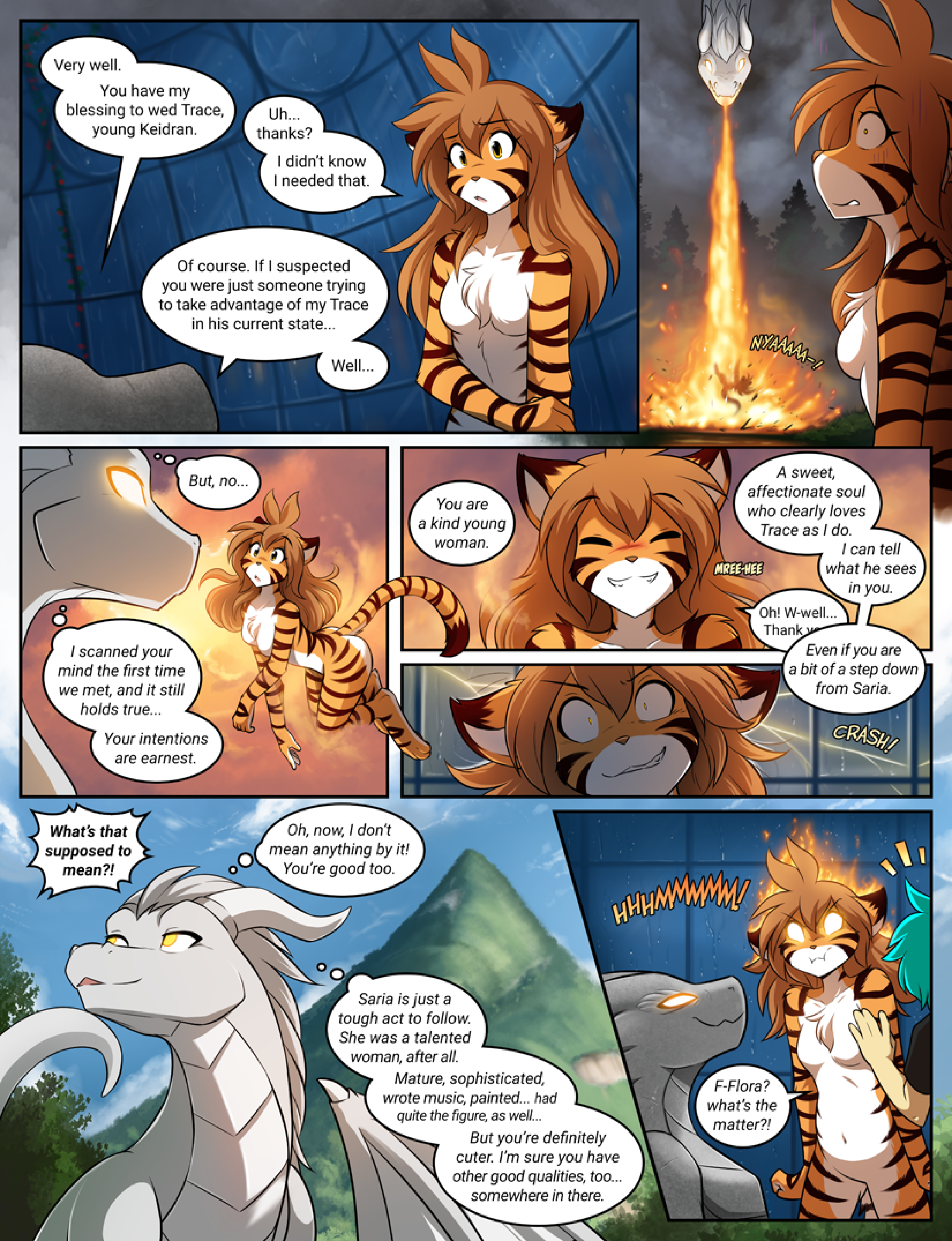

Stoney, you can talk?!
No, Trace, it's me.
Stoney?
I—!
It's **Nora**, you fool!
Wha... ***Nora?!***
You're awake?
Basitin Isles
Not by choice...
UGH
How did you know Stoney was broken?
When I made that toy for you, I designed it to alert me if it was ever badly damaged.
That way I'd know if you might be in danger.
YAWN!
GRAWRL
It seemed like a good idea at the time, but...
NGH!
I never considered it going off during my sleep.
CRACK!
Waaait a minute... you also designed it so you could control Stoney remotely?
Oh, uh... yeees?
Nora... did you make Stoney just to spy on me?
Heh, well, not... ***just*** for spying...
Nora...!
It was for safety reasons, Little One! Just safety!
Nothing devious!

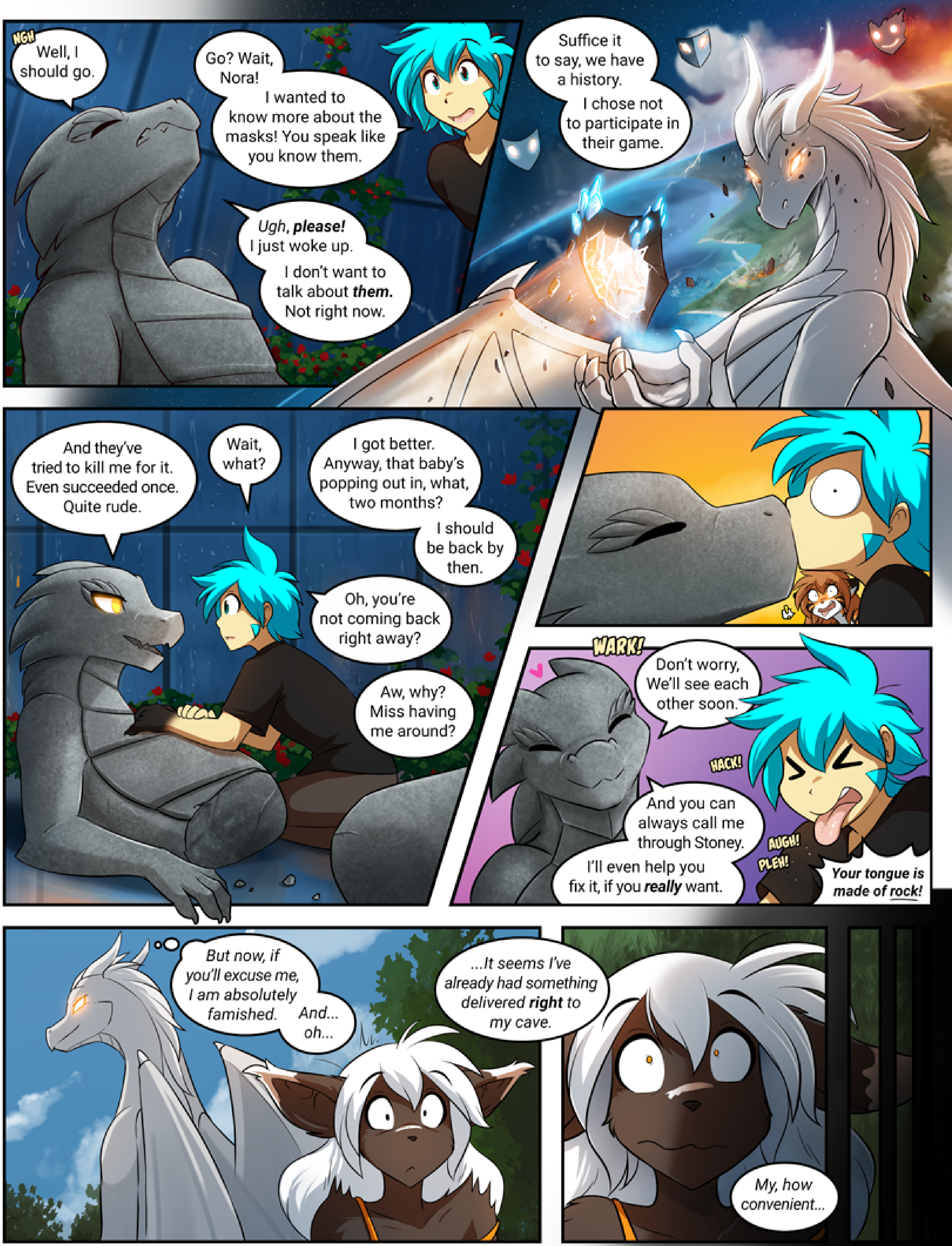
Merry
Christmas

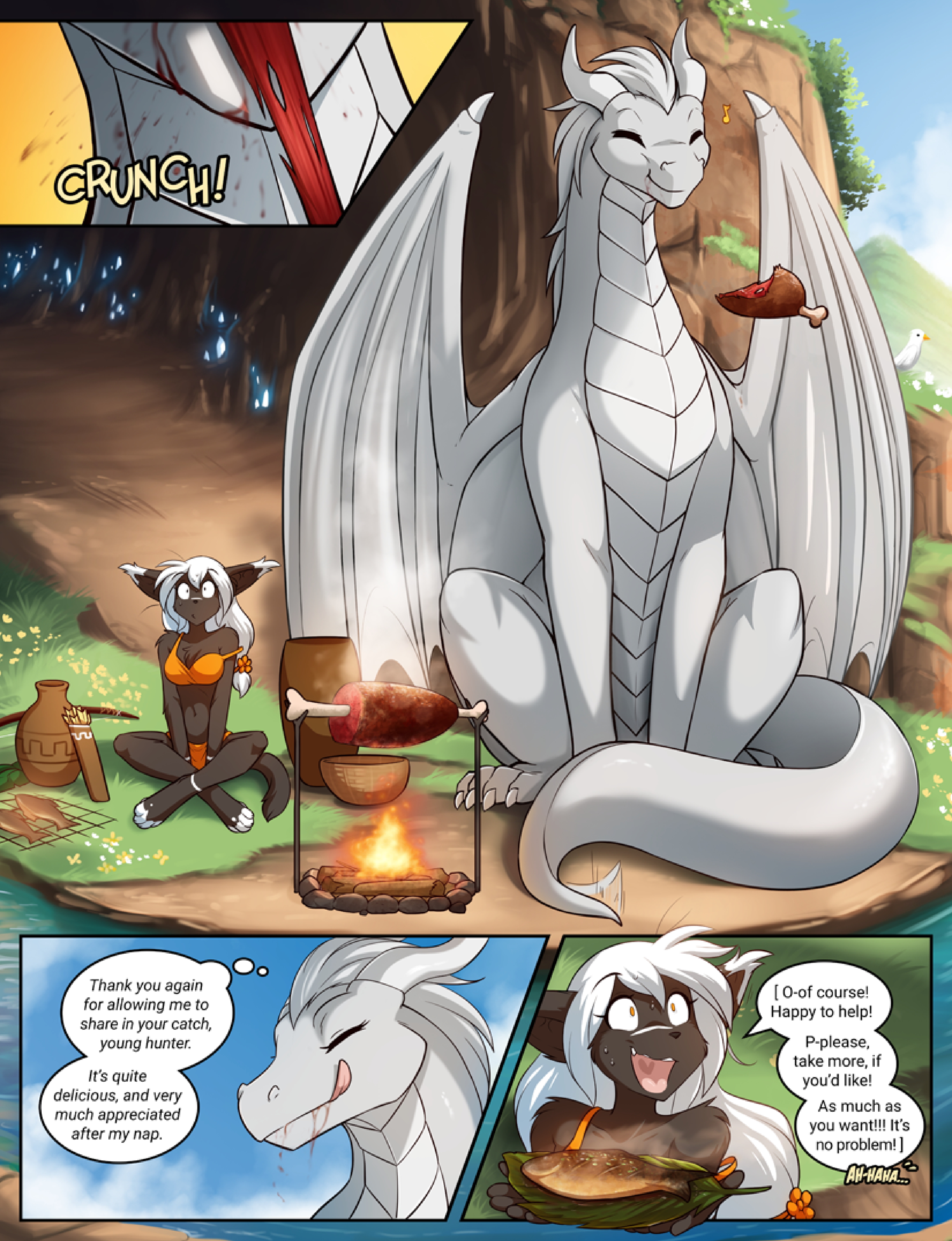

Wow, someone really did a number on this thing.
At least the head's still intact.
So is Stoney still alive? Can you fix him?
Trace... it's a rock. It's not alive.
*As for fixing, **I** can't. Not out here.*
Probably better off just replacing it.
GRARGLE!
***Ergh!** Guess I'm up now...*
So tell me, what happened?
To Stoney, or since you've been asleep?
Both.
Well, we travelled back to the mainland. Took a bit longer than expected.
*But then we got sidetracked in Edinmire, and now we're at my old estate, where we were attacked by **Detritus**.*
Who?
It was... well, to be honest I don't really know what it was...
LAP! LAP! LAP!
A creature of the fey. He called it a **greater mimic**.
Trace tried imprinting it with a copy of his mind to test if it could serve as a **soul vessel** for Saria.
It failed.
HE DID WHAT?!
You didn't know about any of this, Nora? I figured you of all people were keeping tabs...
I'm not a god, Trace.
You kept a lot of things from people during those final days.
...Even from me.

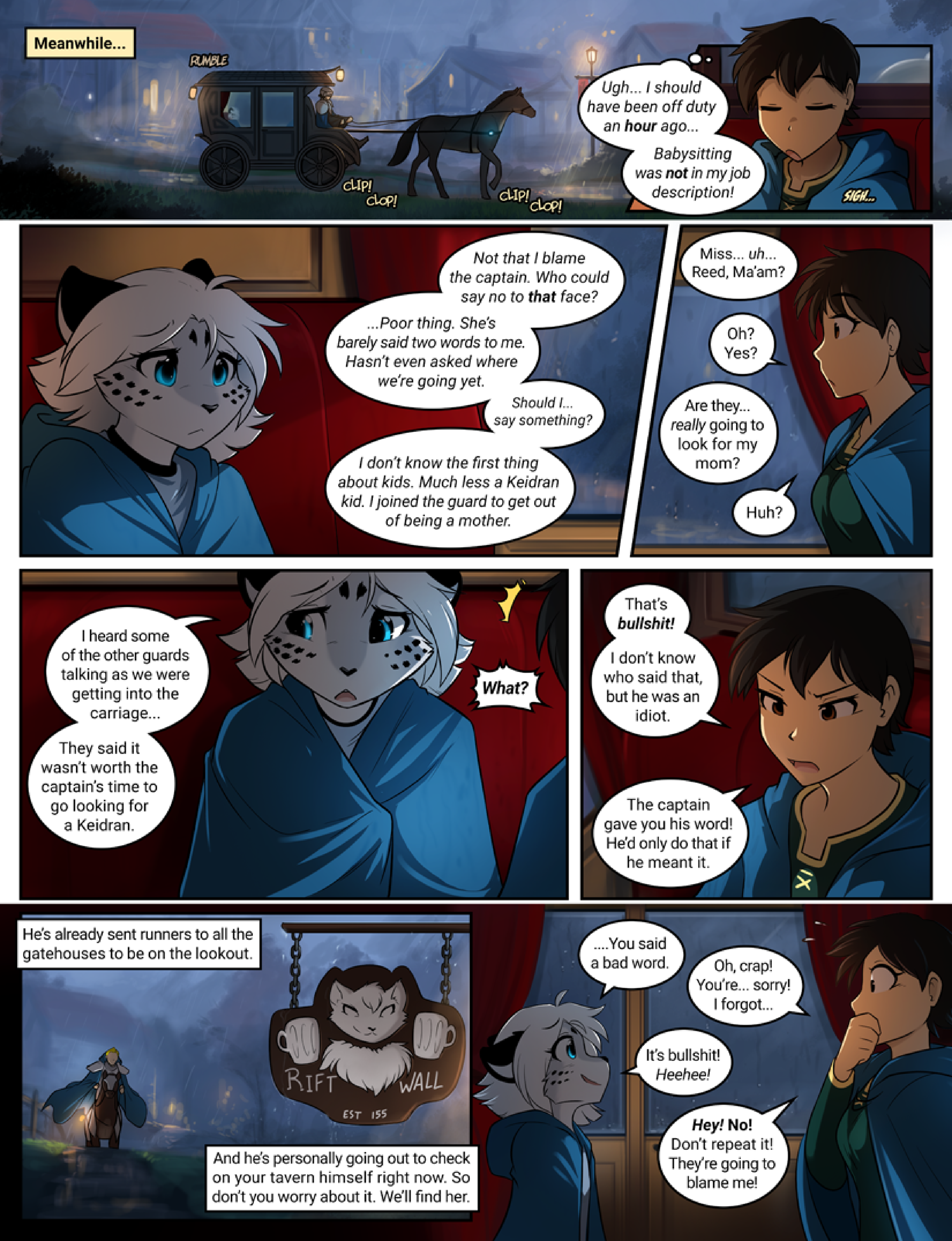

Still, ***fey?!*** Seriously?
FLICK!
Ow!
That was really stupid.
Fey are a corruption born out of death. They are evil to a fault. Every. Single. One.
Don't mess with them again, understand?
Okay, okay! I already get it.
Apparently I did a lot of stupid things. It's dead now.
Good.
Oh, by the way, I forgot to mention, Flora is pregnant.
...Who?
Flora! You know, my fiancée?
UH... HI...
Oh!
Also she's my fiancée now! Since... today.
We're getting married!
Nora, guess what? We're getting married!
Er, well... Yes.
I thought I should get your blessing first, though, uh... my lady, ma'am.
Hm. History's repeating itself, it seems.
But... a Keidran...? It can't be...
SNORT!
*Oh, Ephemural, you **hypocrite!***
Lecture me on how I "mess with nature," then you go and pull this?
O GODS

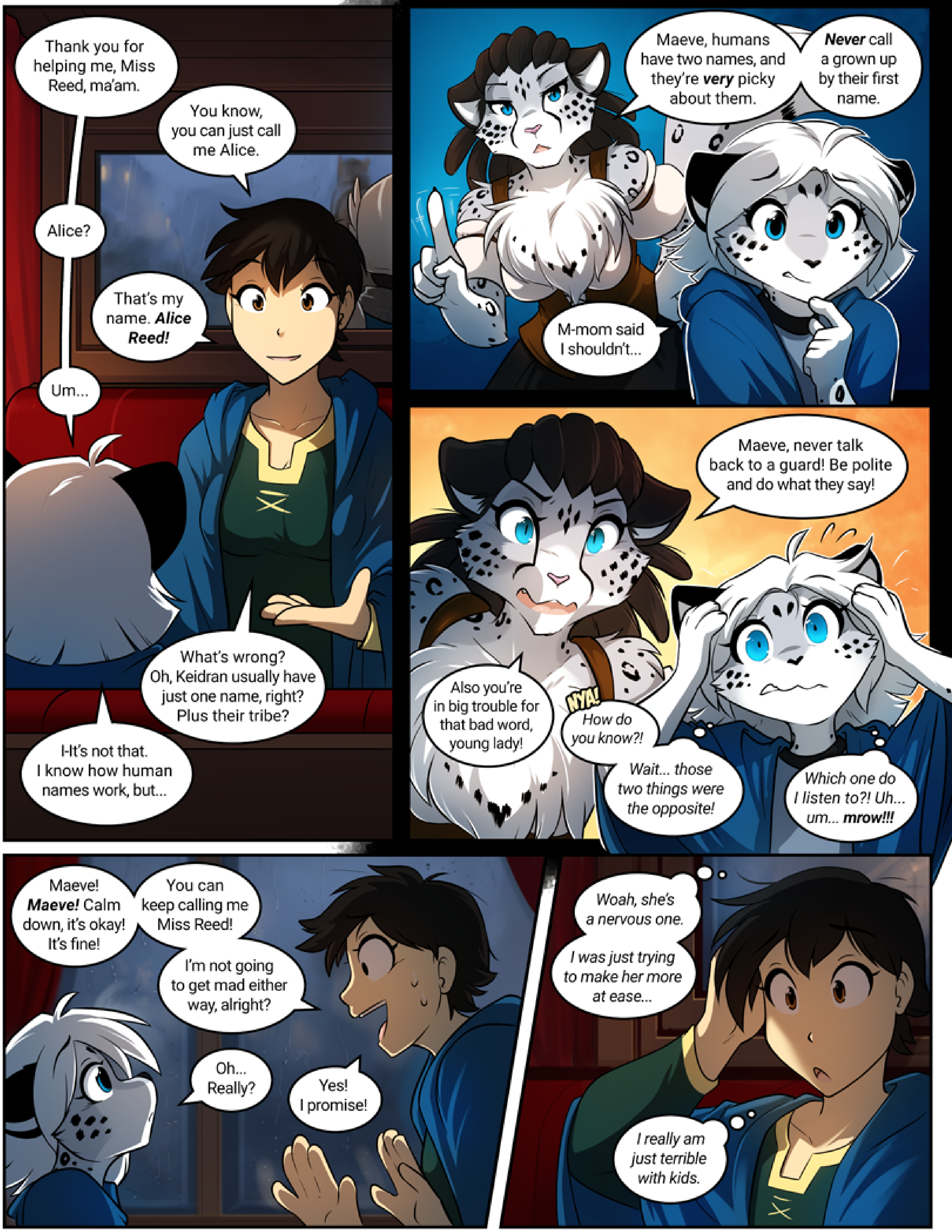

What do you mean by that? "Ephemural?"
The mask that tried to possess me ages ago?
What about it? Didn't Trace kill that creep?
Tsh, I wish. They exist outside of the world. They can't die.
Well...
Not by a sword, anyway.
For ages, they have prohibited "intermingling" between races. But I sense that is no longer the case for you. And likely for other Keidran.
That's how I'm...!
How could you tell?
Stoney was made to protect Trace's child.
It sensed it within you.
I know that must be a surprise, Trace. It *is* yours, if you were worried—
No.
I already knew that.
...You're serious about this, aren't you? You truly love this Keidran?
Uh, yeah. That's why I asked her to marry me.
Do you have a problem with that?
...No. Of course not.
Even though she's a Keidran?
Trace... I of all people understand forming bonds beyond one's own species.
You and I share such a bond.
If something makes you happy, then it makes me happy as well.
For a long time, I feared I would not see the boy I once knew again, but he's still in there.
I'll always have your back, Little One.
NGH
...It's a good thing she made this thing out of smooth stone.
NUZZLE NUZZLE

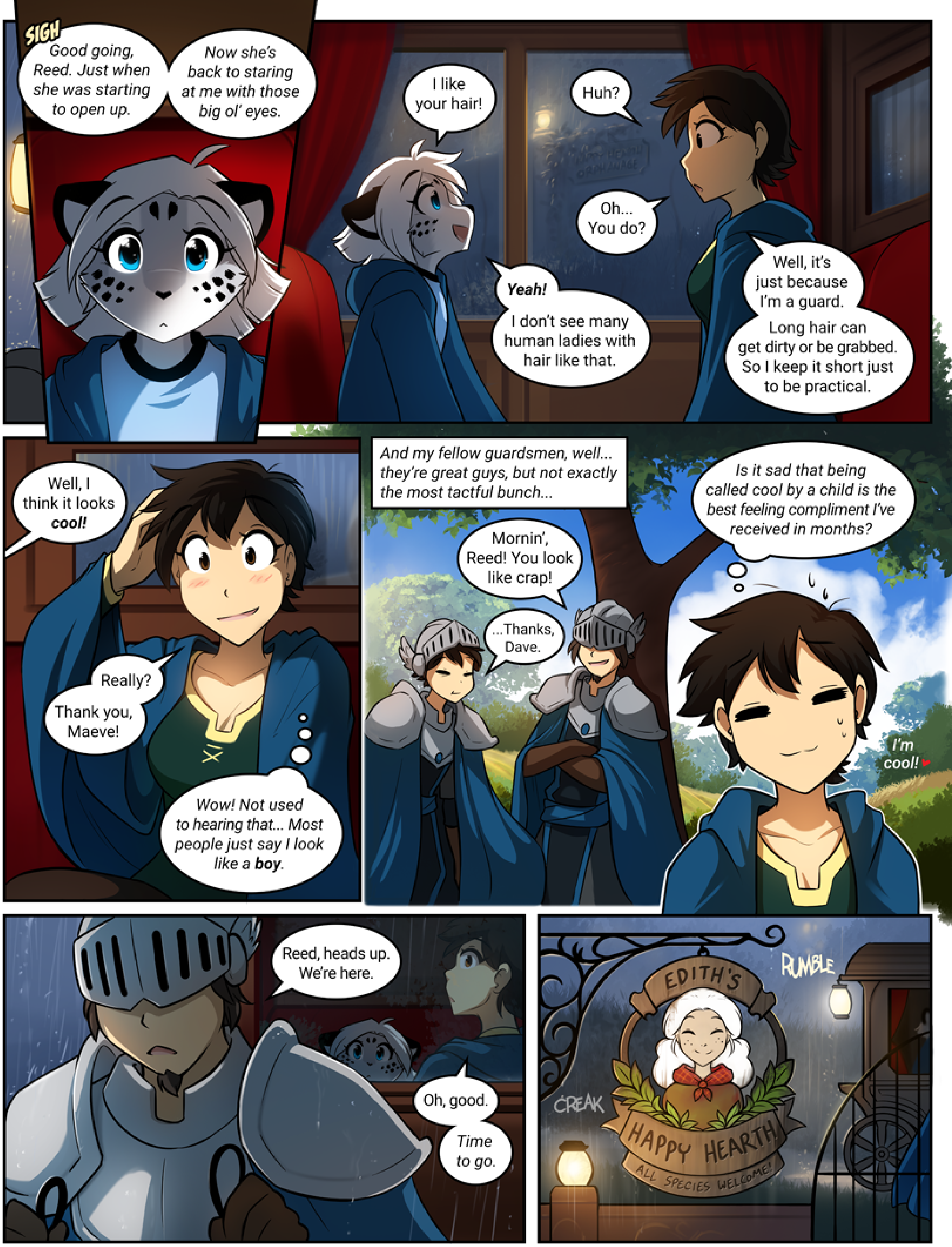

Very well.
You have my blessing to wed Trace, young Keidran.
Uh... thanks?
I didn't know I needed that.
Of course. If I suspected you were just someone trying to take advantage of my Trace in his current state...
Well...
NYAAAAA~!
But, no...
I scanned your mind the first time we met, and it still holds true...
Your intentions are earnest.
You are a kind young woman.
A sweet, affectionate soul who clearly loves Trace as I do.
I can tell what he sees in you.
MREE-HEE
Oh! W-well... Thank y
Even if you are a bit of a step down from Saria.
CRASH!
What's that supposed to mean?!
Oh, now, I don't mean anything by it! You're good too.
Saria is just a tough act to follow. She was a talented woman, after all.
Mature, sophisticated, wrote music, painted... had quite the figure, as well...
But you're definitely cuter. I'm sure you have other good qualities, too... somewhere in there.
HHHMMMMM!
F-Flora? what's the matter?!

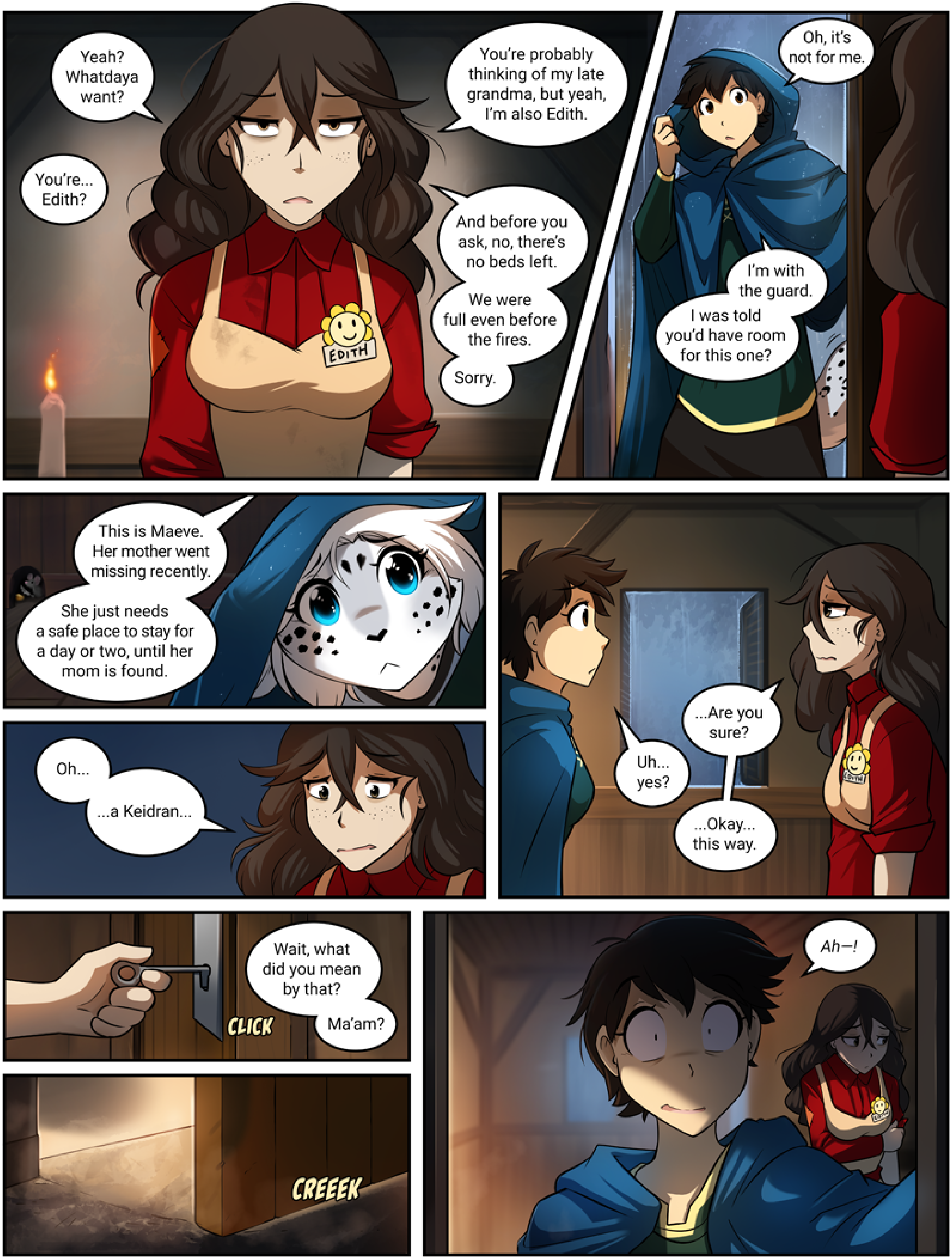

NGH
Well, I should go.
Go? Wait, Nora!
I wanted to know more about the masks! You speak like you know them.
Ugh, **please!** I just woke up.
I don't want to talk about ***them.*** Not right now.
Suffice it to say, we have a history.
I chose not to participate in their game.
And they've tried to kill me for it. Even succeeded once. Quite rude.
Wait, what?
I got better. Anyway, that baby's popping out in, what, two months?
I should be back by then.
Oh, you're not coming back right away?
Aw, why? Miss having me around?
WARK!
Don't worry, We'll see each other soon.
HACK!
And you can always call me through Stoney.
I'll even help you fix it, if you ***really*** want.
AUGH!
PLEH!
Your tongue is made of rock!
But now, if you'll excuse me, I am absolutely famished.
And... oh...
*...It seems I've already had something delivered **right** to my cave.*
My, how convenient...

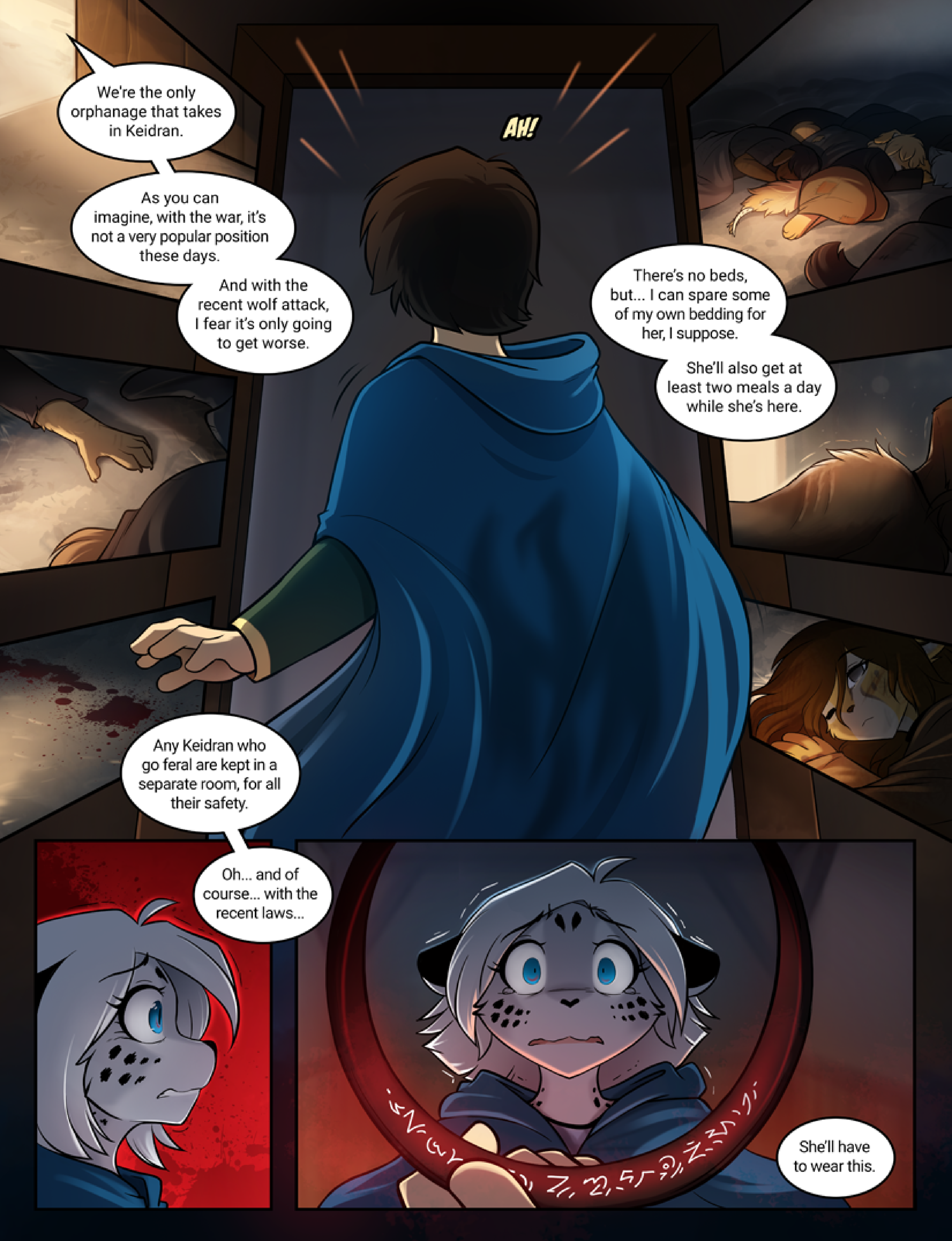

CRUNCH!
Thank you again for allowing me to share in your catch, young hunter.
It's quite delicious, and very much appreciated after my nap.
[O-of course! Happy to help!
P-please, take more, if you'd like!
As much as you want!!! It's no problem!]
AH-HAHA...

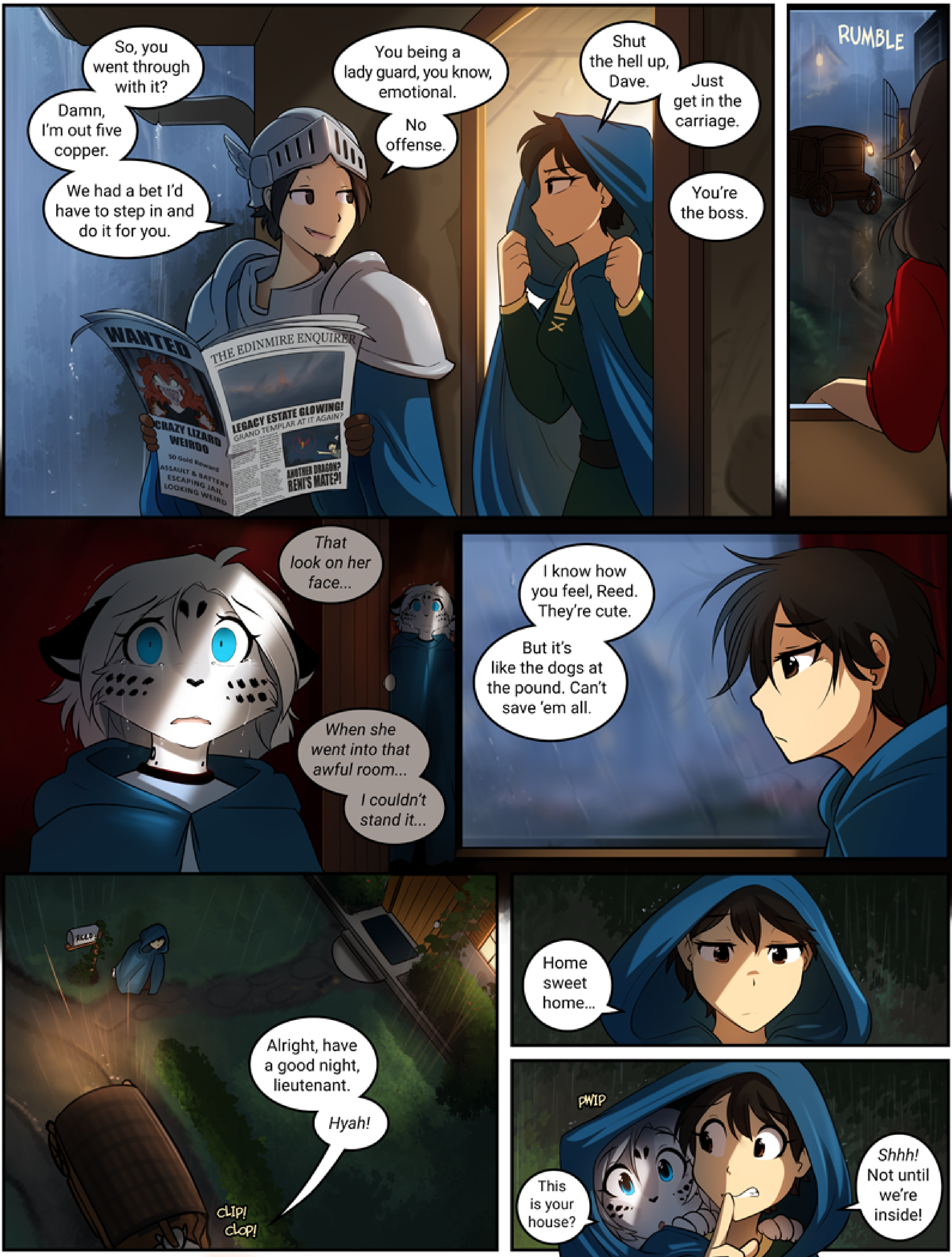

Meanwhile...
RUMBLE
CLIP! CLOP!
CLIP! CLOP!
Ugh... I should have been off duty an **hour** ago...
Babysitting was **not** in my job description!
SIGH...
Not that I blame the captain. Who could say no to **that** face?
...Poor thing. She's barely said two words to me. Hasn't even asked where we're going yet.
Should I... say something?
I don't know the first thing about kids. Much less a Keidran kid. I joined the guard to get out of being a mother.
Miss... uh... Reed, Ma'am?
Oh? Yes?
Are they... *really* going to look for my mom?
Huh?
I heard some of the other guards talking as we were getting into the carriage...
They said it wasn't worth the captain's time to go looking for a Keidran.
What?
That's ***bullshit!***
I don't know who said that, but he was an idiot.
The captain gave you his word! He'd only do that if he meant it.
He's already sent runners to all the gatehouses to be on the lookout.
RIFT WALL
EST 155
And he's personally going out to check on your tavern himself right now. So don't you worry about it. We'll find her.
....You said a bad word.
Oh, crap! You're... sorry! I forgot...
It's bullshit! *Heehee!*
Hey! No! Don't repeat it! They're going to blame me!

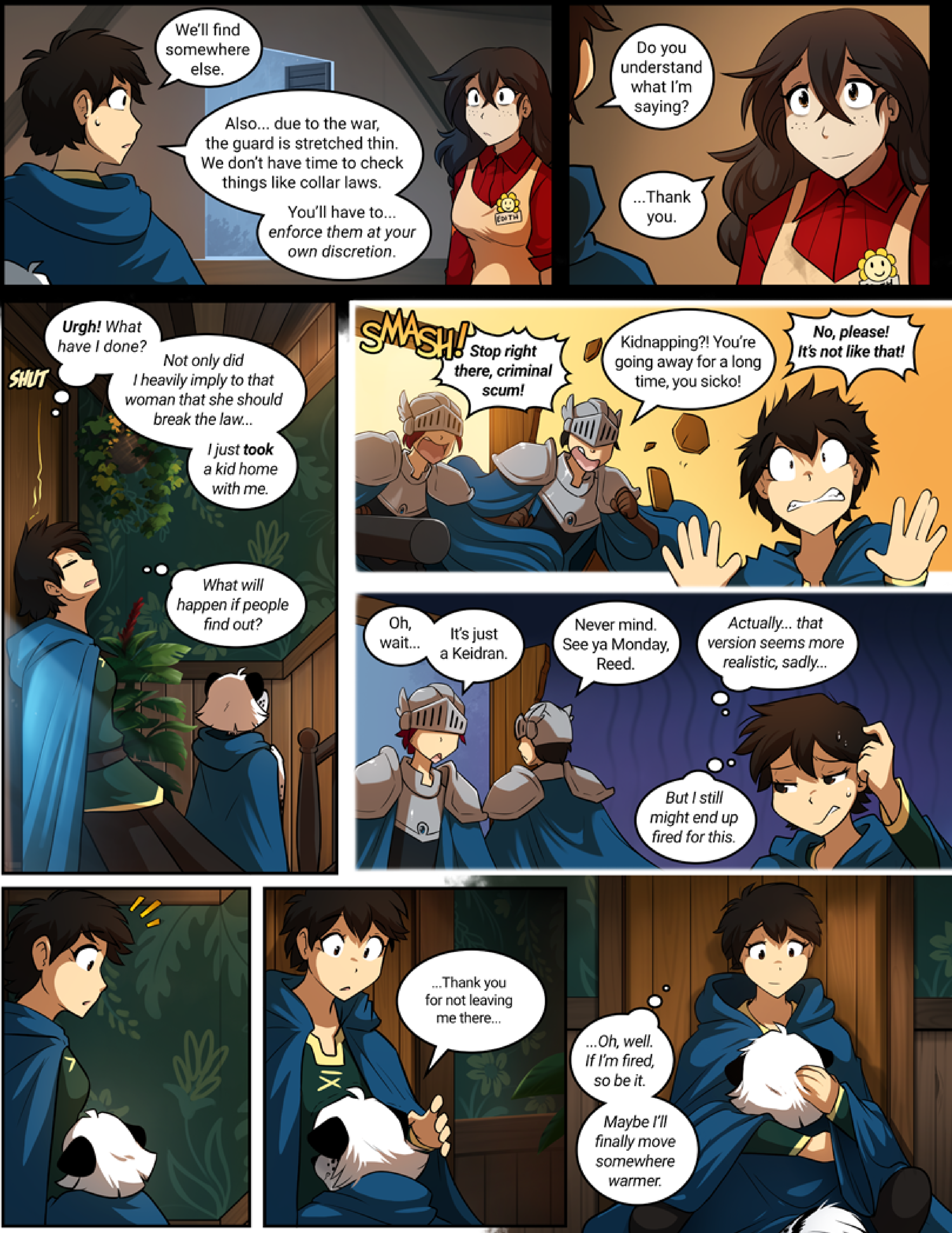

Thank you for helping me, Miss Reed, ma'am.
You know, you can just call me Alice.
Alice?
That's my name. ***Alice Reed!***
Um...
What's wrong? Oh, Keidran usually have just one name, right? Plus their tribe?
I-It's not that. I know how human names work, but...
Maeve, humans have two names, and they're ***very*** picky about them.
Never call a grown up by their first name.
M-mom said I shouldn't...
Maeve, never talk back to a guard! Be polite and do what they say!
Also you're in big trouble for that bad word, young lady!
NYA!
How do you know?!
Wait... those two things were the opposite!
*Which one do I listen to?! Uh... um... **mrow!!!***
Maeve! ***Maeve!*** Calm down, it's okay! It's fine!
You can keep calling me Miss Reed!
I'm not going to get mad either way, alright?
Oh... Really?
Yes! I promise!
Woah, she's a nervous one.
I was just trying to make her more at ease...
I really am just terrible with kids.

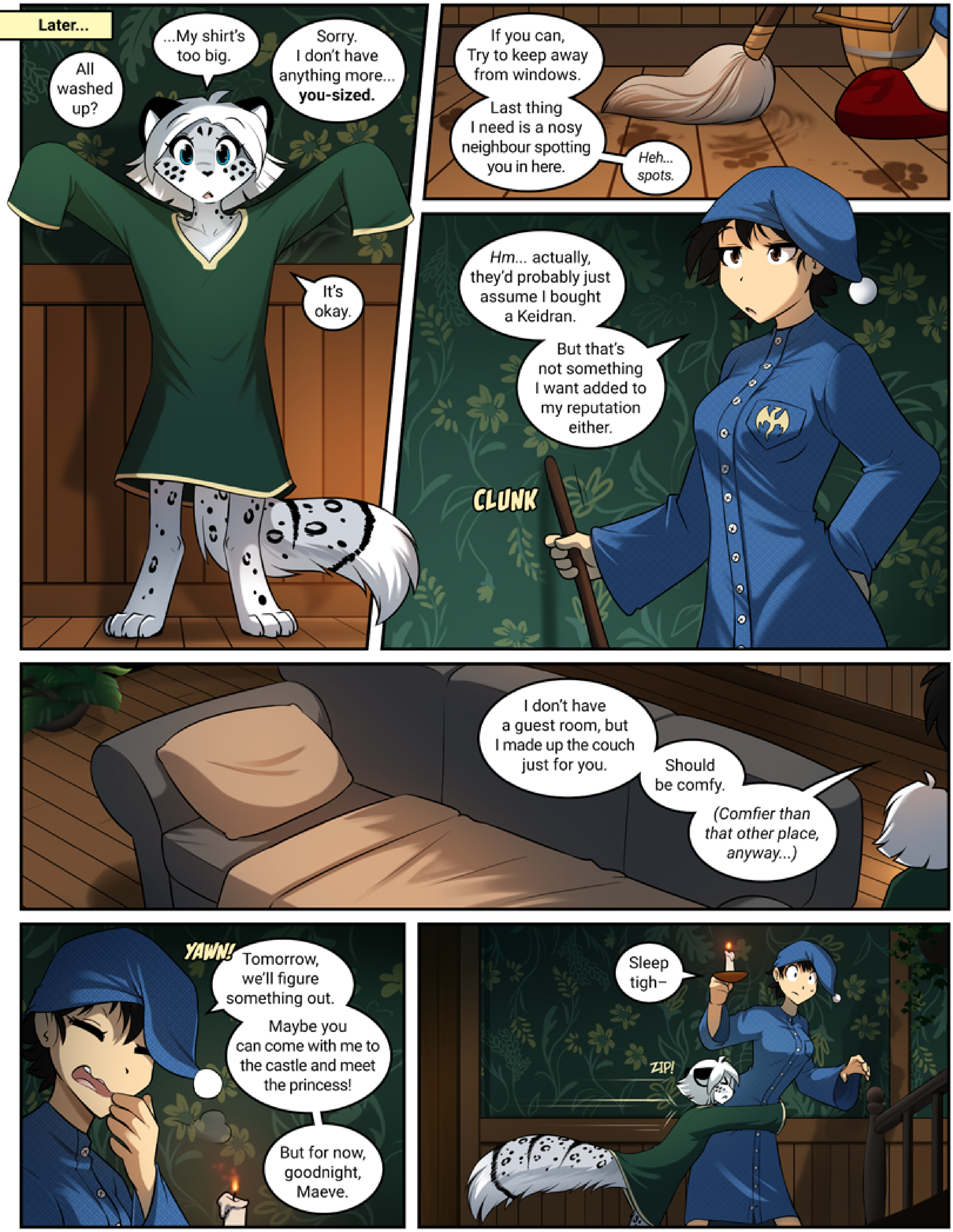

SIGH
Good going, Reed. Just when she was starting to open up.
Now she's back to staring at me with those big ol' eyes.
I like your hair!
Huh?
Oh... You do?
Yeah! I don't see many human ladies with hair like that.
Well, it's just because I'm a guard. Long hair can get dirty or be grabbed. So I keep it short just to be practical.
Well, I think it looks cool!
Really? Thank you, Maeve!
Wow! Not used to hearing that... Most people just say I look like a boy.
And my fellow guardsmen, well... they're great guys, but not exactly the most tactful bunch...
Mornin', Reed! You look like crap!
...Thanks, Dave.
Is it sad that being called cool by a child is the best feeling compliment I've received in months?
I'm cool! ♥
Reed, heads up. We're here.
Oh, good. Time to go.
RUMBLE
EDITH'S HAPPY HEARTH ALL SPECIES WELCOME!
CREAK

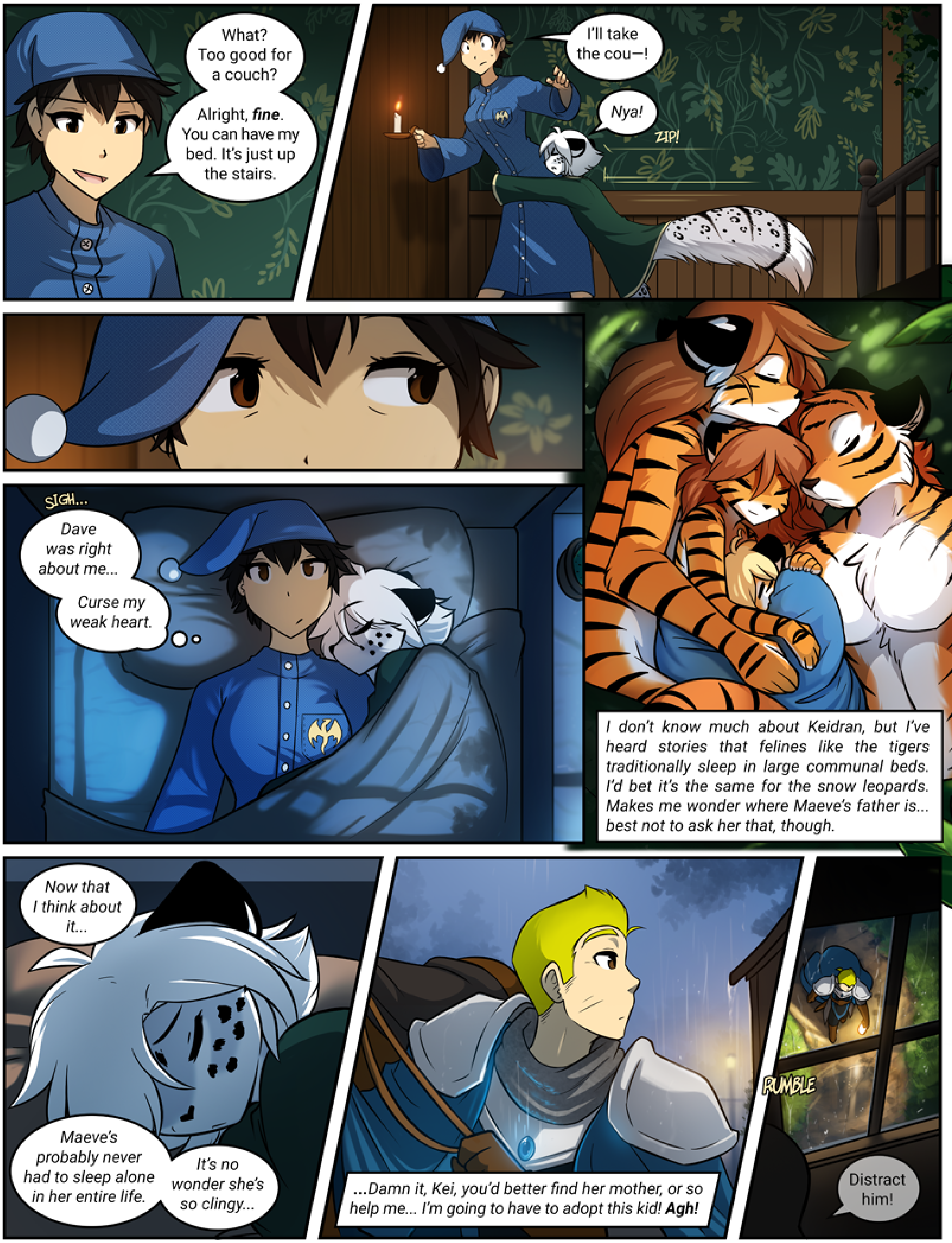

You're... Edith?
Yeah? Whatdaya want?
You're probably thinking of my late grandma, but yeah, I'm also Edith.
And before you ask, no, there's no beds left.
We were full even before the fires.
Sorry.
EDITH
Oh, it's not for me.
I'm with the guard.
I was told you'd have room for this one?
This is Maeve. Her mother went missing recently.
She just needs a safe place to stay for a day or two, until her mom is found.
Oh...
...a Keidran...
...Are you sure?
Uh... yes?
...Okay... this way.
EDITH
CLICK
Wait, what did you mean by that?
Ma'am?
CREEEK
Ah—!

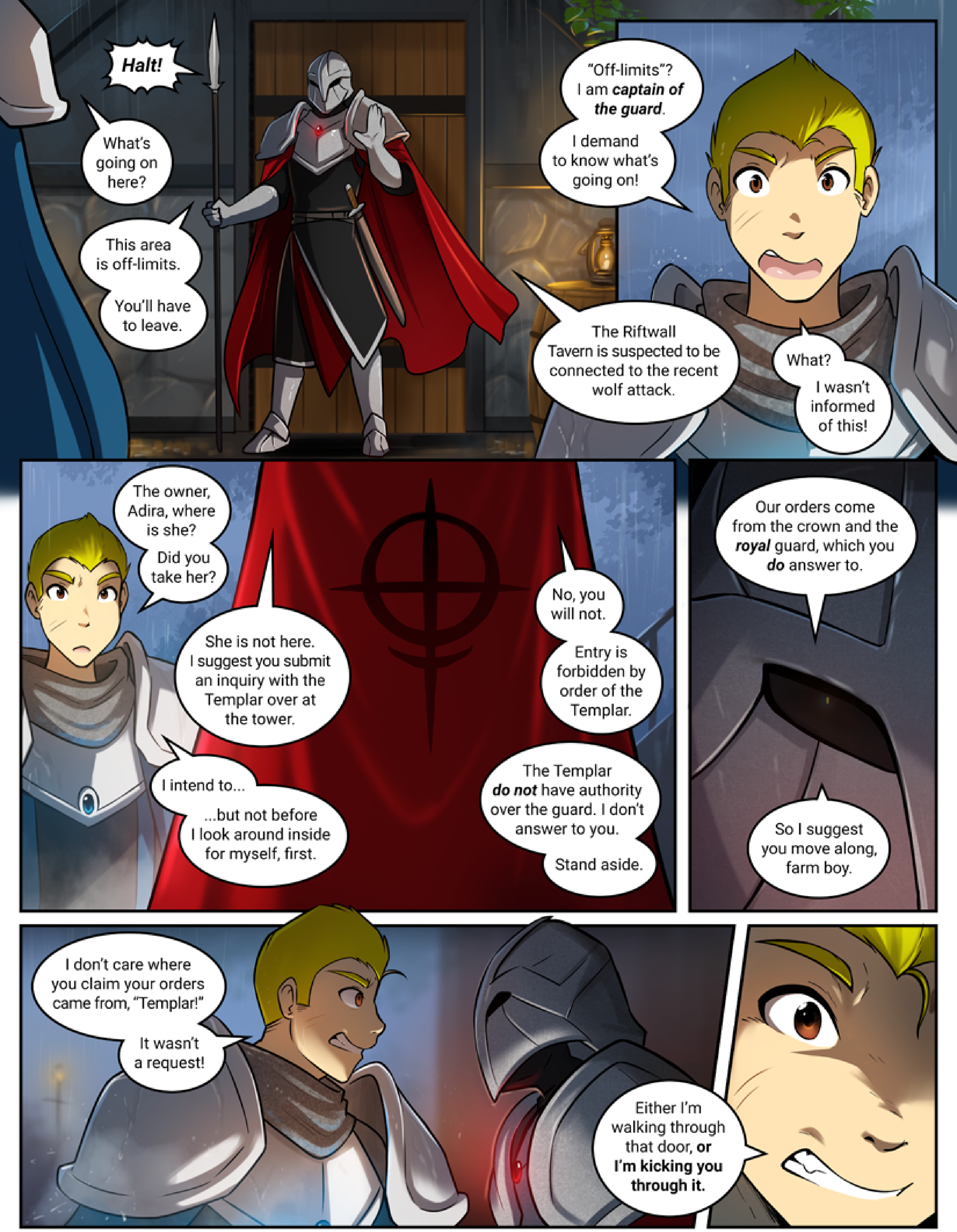

We're the only orphanage that takes in Keidran.
As you can imagine, with the war, it's not a very popular position these days.
And with the recent wolf attack, I fear it's only going to get worse.
AH!
There's no beds, but... I can spare some of my own bedding for her, I suppose.
She'll also get at least two meals a day while she's here.
Any Keidran who go feral are kept in a separate room, for all their safety.
Oh... and of course... with the recent laws...
She'll have to wear this.

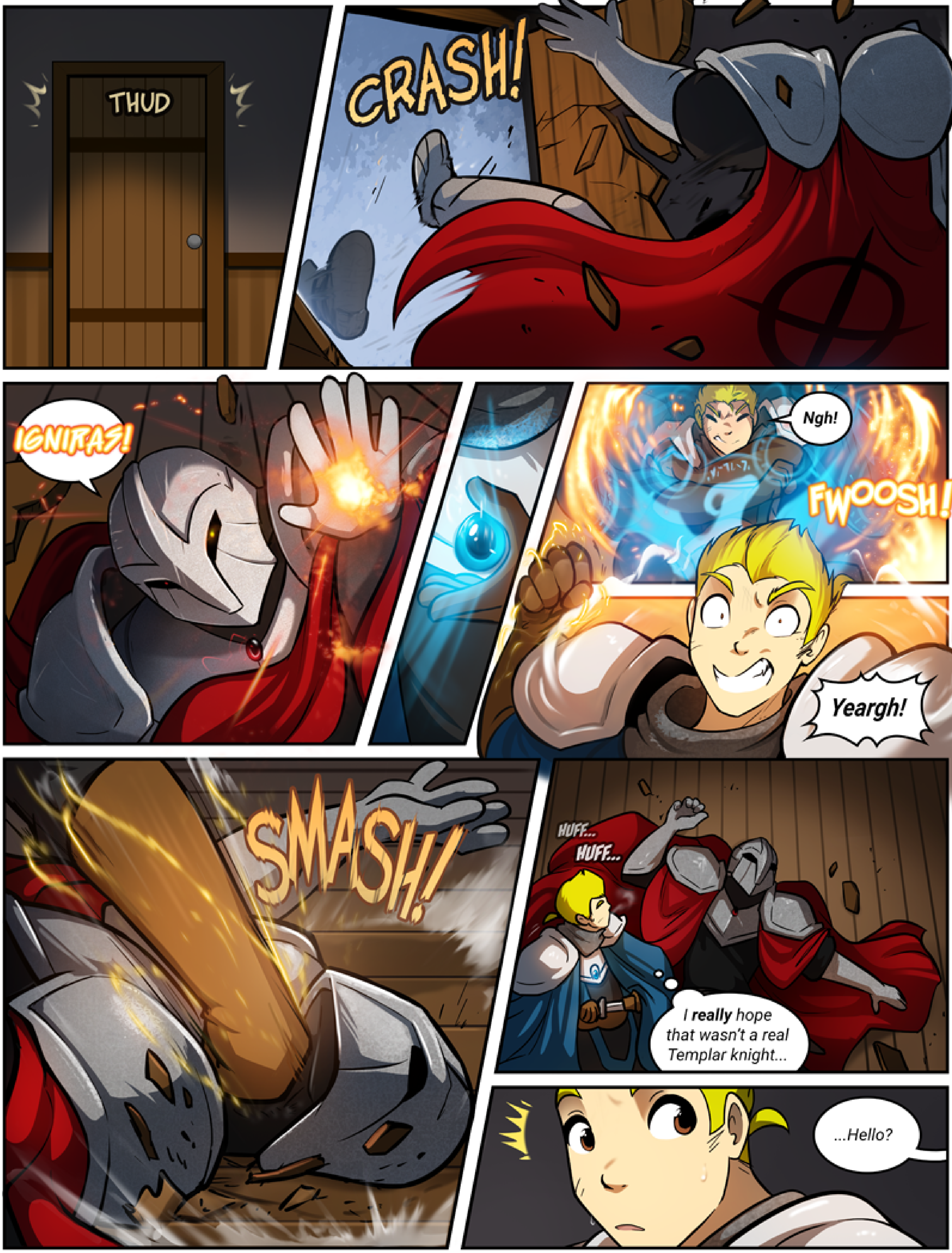

So, you went through with it?
Damn, I'm out five copper.
We had a bet I'd have to step in and do it for you.
You being a lady guard, you know, emotional.
No offense.
Shut the hell up, Dave.
Just get in the carriage.
You're the boss.
WANTED
CRAZY LIZARD WEIRDO
50 Gold Reward
ASSAULT & BATTERY
ESCAPING JAIL
LOOKING WEIRD
THE EDINMIRE ENQUIRER
LEGACY ESTATE GLOWING!
GRAND TEMPLAR AT IT AGAIN?
ANOTHER DRAGON? RENI'S MATE?!
RUMBLE
That look on her face...
When she went into that awful room...
I couldn't stand it...
I know how you feel, Reed. They're cute.
But it's like the dogs at the pound. Can't save 'em all.
Alright, have a good night, lieutenant.
Hyah!
CLIP! CLOP!
Home sweet home...
PWIP
Shhh! Not until we're inside!
This is your house?

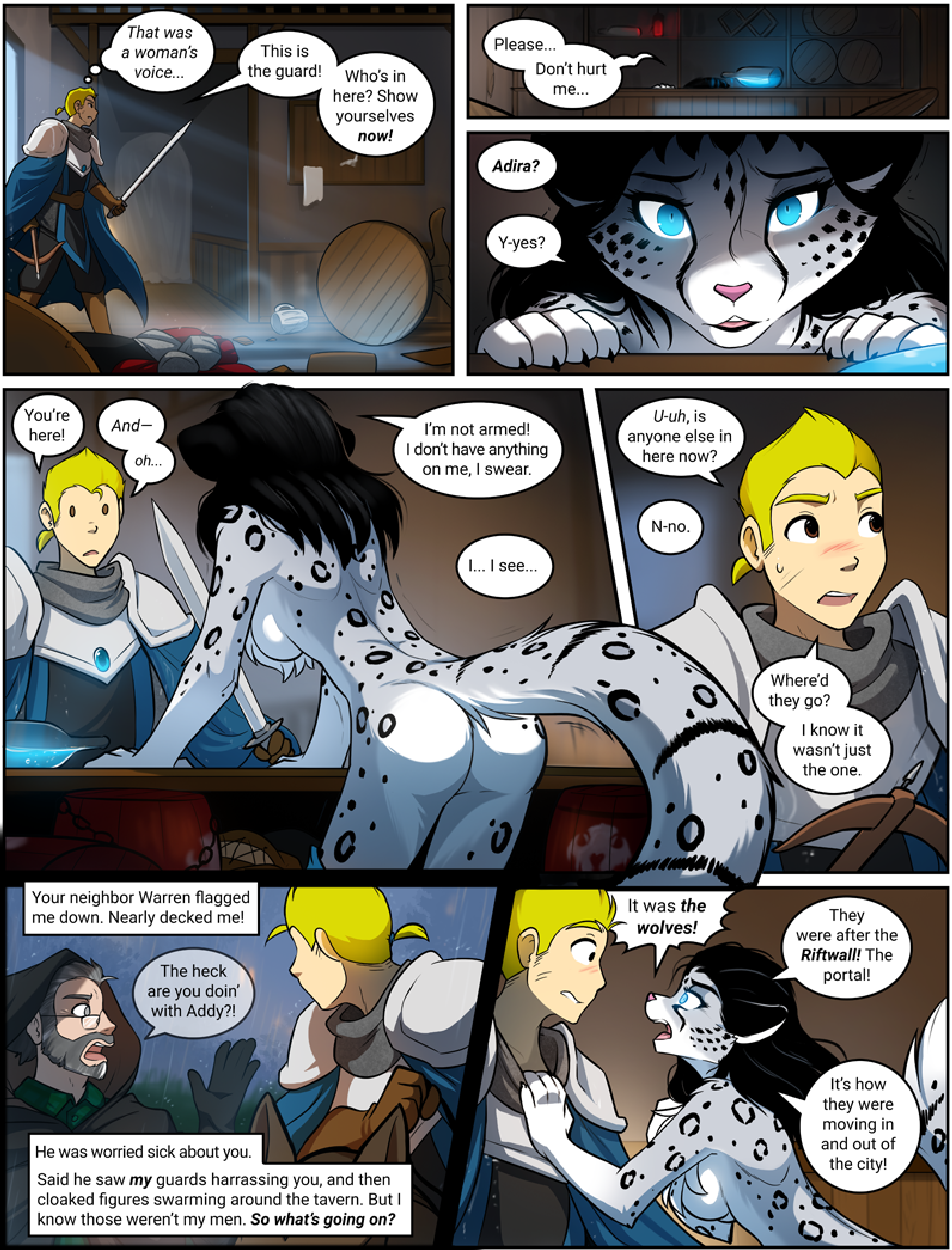

We'll find somewhere else.
Also... due to the war, the guard is stretched thin. We don't have time to check things like collar laws.
You'll have to... *enforce them at your own discretion.*
EDITH
Do you understand what I'm saying?
...Thank you.
SHUT
Urgh! *What have I done?*
Not only did I heavily imply to that woman that she should break the law...
I just ***took*** *a kid home with me.*
What will happen if people find out?
SMASH!
Stop right there, criminal scum!
Kidnapping?! You're going away for a long time, you sicko!
No, please! It's not like that!
Oh, wait...
It's just a Keidran.
Never mind. See ya Monday, Reed.
Actually... that version seems more realistic, sadly...
But I still might end up fired for this.
...Thank you for not leaving me there...
...Oh, well. If I'm fired, so be it.
Maybe I'll finally move somewhere warmer.

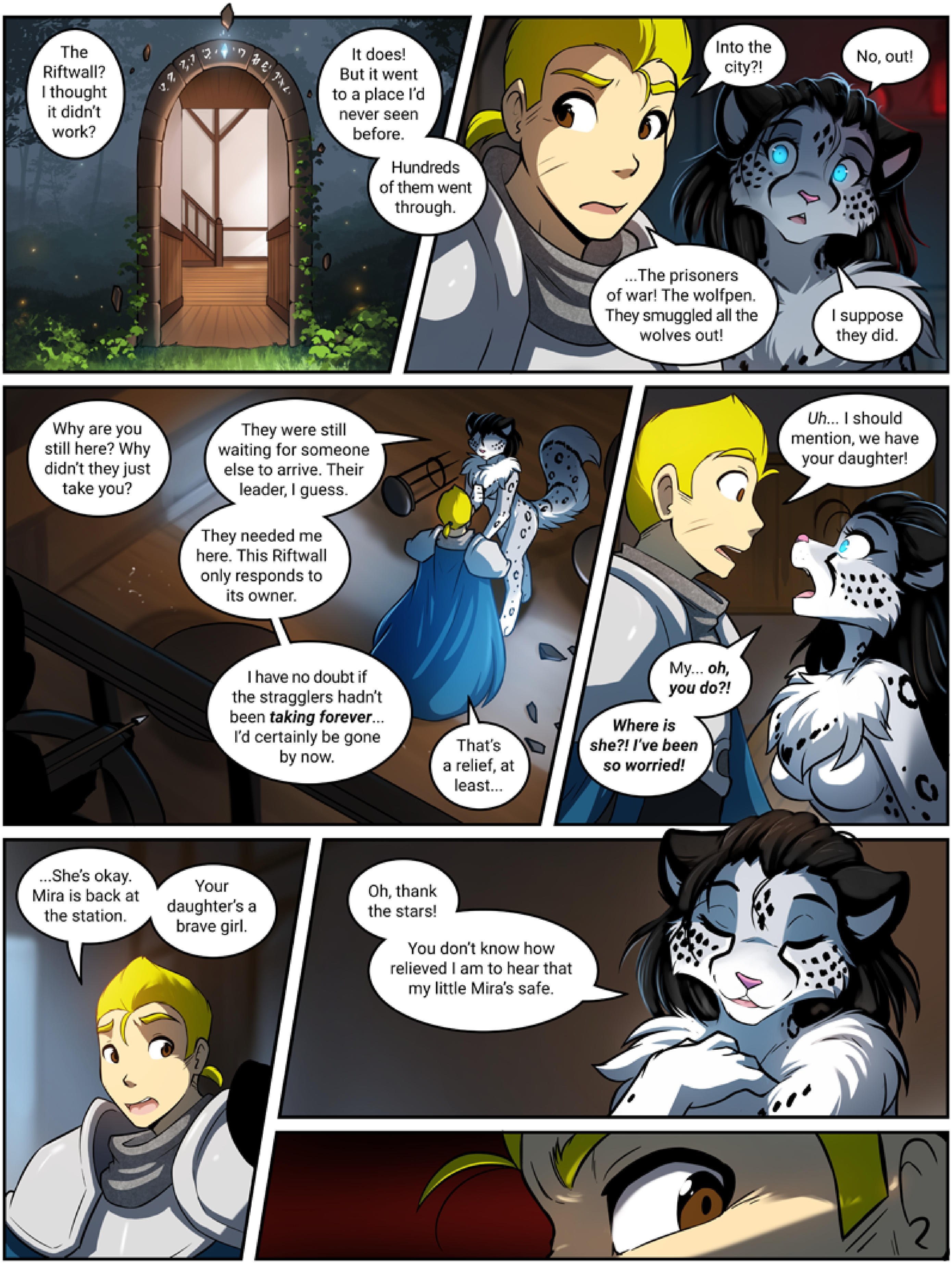

Later...
All washed up?
...My shirt's too big.
Sorry. I don't have anything more... **you-sized.**
It's okay.
If you can, Try to keep away from windows.
Last thing I need is a nosy neighbour spotting you in here.
Heh... spots.
Hm... actually, they'd probably just assume I bought a Keidran.
But that's not something I want added to my reputation either.
CLUNK
I don't have a guest room, but I made up the couch just for you.
Should be comfy.
(Comfier than that other place, anyway...)
YAWN!
Tomorrow, we'll figure something out.
Maybe you can come with me to the castle and meet the princess!
But for now, goodnight, Maeve.
Sleep tigh–
ZIP!

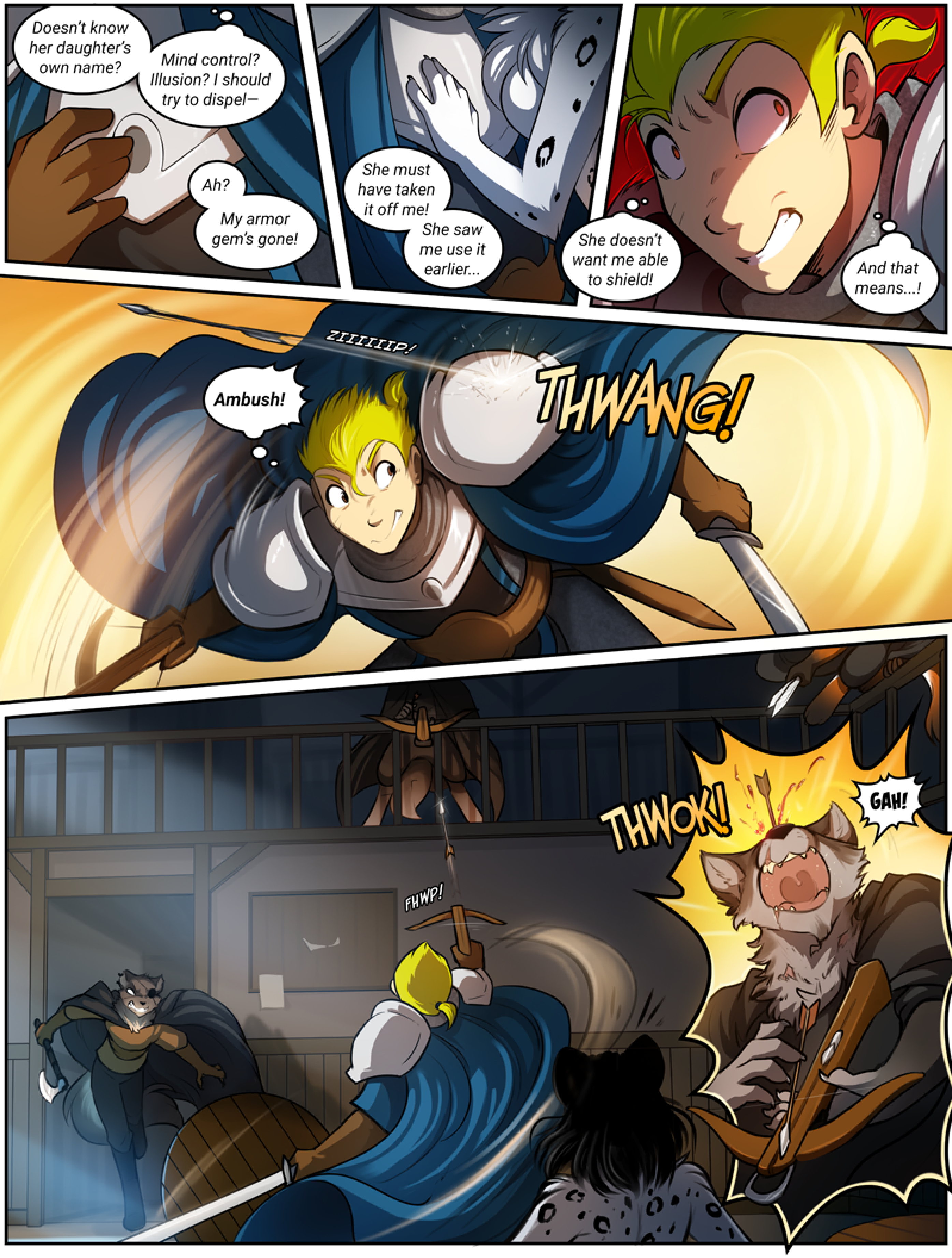

What? Too good for a couch?
Alright, ***fine***. You can have my bed. It's just up the stairs.
I'll take the cou—!
Nya!
ZIP!
SIGH...
Dave was right about me...
Curse my weak heart.
I don't know much about Keidran, but I've heard stories that felines like the tigers traditionally sleep in large communal beds. I'd bet it's the same for the snow leopards. Makes me wonder where Maeve's father is... best not to ask her that, though.
Now that I think about it...
Maeve's probably never had to sleep alone in her entire life.
It's no wonder she's so clingy...
...*Damn it, Kei, you'd better find her mother, or so help me... I'm going to have to adopt this kid!* ***Agh!***
RUMBLE
Distract him!

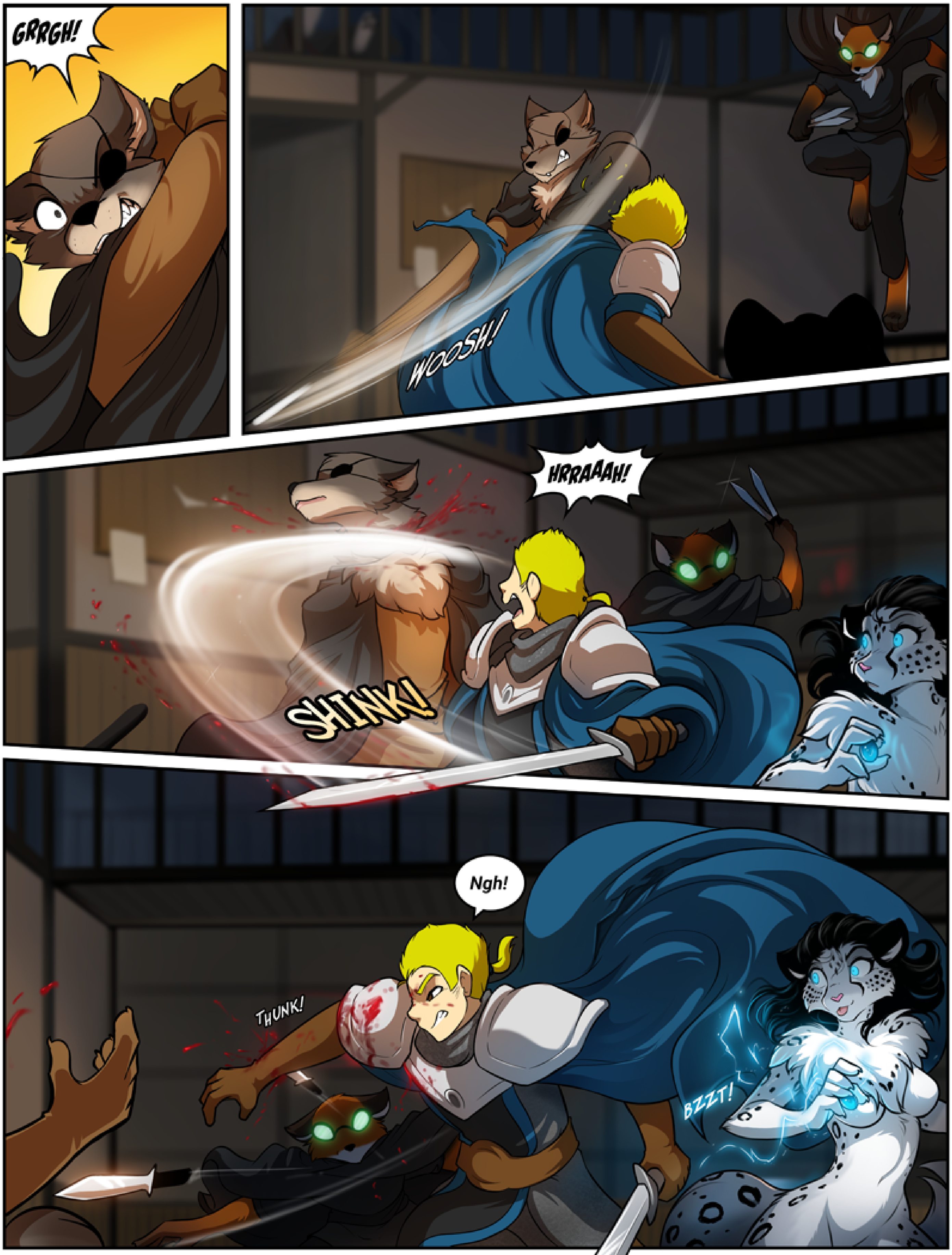

Halt!
What's going on here?
This area is off-limits.
You'll have to leave.
"Off-limits"? I am ***captain of the guard***.
I demand to know what's going on!
The Riftwall Tavern is suspected to be connected to the recent wolf attack.
What? I wasn't informed of this!
The owner, Adira, where is she?
Did you take her?
She is not here. I suggest you submit an inquiry with the Templar over at the tower.
I intend to...
...but not before I look around inside for myself, first.
No, you will not.
Entry is forbidden by order of the Templar.
The Templar ***do not*** have authority over the guard. I don't answer to you.
Stand aside.
Our orders come from the crown and the ***royal*** guard, which you ***do*** answer to.
So I suggest you move along, farm boy.
I don't care where you claim your orders came from, "Templar!"
It wasn't a request!
Either I'm walking through that door, **or I'm kicking you through it.**

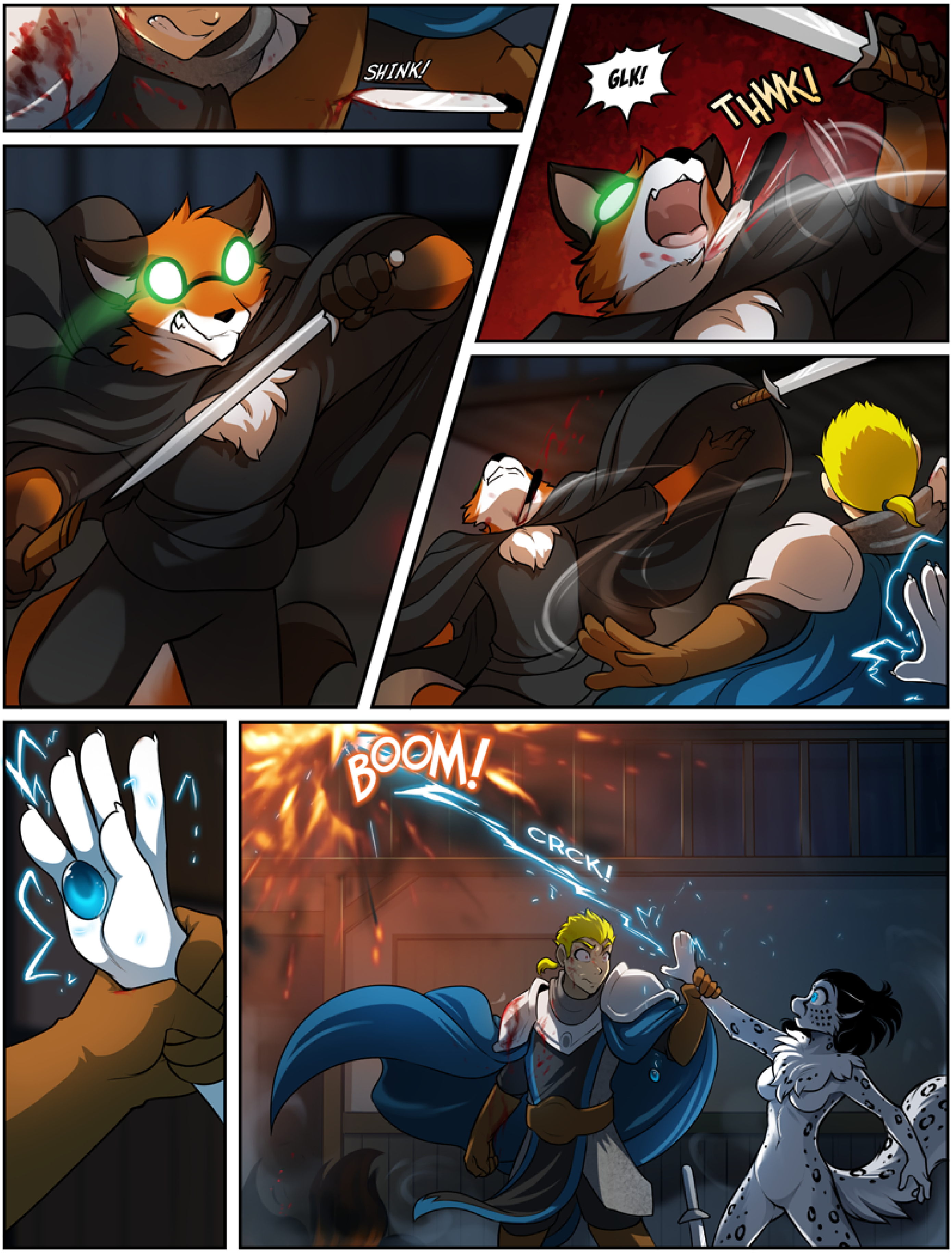

THUD
CRASH!
IGNIRAS!
Ngh!
FWOOSH!
Yeargh!
SMASH!
HUFF...
HUFF...
I **really** hope that wasn't a real Templar knight...
...Hello?

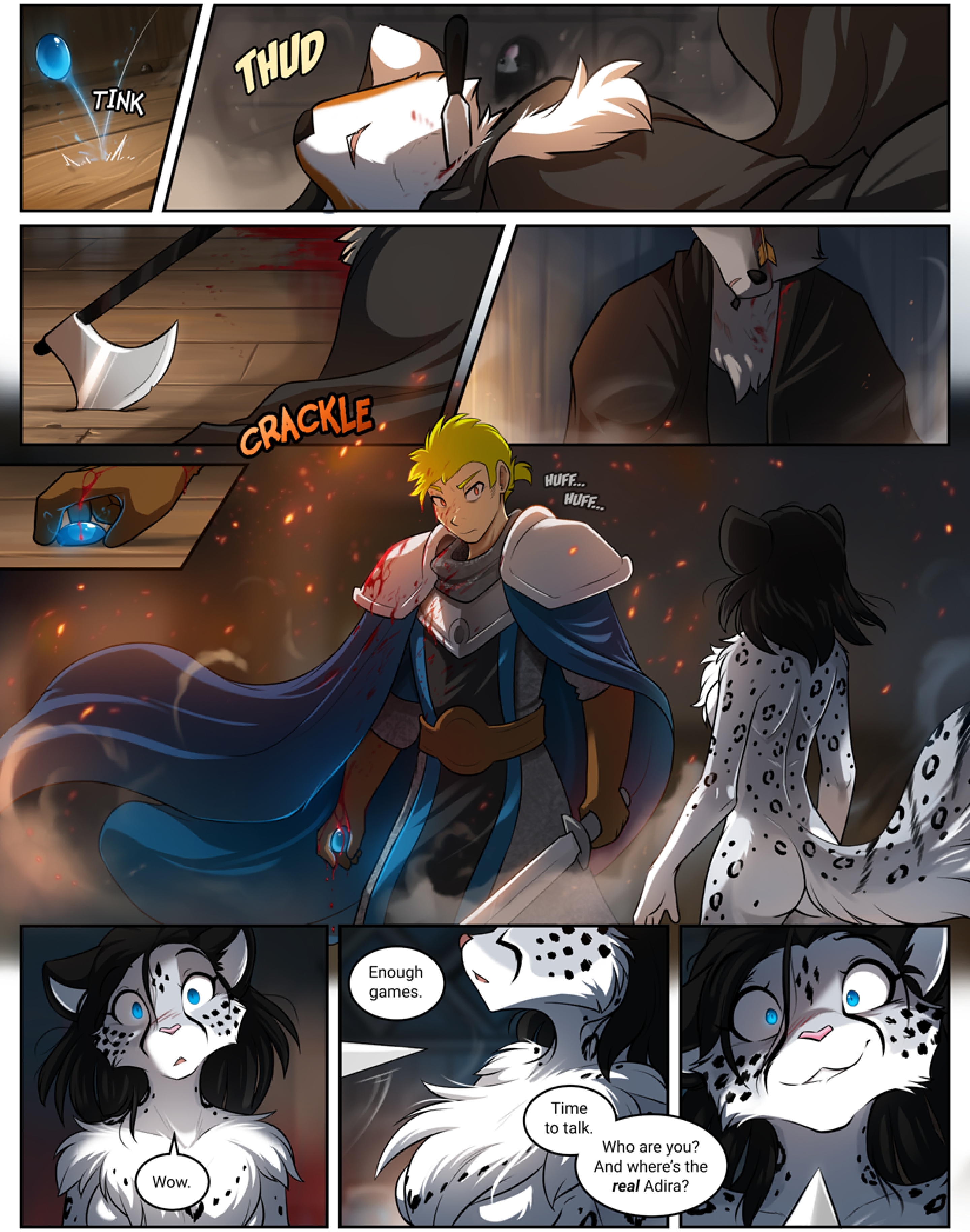

That was a woman's voice...
This is the guard!
Who's in here? Show yourselves *now!*
Please... Don't hurt me...
Adira?
Y-yes?
You're here!
And— oh...
I'm not armed! I don't have anything on me, I swear.
I... I see...
U-uh, is anyone else in here now?
N-no.
Where'd they go?
I know it wasn't just the one.
Your neighbor Warren flagged me down. Nearly decked me!
The heck are you doin' with Addy?!
He was worried sick about you.
Said he saw *my* guards harrassing you, and then cloaked figures swarming around the tavern. But I know those weren't my men. ***So what's going on?***
It was ***the wolves!***
They were after the ***Riftwall!*** The portal!
It's how they were moving in and out of the city!

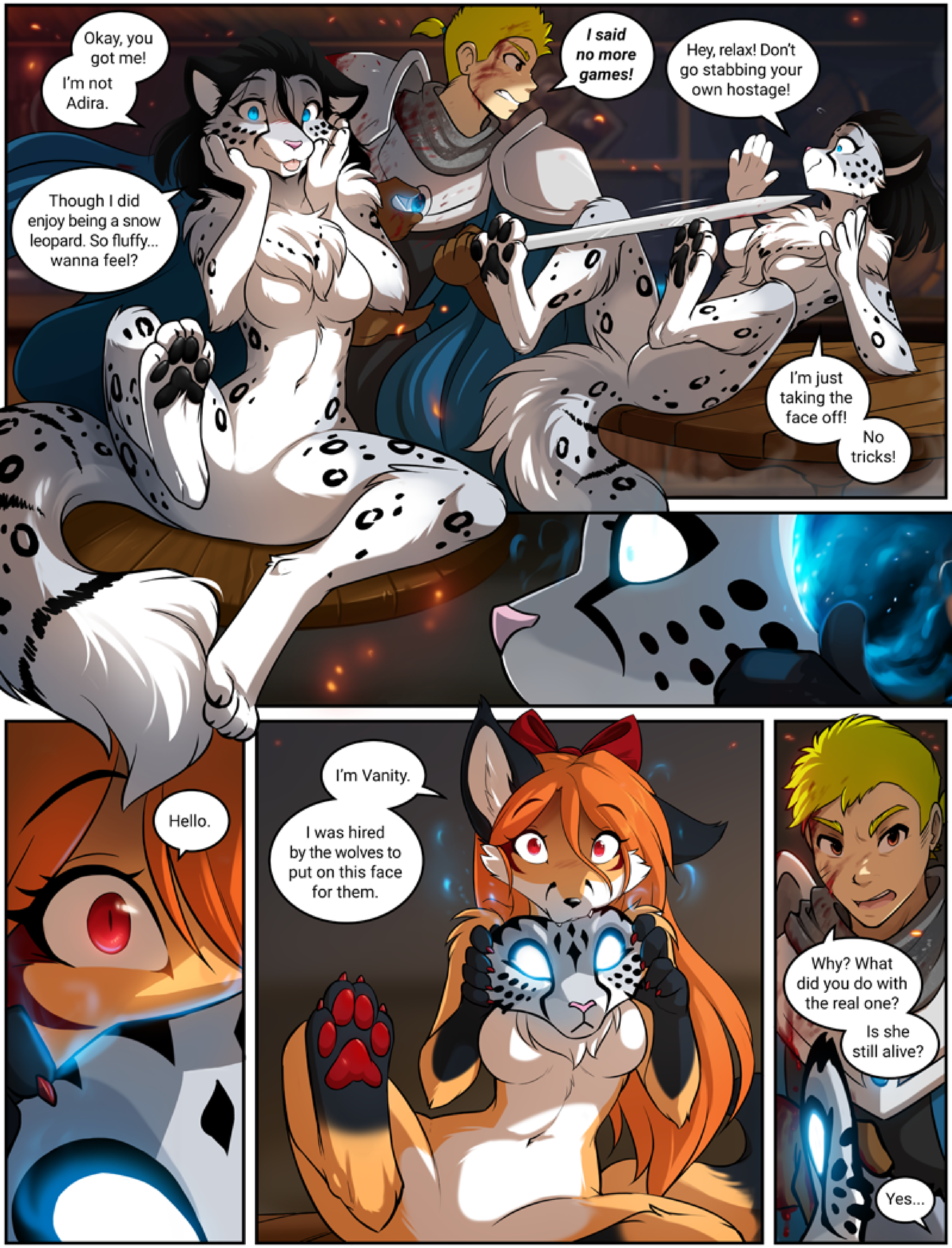

The Riftwall? I thought it didn't work?
It does! But it went to a place I'd never seen before.
Hundreds of them went through.
Into the city?!
No, out!
...The prisoners of war! The wolfpen. They smuggled all the wolves out!
I suppose they did.
Why are you still here? Why didn't they just take you?
They were still waiting for someone else to arrive. Their leader, I guess.
They needed me here. This Riftwall only responds to its owner.
I have no doubt if the stragglers hadn't been ***taking forever***... I'd certainly be gone by now.
That's a relief, at least...
Uh... I should mention, we have your daughter!
My... ***oh, you do?!***
Where is she?! I've been so worried!
...She's okay. Mira is back at the station.
Your daughter's a brave girl.
Oh, thank the stars!
You don't know how relieved I am to hear that my little Mira's safe.

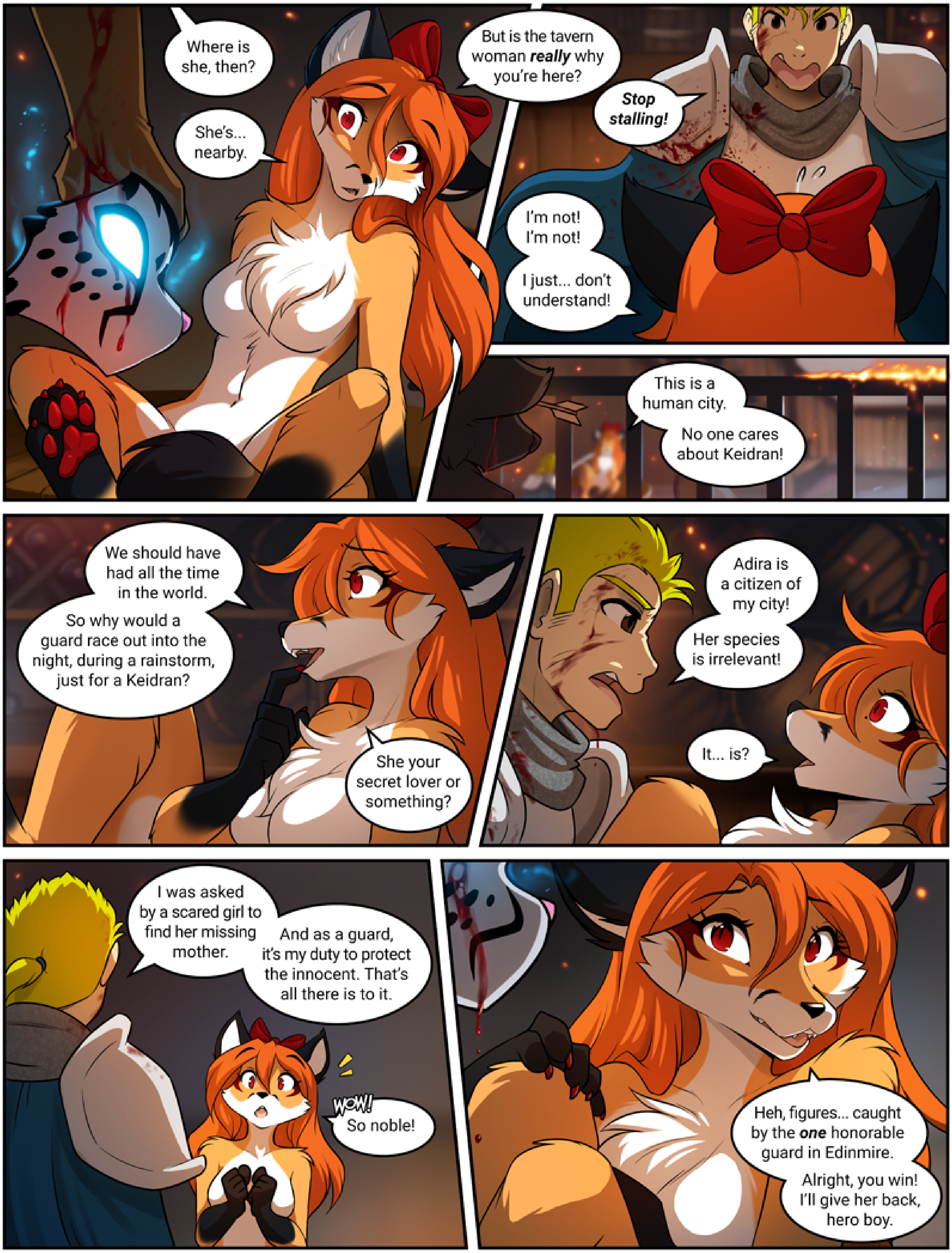

Doesn't know her daughter's own name?
Mind control? Illusion? I should try to dispel—
Ah?
My armor gem's gone!
She must have taken it off me!
She saw me use it earlier...
She doesn't want me able to shield!
And that means...!
ZIIIIIIP!
Ambush!
THWANG!
THWOK!
GAH!
FHWP!

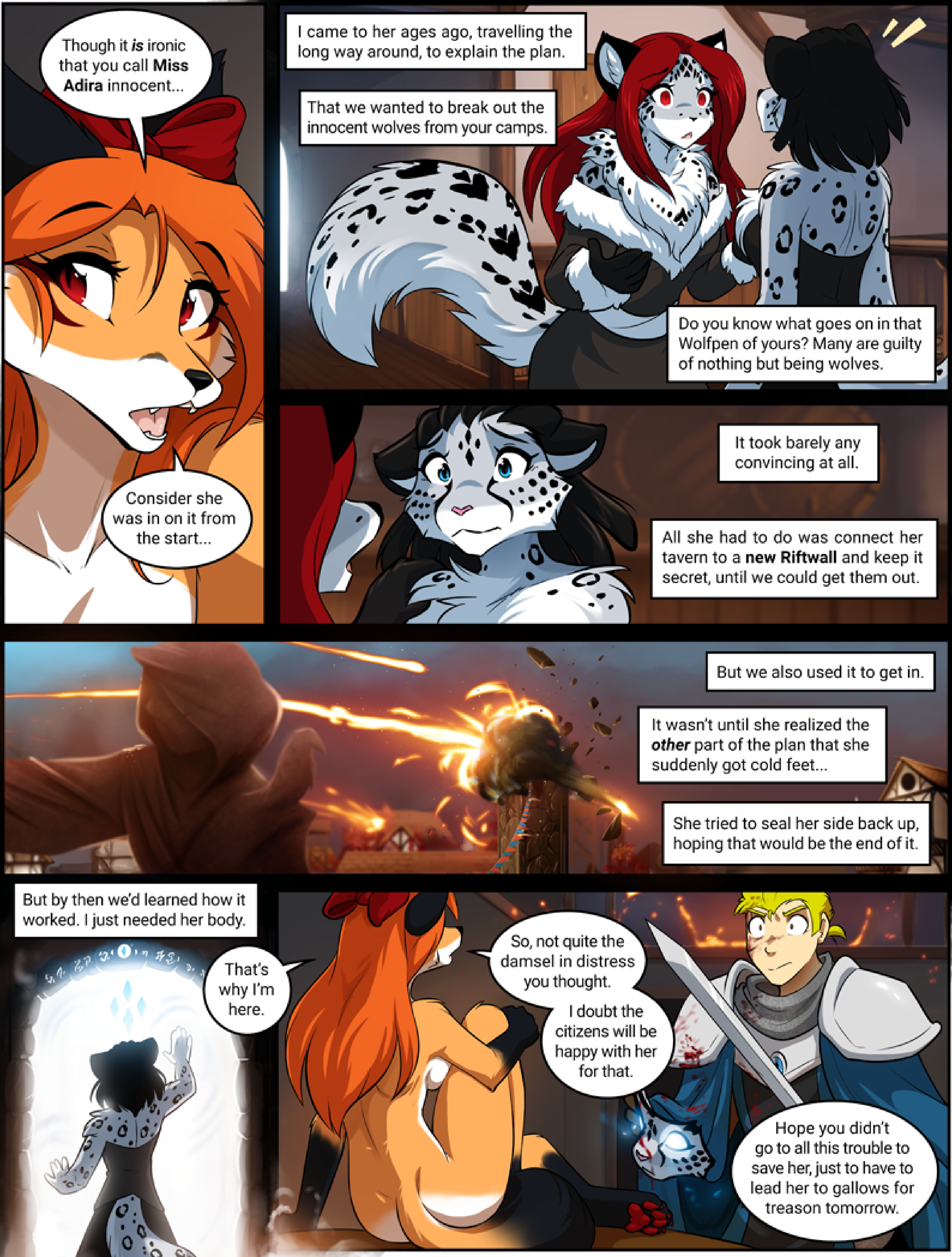

GRRGH!
WOOSH!
HRRAAAH!
SHINK!
Ngh!
THUNK!
BZZT!


SHINK!
GLK!
THWK!
BOOM!
CRCK!


TINK
THUD
CRACKLE
HUFF...
HUFF...
Wow.
Enough games.
Time to talk.
Who are you? And where's the *real* Adira?


Okay, you got me!
I'm not Adira.
Though I did enjoy being a snow leopard. So fluffy... wanna feel?
I said no more games!
Hey, relax! Don't go stabbing your own hostage!
I'm just taking the face off!
No tricks!
Hello.
I'm Vanity.
I was hired by the wolves to put on this face for them.
Why? What did you do with the real one?
Is she still alive?
Yes...


Where is she, then?
She's... nearby.
But is the tavern woman ***really*** why you're here?
Stop stalling!
I'm not! I'm not!
I just... don't understand!
This is a human city.
No one cares about Keidran!
We should have had all the time in the world.
So why would a guard race out into the night, during a rainstorm, just for a Keidran?
She your secret lover or something?
Adira is a citizen of my city!
Her species is irrelevant!
It... is?
I was asked by a scared girl to find her missing mother.
And as a guard, it's my duty to protect the innocent. That's all there is to it.
WOW!
So noble!
Heh, figures... caught by the ***one*** honorable guard in Edinmire.
Alright, you win! I'll give her back, hero boy.


Though it *is* ironic that you call **Miss Adira** innocent...
Consider she was in on it from the start...
I came to her ages ago, travelling the long way around, to explain the plan.
That we wanted to break out the innocent wolves from your camps.
Do you know what goes on in that Wolfpen of yours? Many are guilty of nothing but being wolves.
It took barely any convincing at all.
All she had to do was connect her tavern to a **new Riftwall** and keep it secret, until we could get them out.
But we also used it to get in.
It wasn't until she realized the ***other*** part of the plan that she suddenly got cold feet...
She tried to seal her side back up, hoping that would be the end of it.
But by then we'd learned how it worked. I just needed her body.
That's why I'm here.
So, not quite the damsel in distress you thought.
I doubt the citizens will be happy with her for that.
Hope you didn't go to all this trouble to save her, just to have to lead her to gallows for treason tomorrow.